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MEDIA RELEASE

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NSW BUDGET: \$10 MILLION BOOST FOR NEWBORN CARE

Families and babies will benefit from the upcoming NSW Budget, which will deliver \$10 million to commence construction on the next stages of John Hunter Children's Hospital's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU).

The NSW Government committed \$18 million to Stages 2 and 3 of the project at the 2015 State election, with \$10 million to be delivered in the 2016-17 Budget, to be handed down by Treasurer Gladys Berejiklian on June 21.

Ms Berejiklian said the Government was investing record amounts on health and quality services across all regions including the Hunter.

"The NICU will provide state-of-the-art care for the sickest babies from northern NSW and a more supportive environment for their parents," Ms Berejiklian said.

Health Minister Jillian Skinner and Parliamentary Secretary for the Hunter and Central Coast Scot MacDonald visited John Hunter Children's Hospital today to inspect construction progress on the \$7 million Stage 1 NICU upgrade, which is due for completion in August.

Construction on Stage 1 began in May 2015. It includes 32 special care spaces, a palliative care room, showering facilities, a breast feeding/expressing room, a new waiting area, three counselling rooms and a family room with overnight accommodation.

Stages 2 and 3 will feature a redeveloped intensive care unit, isolation rooms, a procedure room, staff training areas and office spaces.

"We are delivering on our election commitment to this important project, which will increase the hospital's capacity to provide high-quality care to babies in a modern clinical environment. Stage 1 has already delivered new cot spaces more than double the size of the current special care area," Mrs Skinner said.

John Hunter Children's Hospital is the primary referral facility for children and young people requiring intensive care treatment due to injury or illness in northern NSW.

The NSW Government has also committed \$14 million to construct a new Paediatric Intensive Care Unit (PICU) at John Hunter Hospital, which will offer expanded, specialised care for critically-ill children from the Hunter, New England and north coast areas of NSW. Works are due for completion early next year.

John Hunter Hospital - which celebrates its 25th anniversary this year - is one of the busiest tertiary hospitals in NSW, employing 2,654 full-time equivalent staff, delivering over 4,000 babies and conducting over 20,000 operations in the last financial year.

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