



# Jillian Skinner MP

## Minister for Health Minister for Medical Research

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### MEDIA RELEASE

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Wednesday, 13 February 2013

#### **TAMWORTH CANCER SERVICES NOW CLOSER TO HOME**

Health Minister Jillian Skinner and Member for Tamworth Kevin Anderson today met the first patients to be treated at Tamworth's new \$41.7 million North West Cancer Centre.

"It means a lot for me to be here today to see firsthand just how this new centre will improve health services for rural cancer patients," Mrs Skinner said.

"Patients in the New England North West region now have access to radiotherapy services close to home for the first time.

"We know that the time, effort and cost associated with travelling long distances to receive radiation oncology is a major barrier for country people.

"This new centre, complimented by publicly-funded cancer patient and carer accommodation now available on the grounds of the hospital, will make cancer care available closer to home for so many of the region's residents," Mrs Skinner said.

The North West Cancer Centre will make chemotherapy and radiation treatment more comfortable for patients, their carers, and families. The centre includes:

- Four extra chemotherapy chairs, allowing more patients from across the region to receive medical oncology treatment in Tamworth;
- Space for family, carers and friends to sit with patients while they receive treatment;
- Floor to ceiling windows with views over Tamworth and Liverpool Ranges;
- Balcony space for patients and visitors to step outside without leaving the chemotherapy space.

Mrs Skinner said the North West Cancer Centre will eventually provide up to 5500 chemotherapy treatments a year – up from the current 3500 figure.

"It is expected the centre will provide 7000 radiation treatments for patients per year. This is wonderful news for a hospital which has not previously offered radiation," Mrs Skinner said.

Mr Anderson welcomed the Minister's visit to Tamworth and the NSW Government's investment in rural health care.

"The NSW Government is delivering on its commitment to ensure our rural communities get the best health care, closer to home.

“After months of construction, this means a lot to local patients, their families and carers.

“Some local patients have had to travel as far as Brisbane and Sydney for radiation therapy so it is wonderful to see this element of cancer services at Tamworth become a reality,” Mr Anderson said.

The current clinic building and chemotherapy unit, along with other buildings, will be demolished in coming months to make way for the new hospital building to be built this year.

The installation and testing of the centre’s new linear accelerator continues, and radiation oncology staff are preparing to treat patients in mid-2013.

The North West Cancer Centre Project also includes accommodation for patients and carers as well as the expansion of chemotherapy services at Armidale Hospital

The new centre is made possible by \$31.7 million from the Australian Government’s Health and Hospitals Fund and \$10 million from the NSW Government.

While visiting Tamworth Hospital, Mrs Skinner and Mr Anderson also met with the hospital’s 20 new graduate nurses.