

NSW Department of Planning and Environment  
Major Projects

### **New Maitland Hospital Stage 2 Submission**

The Upper Hunter Cancer Action Network (UHCAN) is a group of volunteers that meets regularly in the Upper Hunter, Cessnock and Maitland electorates. Across NSW, Cancer Action Networks advocate on a range of cancer related issues on behalf of cancer patients, their families and carers. We attended a presentation by Health Infrastructure on the New Maitland Hospital at the Maitland Health Expo on 8 May, and are now making this submission.

UHCAN members are in support of building a Level 4 service, intergenerational hospital for residents of Maitland and the wider Hunter community. We are particularly supportive of the new oncology service with provision for 12 chemotherapy chairs, which we hope will be patient-centred. However, we are concerned that the Allied Health services needed by cancer patients and their families has not been adequately considered and therefore not sufficiently accommodated in the plans that are on exhibition. We therefore submit the following additions to the design for consideration.

#### **1. Include a Lymphoedema Clinic in the design**

Many cancer patients develop lymphoedema as a result of surgery or radiation therapy, but there is no public lymphoedema service in the Hunter outside Newcastle. Oncology patients being treated at the New Maitland Hospital will require access to a public lymphoedema clinic, staffed by Lymphoedema-trained Occupational Therapists and physiotherapists.

#### **2. Include Cancer Information Service, in consultation with CCNSW**

The Calvary Mater Newcastle is the main oncology treatment centre for the Hunter New England (HNE) Health District. It has a Cancer Information Service operated by Cancer Council NSW (CCNSW) volunteers, which provides important information to cancer patients and their families when they need it most. It also provides a quiet, private place for families to sit when they have received bad news; are suffering side-effects for their treatment; or are just stuck in the hospital between appointments. The volunteers provide a friendly face, but are also trained in accidental counselling, and can give people the time to just listen that busy health professionals cannot. The inclusion of a dedicated Cancer Information Service space located near the chemotherapy centre is an essential part of a 21<sup>st</sup> century, patient-centred hospital and must be included in the plans.

#### **3. Include culturally appropriate gathering areas for families**

HNE has an Aboriginal population above the NSW average and an unacceptable gap in their health outcomes, including for cancer. Involvement of indigenous artists in the design of the façade is supported, but more needs to be done to involve the local community in the physical design of the spaces. The plans for the New Maitland Hospital should include outdoor areas such as a sensory garden and a civic square and permit natural ventilation and access to outside areas from palliative care rooms. Maximising the use of shade trees to car parking areas will be appreciated by those stuck at the hospital for long periods of time during the summer, and will make the area less sterile.

#### **4. Include location of future services in the plans**

There is currently a palliative care service provided from Maitland Hospital and we are pleased that this will continue. However, in the long term, HNE residents deserve the co-location of a palliative

care hospice on the Metford site. All residents of HNE could be treated at the New Maitland Hospital, and whilst free transport-to-treatment is provided, for those further away it would be much easier to stay near the hospital. For families from rural areas of HNE, they will need access to accommodation when their loved one is admitted to the hospital, including oncology and palliative care. Patient and family accommodation should be co-located on the New Maitland Hospital site.

**5. Include extra psychosocial support services for oncology patients and families**

Whilst there are Social Workers currently at Maitland Hospital, they do not have time allocated to oncology patients, who have on-going, long-term needs that are different to emergency patients. Cancer patients also require access to psychologists at different times in their cancer journey and particularly after treatment finishes. Their families need access to grief support when end-of-life approaches. These services are not yet provided in Maitland but are a necessary part of any oncology service and must be accommodated in the plans for the New Maitland Hospital.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission. I look forward to further involvement with the plans for the new Maitland Hospital

Regards,

Sarah Lukeman  
Chair, UHCAN