

1 July 2019

## Wollongong Hospital Birthing Unit \$2.2m redevelopment

Wollongong Hospital's Birthing Unit will undergo a major transformation to provide a more modern, functional and welcoming birthing space for local women and families.

ISLHD Chief Executive Margot Mains said the \$2.2 million upgrade will begin shortly following a funding commitment from the NSW Minister for Health and Medical Research, Brad Hazzard.

"Our Board Chair Professor Denis King and I are delighted that following meetings last week, the Minister has agreed to allocate additional funding for the unit to undergo this extensive upgrade," Ms Mains said.

"We've had plans in place for the works but an unexpected increase in costs was a significant challenge, so the Minister's support means we can now proceed.

"The Hospital's Birthing Unit was last refurbished two decades ago and over that time has seen the birth of more than 40,000 babies."

"Wollongong Hospital spends around \$19 million each year on maternity services and the staff provide excellent care. The support provided by the Minister means we can now provide a more modernised birthing unit," ISLHD Board Chair Professor Denis King said.

The Hospital has worked closely with consumer advocacy group, Better Births Illawarra, to ensure local women have had input into the new design.

"Better Births Illawarra has provided great support and advocacy for local mums and they will no doubt be equally thrilled that the project can commence," Ms Mains said.

Plans for the refurbished unit will include remodelling assessment areas and bathrooms to better support modern birthing standards; waiting areas will be enhanced to facilitate an improved flow through the unit; and the colour scheme will be inspired by nature to provide a more calming setting.

"We want to make birthing mums as comfortable as possible and improving their surroundings will hopefully contribute to a better birthing experience for them and their families," Ms Mains said.

The Birthing Unit refurbishment project will require an extensive plan for the temporary relocation of the facility while the works are occurring.

"We will temporarily relocate to another ward that will be fully equipped and staffed as normal. Extensive plans around this relocation are now underway and expectant mums will be notified as soon as dates and details are confirmed," said Ms Mains.

The 2018-19 budget for Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District is more than \$951 million, an increase of nearly \$48 million on the 2017-18 budget.

The 2019 NSW Government budget committed \$24 billion in recurrent funding as part of a record \$26.7 billion health budget in the 2019/20 financial year.