

14 May 2008

Newcastle, Shortland, Charlton and
Hunter Electorates

RUDD GOVERNMENT FUNDS NEW SCANNER FOR NEWCASTLE CANCER PATIENTS

Rudd Government MPs representing the Hunter Region have welcomed the funding to enable Newcastle's Calvary Mater Hospital to purchase a state-of-the-art scanner that produces three-dimensional images of the body – particularly useful for devising treatment for cancer patients.

The Rudd Government is committing \$1.5 million in the 2008-09 Budget for a one-off grant to support upgraded Positron Emission Tomography (PET) services at the Calvary Mater Hospital.

PET is a highly advanced medical imaging technique which produces three-dimensional images of the body. It is particularly useful for designing the best course of treatment for cancer patients and is also used for the assessment of other conditions, such as epilepsy.

The Government funding will help the Calvary Mater Hospital to buy radiopharmaceuticals, increase radiation shielding, upgrade equipment and buy the new PET scanner. A further \$700,000 will fund Medicare rebates for the additional PET services that will be provided by the improved facilities.

Member for Newcastle, Sharon Grierson said, "PET cancer scans are much-needed in major population bases like Newcastle. This funding will make a real difference."

Member for Charlton, Greg Combet said, "People in Newcastle and the surrounding region, particularly cancer patients, will benefit from the increased number of PET services provided by the hospital."

Member for Shortland, Jill Hall said, "I'm pleased this has been delivered in the Rudd Government's first budget. My constituents in Shortland will no longer have to travel to Sydney for PET services."

Member for Hunter and Minister for Defence, Joel Fitzgibbon said, "The Rudd Government recognises the need for this service in the Hunter region. My constituents will welcome this investment in local health services."

The new scanner is expected to be purchased by December 2009.

This Budget measure is part of a much bigger Budget package to tackle cancer on several fronts. It is a great boost to the Calvary Mater Hospital, its staff and its patients.

Cancer touches so many people – patients, their families and friends, and carers – and this Government will do all it can to reduce the impact of this disease on Australian men, women and children, no matter whether they live in the cities, or in rural and regional Australia.

Cancer is one of Australia's biggest killers. More than 35,000 Australians die of cancer each year. Around 88,000 Australians are diagnosed every year.

The Government sees the fight against cancer as a national challenge. There are many dimensions to our efforts, involving support for researchers, clinicians, practitioners and other health professionals to deliver top quality care to patients and families in top quality facilities, and make a real difference to people's lives.