



## PRIME MINISTER

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY

OPENING OF NEW SURGICAL OPERATING SUITES    REPATRIATION  
GENERAL HOSPITAL DAW PARK  
ADELAIDE - 1 AUGUST 1985

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Senator Gietzelt, Mr Cornwall, representatives of  
ex-service organisations, ladies and gentlemen -

It gives me considerable pleasure to be here today on  
the occasion of the official opening of the new Daw Park  
surgical operating suites.

It is particularly pleasing to be part of such a  
wide-ranging gathering - with representation from the  
ex-service community; the State Government; the  
Flinders Medical Centre and others concerned with the  
provision of health and hospital services; the staff of  
this hospital and the Department of Veterans' Affairs;  
and those who have been involved with the design and  
construction of this important and high-standard  
facility. The presence of all of you here today is  
clear proof that the facilities available and the  
services provided at Daw Park have an importance  
extending well beyond the Veterans community into the  
wider Adelaide and South Australian health care network.

The project recently completed here at Daw Park, which  
includes the refurbishment of existing wards as well as  
the new surgical operating complex, is not unique.

The Australian Labor Government has given a very high  
priority to refurbishment and construction work  
throughout the Repatriation General Hospital network in  
Australia.

Spending on Repatriation General Hospitals has increased  
by \$43 million in the past two Budgets. This is in no  
small measure due to the persistent advocacy of the  
Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Senator Gietzelt.

He quickly alerted the Government to the state of the repatriation hospitals when he was appointed Minister in March 1983. He made it clear that years of neglect had left staffing levels inadequate, morale low and the standard of equipment and facilities poor.

Senator Gietzelt sought quickly to remedy the problems and commissioned a review of the Repatriation Hospital system by a committee led by Doctor Ian Brand. That committee's report has now been received and its wide-ranging recommendations warrant, and will receive, careful consideration by the Minister and the Government.

They will be addressed against the background of the commitment I gave in the national policy speech before last year's election "to continue upgrading repatriation hospitals to meet the needs of an ageing veterans community." That was a firm, unequivocal pledge and one which, as you can see here today, we are intent on implementing.

I should like to take this opportunity to clear the air on one aspect of the Brand Review Report. Contrary to media suggestions, the Review did not say that Repatriation Hospitals should be "dumped" on the states. What the Review observed was the inevitability of ultimate integration of the Repatriation General Hospitals with State health systems. Clearly what is needed is careful planning for any such eventuality.

Integration simply means working closely with the State system to guarantee the best possible treatment without duplicating services.

The precise form the integration process will take in the future is still to be determined. But it will mean that closer co-ordination and consultation will be required between State authorities and the Repatriation General Hospitals. It will also mean, especially with an ageing veteran population, that a particular effort should be made to provide services, including hospital services, closer to home.

That said, I can assure you that there will continue to be Repatriation Hospitals operating as an important and visible element in the overall treatment system for Veterans and war widows for many years to come.

Ladies and gentlemen, my Government is spending more on Veterans' Affairs than any previous Government. In fact, in the two and a half years we have been in office spending on Veterans' Affairs has increased by more than 35 per cent.

The Government is committed to the care of Veterans and war widows and that commitment is visible in the development of the Daw Park surgical facilities.

All South Australians will benefit from this development because Daw Park is a teaching hospital associated with the Flinders University of South Australia and the Flinders Medical Centre.

Most of all, it will benefit Veterans and war widows whose efforts for their country in its hour of need deserve the best of facilities and services.

I know that many of you have a keen interest in the Veterans' Entitlement Bill which is now being developed through a process of intense consultation with all affected parties. In this regard, I should particularly like to mention the involvement and invaluable advice provided by the RSL National President, Sir William Keys. The services of Judge Paul Toose have also been retained to advise the RSL and other ex-service organisations. This will assist greatly in preparing a bill which will be acceptable to the ex-service community and to the Government. A good deal of progress is being made and we can all appreciate that there is now a constructive and co-operative approach to this task.

Ladies and gentlemen, on this important day in the history of this Repatriation General Hospital, I could not conclude without expressing my thanks to all concerned at Daw Park for their work in providing care to our Veteran community; particularly the visiting Medical Officers, the Visiting Medical Specialists and the staff - doctors, nurses, allied health professionals, ward staff, orderlies and domestic services staff and clinical teams.

The work you do is important and is appreciated not only by your patients, but by the community at large. I should expect that the facilities I shall now proceed to open, will make your task easier and more satisfying. They certainly add a qualitatively new dimension to this important hospital.

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