

# North Shore Times

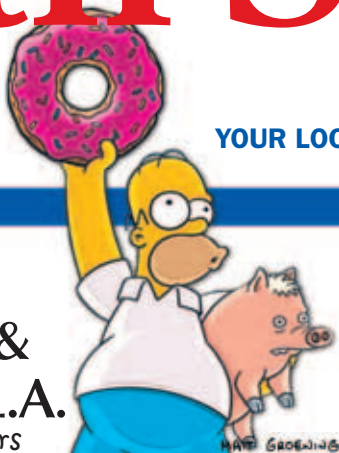
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## 'It makes me sick'

### Latest RNS crisis blamed on the elderly

LISA CARTY

STAFF at Royal North Shore Hospital are ruled by a culture of fear which stops them speaking out about bad management and a lack of resources, according to the Opposition.

Liberal health spokeswoman Jillian Skinner said she received more complaints about Royal North Shore than any other in NSW.

And she said she was fed up with sick old people copping the blame for taking up beds when they were entitled to be treated for winter illnesses.

The hospital was gripped by crisis for the second time in a week on Monday when ambulances were banked up for hours while hospital staff scrambled to find beds for incoming patients.

The State Government defended the hospital's performance but said 22 of its 601 beds were occupied by older people waiting for a spot in an aged care facility subsidised by the Federal Government.

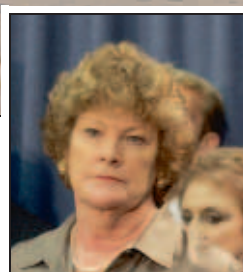
Health Minister Reba Meagher said around 230 people in NSW hospitals on any one day were ready to be discharged into an aged care facility.

"It's not appropriate for these older people to be in hospital when they should be in aged care," Ms Meagher said.

"In addition to the aged care crisis, Federal Government funding of public hospitals has slipped from 50 per cent to 45 per cent since 2000, despite a historical commitment to 50:50 funding."

Monday's ambulance queue was "reflective of peak activity experienced at Royal North Shore in the middle of winter".

"This is the coldest winter in 21 years," Ms Meagher said.



Ambulances were banked up for hours on Monday as the hospital struggled to find beds for incoming patients. Opposition health spokeswoman Jillian Skinner (far left) said she received more complaints about Royal North Shore than any other hospital while Health Minister Reba Meagher blamed the elderly waiting to go into aged care for taking up hospital beds.



**What do you think? Let us know about your experience at Royal North Shore Hospital. Email us at [shorenews@cumberlandnewspapers.com.au](mailto:shorenews@cumberlandnewspapers.com.au)**

"The new acting chief executive Terry Clout has come from the highly-performing Hunter New England Health Service to look at ways to improve performance at hospitals across North Sydney and the Central Coast."

Ms Meagher said the State Government had opened 12 additional beds at Royal North Shore over the past 12 months.

Ms Skinner said the situation at Royal

North Shore, where staff are coming to grips with the sudden departure of the regional chief executive officer, could not get any worse. "The staff at Royal North Shore are the most frightened in the State," she said.

"There is a culture of fear against speaking out. I have people ringing me all the time but they are too scared to speak out publicly.

"There has been a sweep through the

hospital, ever since the restructure, to get rid of very senior, experienced staff.

"There is systemic failure and cover-up. What we are seeing now is the tip of the iceberg with these delays because there are not enough beds."

Ms Skinner said sick old people suffering winter illnesses were just as entitled to hospital care as anyone else.

"It makes me sick that the Government is trying to blame them," she said. "It's a very worrying practice to blame older people for the shortage of hospital beds."

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