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**Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital Health Service District**

10 July 2007

**Patients not being left undiagnosed**

Queensland Health flatly rejects the accusation that hundreds of Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital patients have had diagnosis of deadly afflictions such as cancer delayed.

An article in The Courier-Mail today was not only misleading to the public, but contained factual errors based on assumptions and the omission of relevant information.

The Royal's Acting Clinical Chief Executive Officer, Dr Judy Graves, said no medical imaging machines will be mothballed, no procedure rooms will be closed and there will be no impact on urgent patient treatment or diagnosis.

She confirmed there was a shortage of qualified radiographers at the hospital but plans were in place to ensure it did not greatly affect patients.

Dr Graves said there was a national shortage of radiographers and the problem was not a problem unique to the Royal.

While minimising the impact on patients, the hospital also had to ensure there was a safe working environment for its staff.

"We are looking after our staff to ensure they are not working unsafe hours," Dr Graves said.

"This means that some medical imaging rooms for non-urgent cases will be periodically closed.

"This does not mean procedure rooms are closed permanently or equipment will be 'mothballed'.

"It means that for some sessions a day, some procedure rooms will be closed. However, we continue to do CT scans, MRIs and so on in other procedure rooms," Dr Graves said.

"This will have no impact on clinically urgent patients (including cancer patients) at all. All urgent patients and inpatients continue to take priority."

Dr Graves said the hospital had processes in place to ensure radiographers were only doing radiography tasks. For example administrative tasks are delegated to other staff to ensure radiographers spend majority of time undertaking radiography work.

The waiting time for some medical imaging procedures for outpatients such as an MRI have increased.

“We have closed one MRI so the equipment could be replaced,” Dr Graves said.

“This is expected to be completed by mid-August. It is a major capital works project and takes 3 months to replace MRI equipment.

“An on-call arrangement exists for any urgent MRIs required on weekends.”

The Queensland Government has a proactive and comprehensive recruitment process in place. Queensland Health recruiting staff made a successful visit to London and Manchester in June, interviewing radiographers with an interest in working in Queensland. Fourteen radiographers were given employment approval after interviews.

Radiographer pay and conditions are currently being negotiated as part of an enterprise bargaining agreement. The new agreement is due to be implemented on 1 September 2007.

**Ends**

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