



# Media release

From the Premier of Victoria

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## **PREMIER UNVEILS NEW SITE FOR ROYAL CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL**

The State Government will build one of the world's most advanced Children's Hospitals, with capacity to treat an extra 35,000 patients a year, to the west of the existing RCH, the Premier, Steve Bracks, announced today.

Mr Bracks said the site was chosen as the best option for the new hospital, with an estimated capital cost of around \$850 million, after an extensive community consultation process.

"This Government has spent more than \$2.4 billion rebuilding the hospital system since 1999, including the new Austin and Mercy in Heidelberg and the new Casey Hospital in Berwick," Mr Bracks said.

"But building a new Children's Hospital in Victoria, the largest health project in Australia's history, is something of which this Government, and the people of Victoria, can be very proud."

Mr Bracks said two modern buildings at the existing hospital would be retained but others would be demolished, ultimately increasing the size of Royal Park.

"While the new building will be built on land currently used as parkland, we are committed to ensuring an area greater than it will be revegetated and returned to the park," Mr Bracks said.

"Once the new hospital is completed by 2011, buildings will be demolished on the corner of Gatehouse Street and Flemington Road, and converted to open space."

Mr Bracks said the Government would legislate to permanently reserve most of the existing hospital land as parkland forever.

"Local residents will benefit, with the corner becoming a new gateway to Royal Park. Residents in Gatehouse St will look directly on to parkland and all entrances and exits to the new hospital will be off Flemington Rd."

Mr Bracks said the western option was chosen from the four shortlisted options as the one that best met the needs of ill and injured children, their families and local residents.

"Parkland provides one of the most powerful forces in lifting a child's spirits and aiding recovery, and the new hospital will be flanked by open space on three sides," Mr Bracks said.

The existing RCH and carpark will continue to be fully operational until the hospital opens in 2011 with a new carpark providing 2000 spaces – 800 more than present.

Mr Bracks said community members who participated in the consultation wanted the hospital to stay in Parkville, and also did not want to see recently-upgraded buildings torn down and wasted.

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The buildings to be retained are the new 10-storey research centre, currently being built, and the front entry building built in 1991.

“The new hospital will be bigger, with 75 per cent in single rooms, neonatal cots and operating theatres,” Mr Bracks said.

“It will have the capacity to treat an extra 35,000 patients each year, with improved accommodation and facilities. The siting of the helipad on the roof, rather than its current on-ground site, will further improve community access to parkland.”

Health Minister, Bronwyn Pike, said the decision to keep the hospital in Parkville, where it is surrounded by some of Victoria’s most modern medical research facilities and technology, would bring huge benefits.

She said restricted access for emergency medical helicopters was a key reason why one of the site options at Docklands could not be further considered.

Ms Pike said the new hospital would be constructed under the *Partnerships Victoria* model, with a private sector consortium building and maintaining it for 25 years, while the Government owns and operates it.

The Government will shortly call for tenders to design, construct and maintain the building, with the winner decided next year. Building is due to start in 2007.

“Over the past few years, the Bracks Government has upgraded more than 50 hospitals as part of its commitment to the health and wellbeing of the Victorian community,” Ms Pike said.

“Almost \$2 billion in extra annual funding has been invested in our public hospital and health system, and the Government has hired more than 6000 extra nurses.”