



# Hospital sale on hold

By Peter Reynolds

THE ACT Government's proposal to purchase the Calvary Hospital is set to drag on for several more months.

Health minister Katy Gallagher announced last week the government would proceed with a Bill to purchase the hospital until it had received word from the Catholic Church on whether it wished to go ahead with the sale.

For the deal to continue, it requires the approval of the Little Company of Mary religious order, based in London, and the Vatican, which could take several months.

Ms Gallagher had previously wanted to put legislation before the Legislative Assembly next month for the purchase of Calvary Hospital for \$77 million and the sale of Clare Holland House to the Little Company of Mary for \$8 million.

"I've had a rethink of that approach and think that the best

way forward now is to allow the church to go through their processes prior to bringing an appropriation Bill to the Assembly," she said.

"If we introduce a Bill, debate it and have an estimates process and then the church process doesn't support the sale going ahead, that would leave us with an appropriation Bill before the Assembly that wouldn't need to be there."

Ms Gallagher also said the Bill for the proposal for the hospital purchase would no longer include the sale of the hospice, but that sale would occur immediately after the hospital purchase if the Bill passed.

"If the Liberals vote against this Bill, they will be voting against a new hospital for Canberra's north," she said.

However, the Opposition spokesman for health, Jeremy Hanson, said the Bill and the Opposition's approach to it, remained unchanged.

"This issue has become clouded

by a transparent attempt from Ms Gallagher to appear to split the deal when repeatedly she and LCM have said on many occasions that the Calvary purchase is contingent on the sale of the hospice," he said.

"Nothing has changed with this proposal; for the minister to pretend otherwise is deceitful.

"The community has rejected the deal and Ms Gallagher should not be trying to repackage what is exactly the same proposal and give the community the impression that Clare Holland House is somehow not part of this deal."

Ms Gallagher said she would continue to consult with the Greens in an attempt to win their support for the proposal.

"We need a new public hospital for the north of Canberra and this is the only way to deliver one," she said.