



No giving up vows hospice defender

By Eleri Harris

"IT doesn't matter about the terminally ill, at the end of the day the Government think they're just going to die anyway, why do we need to invest any money?" says Andre Poidomani.

The founder of Supporters of Clare Holland House is critical of Health Minister Katy Gallagher removing the sale of the ACT's only palliative care hospice from the delayed appropriation Bill that will facilitate the purchase of Calvary Hospital.

"We're not going to give up on it, just because the Government is giving up on it – giving up on the hospice and giving up on the dying," he says.

Poidomani's group, created to represent the families of those who have lost a loved one at the hospice, will continue to lobby the Government and the Greens to save Clare Holland House from privatisation, despite firm statements from ACT Labor committing to the sale.

The ACT Government intends to buy Calvary Hospital for \$77 million in a deal that will see it sell the hospice to Little Company of Mary Health Care Limited for \$9 million.

In fact, there is nothing stopping Gallagher selling Clare Holland House at any point, without reference to anyone and regardless of the decisions made by the Legislative Assembly on the purchase of Calvary Hospital.

A spokeswoman for the Health

Minister told "CityNews": "There is no legal requirement to consult with particular groups. However, the Government has just completed an extensive consultation with a large number of stakeholders and the community.

"The sale of the hospice does not require a Bill to be put before the Assembly. The Minister has been clear that the proposal is one as a whole. Should the appropriation Bill pass the Assembly and the Catholic Church approves the sale of the hospital to the Government, the sale of Clare Holland House will also go ahead."

Poidomani says the Government's mounting contradictions on the deal with Little Company of Mary Health Care Limited were evidence of their dehumanisation of the hospice.

"I think it's quite arrogant of the Government not to listen to a few hundred people who are quite concerned about it. It is going to be dollar signs at the end of the day."

While the Government denies the palliative care hospice is being used as a bargaining chip in the deal with Little Company of Mary Health Care Limited, Opposition health spokesman Jeremy Hanson said the Minister's move to split the hospice from the appropriation Bill was a deliberate attempt to wedge the Greens – who support the purchase of the hospital, but not the sale of the hospice.

The Greens' Amanda Bresnan disagrees, but declined to make a comment on the development.

"Look, what the Government's proposed isn't actually any different from what we thought would happen.

"We put forward our concerns regarding the lease and obviously we've now got to consider the implications of the Vatican processes and the delay on the appropriation Bill – because it does change the situation somewhat. We will be responding in due course."

By only including Calvary Hospital in the appropriation Bill, which cannot be put forward till LCMHC gain Vatican approval, Minister Gallagher has said she hopes to respond to calls to separate the sale and purchase – without separating the sale and purchase.

"The appropriation Bill will be for the purchase of the hospital itself, not discounted for the sale of the hospice," she says.

"There have been calls for the hospice and hospital deal to be separated – this meets it to some extent.

"Whilst many would like to see them separated – the issue of the ownership of the hospice versus the ownership of the hospital – for LCM who currently run both of these facilities, this is not an option."



Andre Poidomani... "We're not going to give up on it, just because the Government is giving up on it."

Photo by Silas