



Mother of palliative care vows to fight hospice sale

By Katina Curtis

THE woman dubbed the mother of palliative care in the ACT has vowed to fight the sale of Clare Holland House right to the last minute.

"We and the community haven't worked so hard for this long to let something as special as Clare Holland House go," Shirley Sutton said this week.

She is now the patron of the ACT Palliative Care Society (PCS), and was a driving force behind building the original hospice on Acton Peninsula and then Clare Holland House.

As a community care nurse in the 1980s, she undertook a tour of Australia, looking at models of palliative care, and helped to set up the first home based care program in the ACT.

Mrs Sutton and the PCS have organised a third meeting on the sale of the government owned hospice to Little Company of Mary Calvary Heath Care for tonight (Tuesday, December 8). The sale is linked to the government's

purchase of Calvary Hospital from the Catholic health care provider.

PCS organised two other meetings regarding the hospice during the government's consultation period about this decision, including a heated public meeting at the Ainslie Football Club on November 12.

"We decided that if the decision was not going to be made until February, that we would continue our consultation period until then," Mrs Sutton said, adding that it would be key to keep the issue in people's minds throughout the holiday period.

She said her main concerns about the sale were what would happen to the 130-strong volunteer base PCS has, and ensuring the hospice stays on its current site permanently.

"The sticking points for us at the moment are the sale of the building and the sale of the lease to the Calvary board of management. We don't want that to happen and the public don't either," she said. "It really is a matter of trust in

knowing what's going to happen in the future."

However, Mrs Sutton said that if the government persisted and the hospice did get sold, she would not like to see PCS withdraw its services.

"I would recommend that the Palliative Care Society show great strength in ensuring that the team working within the hospice continue to work collaboratively and continue to offer the best palliative care in Australia," she said.

She also did not believe the community should push to have a second hospice built, saying that one would be enough for many years to come and the government's current alternative, to locate some palliative care beds in the Canberra Hospital's cancer ward, was not really suitable.

■ A meeting about the sale of the hospice will be held at 7pm tonight, December 8, at the Southern Cross Club in Woden.



Patron of the Palliative Care Society Shirley Sutton and her husband Leo discuss the sale of Clare Holland House Hospice. Picture: Holly Treadaway