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Brief: CALVARY

Calvary sale won't be decided by public

By Natasha Rudra

ACT Health Minister Katy Gallagher has warned that the proposed sale of Calvary Hospital could go ahead even if there was massive opposition from the public during a six-week consultation.

Ms Gallagher faced questions from residents at two public meetings on Calvary, with many concerned that the hospital's Catholic ethos would be lost after the Government took over.

Others were worried that the sale would affect palliative care at the ACT's only hospice, Clare Holland House.

The ACT Government has reached an in-principle agreement to buy Calvary Hospital for \$77 million from Catholic sisterhood the Little Company of Mary.

In return, the Government will sell Clare Holland House to the sisters for \$9 million.

Ms Gallagher is appearing at public meetings about the sale during a six-week consultation period.

"The forums just gave us the opportunity to correct some of the myths that are out there and get some feedback from the community and that will all feed into the overall consultation process."

But she warned that palliative-care campaigners and Catholics might be left dissatisfied with the consultation and said the Assembly's decision had not yet been made.

"There are some voices that I won't be able to reconcile but it's important that everyone has the chance to talk with us and, as I told them, this is something the Assembly will ultimately determine," she said.

"There is a six-week consultation process, the Government hasn't taken any decision; not any final decision that will bind anyone, nor can we. This has to be subject to the democratic processes of the Assembly."