



Plea to keep mother's place of peace

By **Natasha Rudra**

At the peaceful lakeside spot where their mother watched her last sunrise, Raff and Andre Poidomani have a simple message. Don't sell Clare Holland House.

The Poidomanis oppose the ACT Government's plan to sell Canberra's only hospice to the Catholic order the Little Company of Mary.

Their mother Franca spent the last three months of her life at the hospice last year, receiving palliative care after a battle with cancer.

Health Minister Katy Gallagher has been forced to defend the controversial plan in which the Government sells the hospice for \$9 million as part of a bigger deal to buy Calvary Public Hospital from the Little Company of Mary.

Catholic Archbishop of Sydney Cardinal George Pell weighed into the debate yesterday, saying the ACT Government's plans to buy Calvary were ideological and driven by anti-Christian elements.

Calvary already runs Clare Holland House for the ACT Government but the hospice will become fully privatised if the sale goes ahead.

Andre Poidomani said his mother

received such excellent treatment she called the hospice her "home away from home".

Families of patients were worried that the high-quality care would suffer if Clare Holland House was sold.

"History proves that once you do privatise something, you do end up with staff cuts because it just comes down to the dollar sign at the end of the day," he said.

His brother Raff Poidomani was also concerned that the Little Company of Mary would impose Catholic values on the way patients were treated.

Mrs Poidomani was a devout Catholic but towards the end, her sons said, she would have chosen euthanasia if it was legalised.

Raff Poidomani said the proposed 30-year agreement between the ACT Government and the Little Company of Mary could also have an impact on patients who favoured euthanasia.

"Should laws come into effect in the next 30 years legalising euthanasia, then some patients just won't get that choice," he said.

The Poidomanis have turned to the web to rally supporters, setting up the Facebook group, "Support Clare Holland House", which has attracted 150 members. They've also formed an organisation, "Supporters of Clare Holland House Young and Old" to represent families.

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FIGHT: Franca Poidomani described the hospice as a home away from home.

Brothers in plea to keep mother's place of peace

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The family had nothing but praise for the care Mrs Poidomani received in the hospice, saying staff always supported families as well as patients.

"They would give you a little bit of an update on how mum was . . . just

so we were one step ahead if she was having a bad day. So it was the whole family, not just the patient that the nursing staff looked after," Andre Poidomani said.

He attended a public consultation meeting on the sale and pressed Ms Gallagher on the need for a second hospice to meet demand for

palliative care and offer a secular alternative to Clare Holland House.

"I think the south side needs to be accommodated with a second hospice or an expansion to the current hospice," he said.

"Unfortunately I don't see that happening with the Little Company of Mary."



DO NOT SELL: Andre Poidomani, of Kaleen, and brother Raff, of Ainslie, outside Clare Holland House, which they want to remain public property. Photo: MELISSA ADAMS