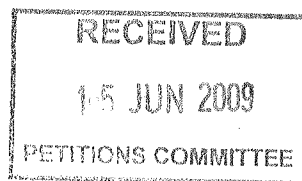




**THE HON NICOLA ROXON MP
MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND AGEING**



Mrs Julia Irwin MP
Chair
Standing Committee on Petitions
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mrs Irwin *Julia*

Thank you for your letter of 8 May 2009 on behalf of the Standing Committee on Petitions regarding funding for the establishment of a public radiotherapy unit on the Central Coast.

The Australian Government works very closely with State and Territory Governments to identify areas in need of radiotherapy services. Factors taken into consideration during assessment include existing and forecast population, current and forecast cancer incidences, location of existing facilities and workforce availability. The feasibility and need for services in regional areas must be considered relative to the need in many other areas of Australia. While the Australian Government will continue to work with State and Territory Governments to improve access to radiation oncology services in regional areas, the location and provision of public radiotherapy services is the responsibility of State and Territory Governments. In this regard, NSW Health has expressed interest in establishing a cancer treatment centre in the Central Coast region.

As part of the 2009 Budget, the Australian Government has committed funding of \$1.3 billion over six years to improve Australia's cancer infrastructure. This includes \$560 million to build a network of up to ten integrated regional cancer centres and associated accommodation following a national tender process which would be open to both the public and private providers. The purpose of these regional centres is to help improve outcomes for cancer patients in rural and regional Australia.

Also, as part of improving access to cancer services in regional areas, you may be aware that the Australian Government has made funding contributions to New South Wales for new radiation oncology facilities in Lismore and Orange. The Lismore facility is expected to commence operations in early 2010 while it is anticipated that the facility in Orange will commence treating patients in 2011.

I appreciate you raising the important issue of access to cancer treatment for the residents of the Central Coast.

Yours sincerely

NICOLA ROXON

04 JUN 2009