

Helipad plan for hospitals

Emergency landing areas are planned to provide helicopter access to Gosford District Hospital and the Wyong hospital at Kanwal which is still under construction.

Emergency sites of this nature would bring both local hospitals in line with the high standard facilities of major metropolitan hospitals such as Royal North Shore.

The proposal for a helipad area was instigated by Scruse Air, based at West Gosford. Scruse Air approached the hospital with a recommendation when the newly opened extensions were still at the half built stage.

"It would not take much planning to have a fully operational site between the new and established sections of the

hospital," said Mr Joe Scruse jnr, pilot for Scruse Air. "The need is obviously there."

Recently, the Wales helicopter made an emergency dash to Gosford and came down in the hospital's Beane Street area where a vital medical parcel was handed to waiting orderlies. This incident demonstrated the need for a closer landing area in Gosford, Mr Scruse said.

In the past, Scruse Air have always conducted emergency landings for the hospital on the Gosford Golf Course about 600 metres away from the casualty area.

This has been successful, but the distance is unnecessary, said Mr Scruse.

"There is also a \$50 minimum landing fee, which can be rather steep for patients who are non-members of the ambulance fund."

An emergency area in the hospital grounds close by casualty would do away with these problems.

The site would not have to be an official landing helipad, as long as orderlies were available to block off the specialised area during emergencies.

Chief executive officer of Gosford District

Hospital, Mr Neville Boyce said the hospital was keen to get the project underway.

"We are now in the process of arranging inspections of areas at both hospitals by the Wales helicopter crew who service Royal North Shore Hospital," he said.

Scruse Air has offered to arrange for the Department of Transport to survey the area and certify a pad for specialised emergency usage.

Under normal conditions, an area of 100 metres by 100 metres is specified and flight paths must meet regulations, but in the case of a specialised service, this can be altered by the department.

There is not a lot of room for landing at the hospital, but the Beane Street area is adequate, Mr Scruse said.

The crest of the road in Beane Street immediately opposite to where the new casualty ward will be located, could be the prime spot, he said.

"It looks ideal but the Department of Transport would have to make the final decision."

Mr Boyce said the casualty section had not been relocated to the new wing yet but hoped the emergency landing area would get the go-ahead.

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