

\$8.3m HOSPITAL OPENED

Service equal for all



STATE Minister for Health, Mr Kevin Stewart unveils a plaque to commemorate the opening of the new section of Gosford Hospital. He is being watched by Mr McGowan (centre) and Mr O'Connell.

PRIOR to officially opening the new \$8.3 million 120-bed surgical block at Gosford District Hospital on Saturday, the Minister for Health, Mr Stewart, commented on the policy of equality of service for all patients.

He said the services of the hospital were available equally to all people in the community, regardless of their age or their financial or health insurance status.

Mr Stewart said: "Any suggestion that persons carrying private hospital insurance receive preferential service over persons presenting as standard ward patients is totally wrong.

"It is the policy of the NSW Government to support a system of health care delivery which makes hospital services available to all people on an equal basis.

"This is regardless of whether they choose to take out private health insurance, or choose to remain uninsured and receive hospital treatment free of charge, if it should be required."

He said it was important to remember that except for the right to choice of doctor, there was no difference between the services provided for insured or non-insured patients of public hospitals in NSW.

"I would be most disturbed if I felt that people

were being pressured into taking out insurance on the pretext that they will receive preferential treatment in the provision of hospital services, if they should be required," he said.

"Health insurance cover does not provide any such privilege, nor does it entitle a patient to use of a private room.

"A decision to take out health insurance should be taken in accordance with the individual's own assessment of his or her personal wish to have doctor of choice in hospital, and against his or her capacity to pay for cover."

Although light rain fell throughout the morning and at the time of the opening, it did not deter the 600 people who accepted invitations to attend.

They were seated under cover or stood out of the rain within the interior roadways of the new hospital.

Official guests included State Members, Mr Brian McGowan (Gosford), Mr Keith O'Connell (Peats), Federal Member, Mr Barry Cohen (Robertson), and Ald J. Little, deputising for Mayor, Ald D. Leggett.

Also present was the regional director of the Health Commission, Dr Jim Lawson and his deputy, Mr R. Beer.

Official guests were welcomed by the hospital chairman, Mr L. E. Hannell, Mr McGowan introduced the Minister, and Mr O'Connell moved the vote of thanks.

The opening was followed by a tour of inspection of the hospital

NS
27/2/80