

Date:	16 April 2004
Subject	Prime Minister John Howard to Open Newcastle Private Hospital

Newcastle Private Hospital, the largest private hospital in regional NSW, will be officially opened today by the Prime Minister of Australia, The Honourable John Howard MP.

Located at New Lambton Heights, adjacent to the John Hunter Hospital, Newcastle Private Hospital represents a \$50million investment in the region's health infrastructure by health insurer, NIB Health Funds Limited (NIB).

The new hospital, which accepted its first patients on 5 April 2004 offers 162 beds across two buildings as well as a Specialist Medical Centre with 24 consulting rooms due to open in August.

The Chief Executive of NIB, Mr Mark Fitzgibbon, said the fund's biggest ever investment in health infrastructure would provide genuine benefits for the Hunter community.

"With a large private facility sharing a campus with the region's major public teaching hospital, the John Hunter Hospital, we have an unprecedented opportunity to attract more medical specialists to the region," Mr Fitzgibbon said.

"We also have a chance to work together to foster closer links with peak medical and educational bodies.

"The net result is a benefit for those with private health insurance, especially our members, but also the Hunter community as a whole."

The Chief Executive of Newcastle Private Hospital, Mr Ron Denison, said the new hospital was a development that takes the Hunter's health infrastructure to a level consistent with the region's standing as Australia's sixth largest urban centre.

"Newcastle Private Hospital answers a growing demand for private facilities from people across the Hunter and surrounding areas," Mr Denison said.

Demand for private hospital services has grown by 20% across the country over the past two years.

"Given the scale and pace of development across the region, demand for the services provided at Newcastle Private Hospital will continue to grow as the population of the region grows and ages", Mr Denison said.

Newcastle Private Hospital will operate from two buildings at New Lambton Heights: the new Kingston Building and the Croudace Building (formerly NIB Private Hospital).

The Kingston Building provides four operating theatres, a 10-bed intensive care unit, 119 inpatient beds, a 29-bed rehabilitation unit, acute admissions and primary care centres, gymnasium and hydrotherapy pool and medical imaging facilities.

NIB Health Funds Limited
A.B.N. 83 000 124 381

Head Office
384 Hunter Street
Newcastle NSW 2300

Phone: 13 14 63
Fax: 02 4921 2444
Web: nib.com.au

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Media Release

Medical equipment and technology in the Kingston Building is worth more than \$10million alone.

The Croudace Building will continue to offer some low acuity surgical procedures but will concentrate on specialist obstetric and gynaecological services. It retains 38 inpatient beds, three operating theatres, a 5-room birthing suite and a neonatal intensive care unit.

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