



Southland Charity Hospital

Media release: Charity hospital generously gifted building and land

An 'unbelievably generous' donation from ILT will ensure more people will be able to live happy and healthy lives alongside their families.

The mission of the Southland Charity Hospital has been given a major boost with ILT donating a building and land package.

The Clifton Club Inn will be repurposed and transformed into the Southland Charity Hospital. The process is expected to take several months and a date for this project to be completed is currently unknown.

The building is in close proximity to Southland Hospital.

Southland Charity Hospital Trust chairman Dr Murray Pfeiffer said the generosity of ILT could not be understated.

"This is an unbelievably generous gift to the people of the south, and will ensure more members of our community are able to access vital health treatment they need," he said.

"The Southland Charity Hospital would have conceivably needed to raise in excess of two million dollars in donations to build or buy a location suitable for its needs. The trust has instead substantially catapulted the Southland Charity Hospital forward, which means we will be able to provide treatment to our community far sooner than we would have otherwise been able."

ILT president Alan Dennis said the organisation had been committed to supporting the charity hospital since its inception.

"This decision will save lives. That's an incredibly powerful thing," he said.

"We are for our community and that's been the driving force over the past few months as we've investigated ways for ILT to provide a meaningful impact.

"We're immensely proud this will enable the hospital project to reach its operational targets much sooner than initially envisioned."

Chief executive Chris Ramsay confirmed discussions had taken place with staff at the Clifton Inn and all would be reassigned roles at other ILT establishments.

“We were always motivated to find a way to make a significant contribution to such a worthy project. Once we reviewed the best future use of the Clifton it became clear this would be a fantastic way for this asset to benefit our community,” he said.

The Southland Charity Hospital Trust was established in 2019 following Winton man Blair Vining’s highly-publicised journey navigating New Zealand’s health system. After being diagnosed with bowel cancer in 2018 Blair was told he had weeks to live, but chronic under-resourcing of the health service in his region meant he was unlikely to see a specialist before cancer took his life. He and his wife Melissa worked tirelessly to reform the system and make access to cancer care equitable for all Kiwis.

One of Blair’s greatest legacies is the formation of the Southland Charity Hospital. The hospital was founded by the community, for the community. When established it will provide free services to those in the southern community who cannot access care from the public or private health systems.

Melissa Vining said she was “blown away” by the generous support of ILT.

“I was in tears the whole way from Invercargill to Winton. It’s just such an incredible gift for the people of our community and makes me so proud of where I come from,” she said.

“I just don’t think something like this would have happened anywhere else in the country. Southlanders are renowned for supporting those who need it, but I never could have imagined an organisation doing what ILT has just done. It’s indescribable.”

The generosity the community had shown to the Southland Charity Hospital development was staggering. Equally generous was the support, expertise and guidance given to the Southland Charity Hospital Trust by Boyd Wilson and the team at Bonisch Consultants, she said.

“Bonisch is an Invercargill-owned organisation with expertise in land development, civil engineering, and resource management, among other fields – and this expertise has been absolutely crucial in the progression of the Southland Charity Hospital,” she said.

“Boyd has kindly donated his time to our cause, and his hard work and expertise ensured we got the very best building option for now, and for our future development and expansion. Having somebody with such a high calibre of expertise on board has brought me so much comfort, to know our community is getting the very best option for the Southland Charity Hospital building.”

Timelines around the hospital’s development are yet to be confirmed.

Initially the Southland Charity Hospital will provide colonoscopies with the intention to expand the services it provides in time. The Southland Charity Hospital is modelled on the successful Canterbury Charity Hospital, which has helped thousands of patients since its inception in 2007.

Advisor to the board of the Southland Charity Hospital Trust, Dr Phil Bagshaw from the Canterbury Charity Hospital, was equally stunned at the generosity of ILT.

“I knew that, when the decision to form the Southland Charity Hospital Trust was made, the people of Southland would throw their weight behind such a worthy cause. However, I never could have predicted the speed with which this project would move,” he said.

“The hospital is now even closer to becoming a reality, and that is thanks to the support of ILT.”

The Southland Charity Hospital will not receive any Government funding. It will rely solely on donations, grants and the generosity of the wider community keen to help southerners in need. Patients of the Southland Charity Hospital will come from the Southern District Health Board zone: this covers both the Southland and Otago regions.

Its workforce will be made up of medical professionals donating their time and expertise to the cause. In addition to the expertise of medical professionals, many people in the community will be required to help with progressing the hospital.

Tradespeople able to assist with repurposing the Southland Charity Hospital's building are urgently required. Those who are able to assist can get in touch with the board through its website www.southlandcharityhospital.org

It was not the first time an ILT establishment had been converted into the community asset – 10 years ago Don Lodge became the Enrich@ILT educational facility for students with outstanding academic or creative ability.

The trustees elected to the Southland Charity Hospital Board are:

Dr Murray Pfeiffer (Chair)
Neil McAra
Melissa Vining
Janet Copeland
Roger Wandless
Chris Menzies
Advisor to the Board: Dr Phil Bagshaw

For further information, please contact Southland Charity Hospital communications manager Alana Dixon-Calder on 027 7428 817.