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HEALTH

Elderly QEH patients at risk

LIA HARRIS

ELDERLY western suburbs residents will be put at risk by the downgrade of The Queen Elizabeth Hospital's intensive care unit, local veterans' groups say.

Returned Services Leagues (RSL) clubs have criticised the State Government's decision to downgrade The QEH's intensive care unit.

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Concern over QEH cutback

LIA HARRIS

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ELDERLY western suburbs residents will be put at risk by the downgrade of The Queen Elizabeth Hospital's intensive care unit, local veterans' groups say.

Returned Services Leagues clubs have criticised the State Government's decision to downgrade The QEH's intensive care unit (ICU) and shift key services to Royal Adelaide and Lyell McEwin hospitals.

Seaton Park RSL president **Warren Brown** said the downgrade would have a "huge impact" on elderly residents.

"Obviously many of our elderly members will have to travel further to get to another hospital and a lot of them can't just jump on a train or a bus," Mr Brown said.

The *Portside Messenger* last month reported that by 2016 The QEH would no longer offer complex heart surgery or acute care because of the expansion of the Royal Adelaide and Lyell McEwin hospitals.

Both hospitals are to be expanded to accommodate the extra QEH patients – 100 extra beds are planned for the Lyell McEwin.

Semaphore and Port Adelaide RSL

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president **Graham Parks** said: "I've got a lot of members who are in nursing homes and I have a concern that they're not going to get ... treatment as quickly as if they could go to The Queen Elizabeth Hospital." Parks Community Centre Seniors member **Eileen Harris** said many elderly people would struggle to travel long distances to another hospital.

"I don't know what all the older people in the west will do without these services," Mrs Harris said.

SA Council of Social Service chief executive **Ross Womersley** and SA Council on the Ageing chief executive **Ian Yates** agreed the extra travel time could put patients' health at risk.

An SA Health spokeswoman said there would be no need for a high-level ICU at The QEH from 2016 with the upgrade of the other hospitals.