

Call for RHH cash now

BLAIR RICHARDS

DOCTORS and nurses are calling on the State Government to come up with the money for the next stage of the Royal Hobart Hospital redevelopment, with the project listed as "unfunded".

The \$689 million first stage, featuring the Campbell St K-Block tower and helipad, is due for completion in August.

However, problems in the rest of the ageing hospital,

such as lift failures, overcrowding, airconditioning breakdowns and water leaks have prompted calls for the State Government to explain how it will fund stage two.

The State Government has not outlined a timeline or price tag for stage two, which is set to involve the demolition of E-Block on the corner of Campbell and Collins streets and F-Block on Collins St.

The existing Royal Hobart Hospital redevelopment

masterplan lists stage two as "currently unfunded".

A reviewed masterplan is due to be released this month.

The State Government did not provide a response to questions from the Mercury around timing or funding of stage two.

Australian Medical Association state president John Davis said the review of the masterplan must be followed up with commitments on funding and implementation.

"What's important is that

we see the reviewed masterplan and the Government's commitment to implement it. It's not just the plan, it's the dollars to do it," Dr Davis said.

Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation state executive director Andrew Brakey said the growing pressures on the older parts of the RHH meant stage two needed to be set in motion.

"However the masterplan actually turns out, there's an imperative the second stage is

funded almost immediately if possible, because there is a requirement for beds already. There's concern rising about mental health in the RHH now and there's also concerns about the ICU," Mr Brakey said.

"Given the next stage is going to be four to five years away from completion, it's important they get started straight away."

Issues identified by the nurses' union in the older parts of the hospital have in-

cluded the deteriorating facade on A-Block, poor airconditioning leading to extreme heat on some wards, corridors closed off hampering patient transport and rain-water leaks.

Last week Health Minister Michael Ferguson described the review of the redevelopment masterplan as "a highly complex piece of work done by qualified experts", and said the Government had a duty to Tasmanians to get it right.



Time for serious clowning around

INSPIRATION: Former Class Clowns contestant Isabella Roldan gets some laughs out of Year 7 St Mary's College drama students. PICTURE: LUKE BOWDEN

SHAUN MCMANUS

THE national Class Clowns competition kickstarted Tasmanian Isabella Roldan's comedy career, so she is encouraging other aspiring comedians to share their best gags on stage this month.

Class Clowns is Australia's open mic comedy competition for 14 to 17-year-olds, run by

the Melbourne International Comedy Festival, with heats held in every state and territory.

There is no entry fee, and no experience is required.

The southern heat and Tasmanian Class Clowns final will be held at Hobart's Jokers Comedy Club on Sunday, March 24.

Roldan, 22, competed in

Class Clowns twice, in 2013 and 2014, and said it kickstarted her career.

She has gone on to be a RAW Comedy national finalist, runs her own comedy room, and is a regular on the Hobart circuit.

"It definitely opened that whole comedy gate for me," Roldan said.

"Doing my first gig there

was really supportive — no one's going to heckle a kid doing his first comedy gig, so it was really relaxed and nice and I made a lot of friends.

"The first time I did it, I was definitely umming and ahing, and I'm so happy I did it because it was just really supportive, and it's just five minutes of material, so it's much quicker than you think

it is when you're up there."

Participants must register online to be included in the competition.

State and territory winners will be flown to Melbourne to compete in the national final in April.

Participant information and online registrations can be accessed at comedyfestival.com.au/2019/classclowns/.

Fallen AFL star to stand trial

SHANNON HAMPTON

FORMER West Coast Eagles superstar Ben Cousins will stand trial over allegations he stalked and threatened ex-partner Maylea Tinecheff, and repeatedly ignored a family violence restraining order she had taken out.

Cousins pleaded not guilty to 14 offences in Armadale Magistrates' Court yesterday, 12 of which were breaching a family violence restraining order, as well as one count each of aggravated stalking and threatening to injure, endanger or harm.

Cousins appeared in court by video link from prison, where he has been since he was arrested at Ms Tinecheff's Canning Vale home in August.

WA police say they were watching Ms Tinecheff's home after the Brownlow medallist allegedly bombarded the mother of his children with phone calls, messages and visits, ignoring a restraining order put in place months earlier.

On one occasion, Cousins allegedly threatened Ms Tinecheff after getting into her BMW wielding a screwdriver. He allegedly told her he "can't wait to use it". Later, police allege Cousins told her: "I'm going to kill you ... take your life, your freedom and the things you love the most".

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