Night Chopper for Katherine Health Evacuations

The Northern Territory Government has contracted a local company to provide an after-hours medical retrieval service for the Katherine region – using helicopters.

The Health Minister Chris Burns said the Territory Government has entered into an interim contract with Jayrow Helicopters to provide the service while safety issues at Tindal airbase are resolved.

"There have already been two serious incidents because of wallabies on the runway and a delay from December to April of next year for the Department of Defence to build an internal wallaby-proof fence," Dr Burns said.

In this context, urgent talks have been held with several groups and companies to ensure a night service can resume until the Department of Defence fixes the wallaby problem at Tindal.

"When we became aware of the delays, we immediately began investigating alternative options," Dr Burns said.

"I'm pleased to say that from November 21, the people of the Katherine region will have a dedicated, night-capable and medically-equipped helicopter suitable for a medical evacuation retrieval service."

Dr Burns said Jayrow has agreed to operate a dedicated night retrieval service for the Katherine region for the rest of this year.

“This is an interim solution to address the immediate need. While the Jayrow agreement is in place we will be finalising current negotiations with companies who provide air ambulance helicopters. The Territory Government will ensure there is a continuity of service for the people of Katherine until Pearl Aviation feels it is safe to recommence fixed-wing night flights into Tindal.”

“Aero medical staff have inspected and approved the use of Jayrow’s helicopter for medical evacuations.

“The aeromed service is crucial for the people of the Katherine region. Having a helicopter to provide night retrievals will provide a fuller service while not compromising the safety of patients, crew and medical staff.”