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Minister backs Royal Darwin Hospital and staff

The Minister for Health, Kon Vatskalis, today gave his full support to Royal Darwin Hospital and its staff following the release of a report from the Ombudsman into the use of restraint at Royal Darwin Hospital.

Mr Vatskalis said the report raised several issues in relation to the complex issues surrounding the use of restraint and detention of patients at the hospital.

“Staff at Royal Darwin Hospital frequently face the dilemma of how to respond to patients who through their own actions place their lives at risk,” said Mr Vatskalis.

“The processes in place at Royal Darwin Hospital take into account various aspects such as the age of the patient, the mental capacity of the patient, the potential danger to the patient in not being treated and the potential of the patient to transfer their illness to others.

“The Department of Health and Families and Royal Darwin Hospital have responded to the issues highlighted by the Ombudsman.

“As the Minister for Health, I accept their response and stand by the hospital and the processes management has put in place to manage this very difficult issue.”

Royal Darwin Hospital has always sought legal advice in relation to the use of restraint and detention of patients and has put processes in place in light of this advice.

As the legal advice has changed so have the processes in place at the hospital.

The Minister said the General Manager of Royal Darwin Hospital, Dr Len Notaras, has advised that processes put in place are appropriate and take into account the range of situations staff face on a daily basis.

“Dr Notaras tells me that the processes put in place saves lives and I trust his judgement,” said Mr Vatskalis.

The recommendations from the Ombudsman do not include any suggestion to amend legislation.

“However, if legislative change is required for Royal Darwin Hospital to have more certainty then that’s what we will do.”

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