A confidential hotline to allow the public to seek advice and report problems with their medications has been launched in Darwin.

Minister for Health Dr Peter Toyne said the Adverse Medications Events (AME) hotline provides a system for consumers to report adverse experiences with their medicines.

“Up to 3 per cent or 140,000 hospital admissions in Australia each year are due to adverse medicine events and many of these originate in the community,” Dr Toyne said.

“They are estimated to cost the public hospital system $380 million a year.”

“In the past, only health professionals have been encouraged to report adverse drug reactions to the Adverse Drug Reaction Committee (ADRAC).”

“However, studies have shown that consumers report a broader range of adverse drug reactions more quickly and provide a better account of the event.”

“We’re tapping into this ‘on the ground’ experience to make sure our health system can tackle this problem with the best possible knowledge.”

Medication errors and “near misses” are reported to the Australian Council for Safety and Quality in Health Care.

The data is then analysed and fed back to health professionals to assist in changing systems to help prevent recurrence of these adverse events.

The hotline is an initiative of the Australian Council for Safety and Quality in Health Care.

The hotline number is 1300 134 237 and consumer information is treated in-confidence and cannot be accessed without the person’s permission.

This latest initiative comes just a month after the launch of a computerised e-prescribing system at Royal Darwin Hospital which allows doctors to prescribe drugs, pharmacists to review prescriptions and nurses to administer drugs.

It replaces the old paper-based system - a medication chart and clipboard at the foot of the bed.

Royal Darwin is the first public hospital in Australia, and one of only a
handful in the world, to trial the technique

The ePrescribing pilot project has been introduced in a medical ward at the hospital and will run for the next 12 months.

The exciting initiative is about improving the quality of medication management, patient safety and health outcomes.”

Electronic prescribing is a leading-edge project designed to manage the risk of errors in prescribing and administering drugs to hospital patients.