Sue Carter
Shadow Minister for Health & Community Services,
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Hospital deaths must be investigated

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Shadow Minister for Health Sue Carter MLA today called on Health Minister Toyne to ask the Coroner to conduct an inquiry into two deaths that occurred at Alice Springs Hospital last weekend.

Ms Carter said reports that an Alice Springs Hospital staff member had contacted the Centralian Advocate and raised concerns that “inadequate planning and limited medical backup” - due to the fact that the ICU was closed - contributed to the deaths”, warrant investigation by the coroner.

“It may well be that these two people would have died even if they had received full ICU care. But the fact that a staff member has contacted the press raising concerns is too serious to ignore,” Ms Carter said.

“Minister Toyne should request that the Coroner conduct an inquiry to satisfy the serious nature of the concerns. These deaths have occurred after the Health Minister gave his assurance that the Intensive Care Unit in Alice Springs Hospital was open and emergency patients were being serviced as they always have been.

“Doubts have now been raised because of the Minister's admission that the ICU had not been operating for four or five days.

“Minister Toyne is refusing to seek an inquiry and has only referred it to his embattled CEO of Health. The best way to clear the air is for the Coroner to conduct an inquiry.

“Minister Toyne has mismanaged the current crisis at the Alice Springs Hospital. He damaged his credibility as Health Minister when caught out with his less than honest accounts of the true extent of the crisis within the hospital's Intensive Care Unit.”

Ms Carter said she has been campaigning for many months for the Minister to act on the problems at Alice Springs Hospital.

“Alice Springs Hospital has always had an ICU and it's never closed before. The Martin Government's inability to adequately recruit and retain critical care staff has been brewing for many months. The Minister's only response has been to deny the problems. Yet within the next month there may well be no anaesthetists at all on the Alice Springs Hospital's staff,” Ms Carter said.

“Minister Toyne, as the Minister for both Health and Central Australia has failed to cope
with the pressure and his workload. Perhaps it would be best of the Chief Minister if she let
Minister Toyne retire as he wants to.”

Ends