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FRANK AND FEARLESS ADVICE NEEDED IN HEALTH CRISIS

The new Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Health, Dr David Ashbridge, has failed on his first day in the job, say the Territory Opposition.

“What Territory Health needs are real nurses at satisfactory numbers working in the real world, treating real patients,” says Dr Richard Lim, Shadow Minister for Health.

“The Chief Executive Officer for Health has made a bureaucratic decision which only produces another layer of bureaucratic paper pushing, having the Director of Nursing ticking off on nurses’ overtime sheets.

“He has passed the buck to the Director of Nursing, putting the DON in an invidious position. Where does the DON go to prevent overtime when there are patients to be cared for?”

“Besides, the DON has far more important things to do than become another bureaucratic check, imposed by Health House, on the amount of overtime nurses are working.

“Dr Ashbridge should have gone to the Minister for Health, Chris Burns, and advised him he needs to implement the recommendations of the Northern Territory Nursing Workload Review – 2005.

“That Review found the Territory has “an overall shortfall of approximately 82 nursing (Full Time Equivalent) positions”, a shortfall that continues to this day.

“Until the establishment or base number of nurses is raised to a sufficient level to cover the patient caseloads in the Territory’s public hospitals, nurses and doctors will continue working excessive overtime.

“The Minister is in desperate need of some good old fashioned, frank and fearless public service advice.

“The fact the Minister isn’t across the detail of the health system makes him even more reliant on the quality of advice receives.

“Rather than dealing with symptoms of the problem, Dr Ashbridge needs to deal with the causes.

“The answer is setting establishment nursing numbers to reflect patient numbers and Dr Ashbridge should say so.”

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