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No relief for cancer sufferers in the Territory.

With over $750 million of additional GST revenues, and a Health Minister who is crowing over his departmental budget of $788m for 2006-07, one would have thought that the Territory Government could have found a few million dollars for its 5 year old promise of a Radiation Oncology unit for the Territory, but unfortunately no monies have been forth-coming, said Opposition Health Minister Dr Richard Lim.

“Cancer suffers across the Territory will be greatly disappointed with this year's budget,” Dr Lim said.

“The single biggest thing that this Government could have done in this budget was to announce the funding of a Radiation Oncology unit for the Darwin hospital, considering they are celebrating a $100 million increase in this budget.

“This is a glaring omission in the Budget just handed down by the Treasurer despite the apparent increase in allocation to Health.

“The truth of the matter is that this Government has let the Health Department budget get out of control with continued massive overspends and subsequent increases.

"The bottom line is that the Health Department has blown its 2005-06 budget by some $60m, and the 2006-07 Budget allocation is to allow the department to catch up.

“These increases in the budget are not translating into service improvements, rather these increases has been to fund more and more bureaucrats in the department.

“Whether it be the treatment of cancer patients in Darwin, or waiting lists for elective surgery or dental treatment, or just getting a bed at the hospitals, these services are simply not improving. In fact, they are getting worse.

“Budget mismanagement under the Martin Labor Government has lost the Territory its opportunity to have a world class radiation oncology unit.

“While the Health Minister crows about his increased budget, Territory cancer sufferers are paying with their suffering.”

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