17th August 2005

**Labor Government Fails St John Ambulance Service**

Today, the Shadow Minister for Health, Dr Richard Lim accused the Martin Labor Government of failing to support St John Ambulance Service and allowing its services in Darwin to be stretched to the absolute limit.

“This is a government that is awash with money from the GST, yet it refuses to adequately fund St John Ambulance Service so that it can look after Territorians in a timely and safe manner,” Dr Lim said.

“St John Ambulance services have gone up by around 30% in the last 12 months in Darwin and 20% in Alice Springs.

“The number of calls increases significantly when you add calls to the St John Ambulance Service from doctor’s surgeries, hospitals, Aeromed and nursing homes.

“The Darwin region has only 3 ambulances in service 24 hours a day, but needs to have one more ambulance to help service the Greater Darwin area, including the rural area.

“Katherine does not have a 24 hour ambulance service, and Alice Springs now needs to have a second 24 hour ambulance to service the town and surrounding rural areas.

“St John Ambulance Service contract with the Northern Territory Government ran out on 30 June 2005 and has not been able to finalise a new contract with the government for the coming period.

“For it to deliver services for the NT Government this financial year, it has to operate under the terms of old contract, that does not take into consideration the increase in services that are required from St John Ambulance.

“Staff salaries are presently 20 – 30% behind their interstate colleagues, and their salary parity will fall further behind with the NT Government only offering them 9% over the next three years.

“It is time the NT Government deals seriously and realistically with St John Ambulance Service so that it is adequately resourced.

“Territorians need to be assured that when they call for an ambulance, that there will be one available in a timely manner.”

Ends. 

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