The release of the Federal Government’s annual State of Our Public Hospitals report has highlighted the fact that the Territory has the busiest and best-funded hospitals in the country.

Health Minister Peter Toyne said that during 2004-05, the Territory was at the top of the national rankings for the number of patients per capita who attended hospital emergency departments, as well as the number of admissions for elective surgery.

At the same time, the figures show increasing demand on our public hospitals, with 481 admissions per 1000 people in 2004-05, compared with 401 in 1998-99 – an increase of 20 per cent. The Australian average for 2004-05 was less than half the NT figure, with 203 admissions per 1000 people.

“We also have the greatest demand for elective surgery in the country at 37 per 1000 people, far outweighing the national average of 27,” Dr Toyne said. “However, the report states waiting times for elective surgery in the Territory are the same as those nationally.”

Dr Toyne said the Territory also topped the rankings with the amount of expenditure spent on public hospitals and the number of hospital beds per capita.

“Per thousand people, the Territory provides 3.7 beds, which is far above the Australian average of 2.6,” he said.

“At $1355, we also provide more recurrent spending per person on our hospitals, an increase of 75 per cent from 1998-99.”

Dr Toyne said the Territory Government is focused on ensuring it builds healthier communities through a 63 per cent increase in the health budget since 2001.

“This has allowed for the recruitment of more than 100 nurses, extra doctors and specialists, major redevelopments at Alice Springs and Royal Darwin hospitals, and other health programs such as the Child Health Initiative,” Dr Toyne said.

“The State of Our Public Hospitals report reflects the hard work that has gone into ensuring our hospitals provide quality health care for Territorians. I would like to especially congratulate all hospital staff for their continued commitment to caring for their fellow Territorians.”

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