MAPPING THE PATH OF SWINE FLU

As the number of Swine Flu infections across the Northern Territory continues to grow, so too does the need for accurate and timely data detailing the movement of the virus.

Shadow Health Minister Matt Conlan said detailed mapping of the disease across the Northern Territory would provide a valuable mechanism for better understanding the movements of swine flu.

“The speed the virus has spread around the Northern Territory has been worthy of note,” Mr Conlan said.

“Just over three weeks ago there were no confirmed cases in the Northern Territory, now we have the highest per capita rate in the country.”

Mr Conlan said an epidemiological map tracing the virus would provide valuable data for health authorities and the community now and into the future.

“Not only will it assist tracing the progression of Swine Flu as it passes through the Territory, it will also provide valuable data in the event of further epidemic outbreaks into the future.”

Mr Conlan also called on the Territory Government to provide more detailed break-downs of where swine-flu has struck.

During Estimates Committee hearings last week, Health and Families CEO Dr David Ashbridge said updates are being posted twice a day and that the regions where cases are reported are also being identified.

“While there appears to be some regional references on media releases, the current data chart on Health and Families swine flu web-site certainly makes no reference to localities.

“Additionally, as at 2.30pm today, the most recent update had occurred at 6.45 last night.”

Mr Conlan said he hoped the Commonwealth Government hadn’t underestimated the impact of Swine Flu in Aboriginal communities.

Last Wednesday, just two days before the death of an Aboriginal man who had spent time in Territory communities, Federal Health Minister Nicola Roxon issued a media release announcing the commencement of the epidemic’s PROTECT phase, which said in part:

The new phase recognises that the infection with H1N1 Influenza 09 is not as severe as originally envisaged when the Australian Health Management Plan for Pandemic Influenza was written in 2008 and that this new disease is mild in most cases, severe in some and moderate overall.
“The Australian Medical Association and other health organisations are deeply concerned about the potential impact on Aboriginal communities of Swine Flu.

“Some of the underlying health problems in communities, such as diabetes and renal disorders, make Aboriginal people extremely vulnerable to the virus.”

Further comment: Matt Conlan 0418 833 594