MATT CONLAN
SHADOW HEALTH MINISTER
MEDIA RELEASE

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BOARD MEMBERS
SHORT CHANGED

It’s little wonder regional hospitals in the Northern Territory have trouble attracting members.

Shadow Health Minister Matt Conlan said the Henderson Government has short-changed Hospital Board members across the Northern Territory.

Mr Conlan said for instance, the Chairman of the Royal Darwin Hospital board should have received $1953 in 2007-08 and $2160 during the previous year in sitting fees.

“My understanding is that the Chairman has received nowhere near that amount,” Mr Conlan said.

“One can only wonder how many other board members across the Territory have also missed out on their full entitlements.

“Instead of valuing boards for the input they can provide to the oversight of the Territory’s five hospitals, the Government has significantly underpaid those people that give their time to be on the boards.

“On top of this, successive Labor Health Ministers have failed to maintain their statutory obligation to appoint hospital boards.”

And in the Hospital Board Bill, passed tonight, community-minded public servants who give their own time to contribute to hospital boards do not even receive a sitting fee.

“Considering the public sector is the single biggest employer in the Northern Territory, this deters the best part of 18,000 people – about 15% of the adult population – from joining a board,” Mr Conlan said.

“Under the provisions of the new legislation, hospital boards can be abolished and merged into the board of a larger hospital, causing the local community to lose its direct involvement into health service delivery.”
Mr Conlan was successful in steering through several significant amendments to the Government’s Bill that will ensure there’s public scrutiny of any decision to abolish or suspend hospital boards.

“This will prevent any Health Minister now and into the future unilaterally burying a regional hospital board or forming a super board without a sound reason.

“Now the Minister needs to address the situation of remuneration with board members and negotiate back-pay for board members who have been underpaid for their contribution to the community.”

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