DAVY DECISION NEEDS MINISTERIAL EXPLANATION

The Health Minister, Kon Vatskalis, must provide a cast iron assurance to Northern Territory women that the decision to sack one of Australia’s most eminent gynaecological oncologists won’t put patient health at risk.

Shadow Health Minister Matt Conlan said the decision to terminate the services of Professor Margaret Davy in such a cold and dispassionate way shows the Henderson Government has lost sight of the human cost of its action.

With its usual secrecy and incompetence, Kon Vatskalis and the Department of Health and Families have managed to end a 20 year relationship between Professor Davy and women – many of them Indigenous - across the Northern Territory.

“How can it be that someone with Dr Davy’s status within the Australian medical profession can have been treated so shabbily by the Henderson Government?” Mr Conlan said.

“Professor Davy has given 20 years of truly marvellous service to the Northern Territory.

“Someone with her qualifications could have made a fortune treating cancer patients exclusively in Adelaide – instead she’s put her heart and soul into treating women across the Territory – many of those in remote communities.

Mr Conlan said Professor Davy disputed comments made in the Northern Territory Parliament last month by Mr Vatskalis that her position:

...has not been terminated. As a matter of fact, Professor Davy will be here for another six months to provide services to all the people and, in six months’ time, she will have the ability and the possibility, to provide a tender, like everyone else

Professor Davy in fact received a letter from the Department of Health and Families saying her services would no longer be required.

This decision was based on the premise that Professor Davy had not signed a contract with the Department – even though she has never been offered a contract.

“Professor Davy said Mr Vatskalis’ assertion she would still be required to visit the Territory several more times this year also appeared doubtful given that she has had no recent contact with the hospital and a contract has already been awarded to an interstate group,” Mr Conlan said.

“Professor Davy believes she is being shunted from the Territory health system because she has spoken-out about governance in some areas of Royal Darwin Hospital.
“It would be a tragedy if the health of Territory women was compromised because one of the country’s leading gynaecological oncologists has been sidelined over a political dispute and replaced by predominantly male doctors.

“Many women will have nothing to do with male gynaecologists. This is further proof the Henderson Government has lost touch with reality.”

Mr Conlan called on Kon Vatskalis to front the media and explain exactly why Professor Davy has been fired.

“Despite appearing to have misled Parliament and even though this matter deserves the highest priority, Mr Vatskalis decided to put a bureaucrat forward to talk to media today rather than answering the questions himself.

“He should stop hiding behind the public service like many of his predecessors and display the accountability expected of a senior Minister.”

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