07 December 2009

National Health Reform Moving Forward

The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) has agreed health reform will be a priority in 2010.

The Northern Territory Chief Minister Paul Henderson and Treasurer Delia Lawrie attended the last COAG meeting for 2009 in Brisbane today.

“Long-term health reform will better address the emerging pressures of an ageing population, higher levels of chronic disease and higher costs,” Mr Henderson said.

“COAG agreed to develop a national reform plan that will consider funding requirements, building workforce capacity and ensuring access to health care that meets the needs of communities.

“COAG agreed to a National Partnership on e-Health. The Northern Territory is already at the forefront of e-Health with 66% of indigenous Territorians having an individual electronic medical record.”

All states and territories signed up to work with the Commonwealth on a national strategic approach to better plan our capital cities to tackle climate change, urban congestion and improve housing affordability.

“Darwin is well placed to meet COAG commitments for long-term planning to provide housing to support economic growth, population growth and demographic change with my Government’s action to develop four new suburbs in Palmerston and the new township of Weddell.

“Under my Government’s Housing the Territory strategy we will see the release of 6000 new lots across Darwin and Palmerston during the next five years. Work is already underway at Bellamack and Johnston.”
Mr Henderson said COAG also signed a landmark $61 million national agreement to improve early childhood education and care.

“The new quality standards will include higher staff to child ratios, better trained carers and early childhood teachers, and a new ratings system giving parents more information about the quality of childcare services,” he said.

“There will be some additional costs for Territory families to improve the standards. However as the Territory Government is the only jurisdiction to subsidise childcare, it is anticipated the quality improvements may equate to about $8 a week after payment of the Federal Government’s Child Care Rebate.

“Last financial year $3.4 million was paid to centres to help contain costs.

“As strong supporter of football, I’m pleased that Australia will be making a strong bid for the 2018 or 2022 World Cup. I’ll be writing to Geoff Dixon, the former CEO of Qantas, who has been appointed by the Australian Government to co-ordinate Australia’s bid to offer the NT as a base for either practice games, acclimatisation training camps or to host a team.”

*Media contact: Andrea Adlam 0401 119467*