Almost 5 years since the Katherine Hospital Board last met, the Northern Territory Government continues to move at a glacial pace to implement a new one.

Member for Katherine, Willem Westra van Holthe, said the delays implementing a new board shine a light on the Government’s disregard for community governance.

"After my office canvassed community members to nominate, there have been more than a sufficient number of expressions of interest from the community to join the board," Mr Westra van Holthe said.

Letters finally went out last week, however it has taken months for those letters to be sent to applicants advising them they have been offered a board position or whether their applications for board membership were rejected.

This painstaking process is illustrative of the Henderson Government’s reluctance to have in place a proper hospital board structure in the Territory’s regional centres.

The Health Minister, Kon Vatskalis, has already admitted hospital boards have been sidelined under Labor.

In the Territory Parliament last year he acknowledged that Katherine Hospital Board met only seven times between 2001-02 and 2005-06 – and that the Board had since stopped functioning.

The Country Liberals identified in 2008 that regional hospital boards were moribund and on the back of that revelation, the Government introduced the Hospital Board’s Bill to Parliament to resuscitate the process.

Unfortunately, the Katherine district is still waiting and I am left wondering whether other Hospital Boards have now been established in other regional towns like Nhulunbuy or Tennant Creek.

The new Katherine Board meets this month, but five years is too long for regional hospital boards to be sidelined. The Labor Party’s centrist approach to regional hospital governance is part of a wider pattern of neglect of Katherine and the Territory’s towns."

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