$26 MILLION SHORT TERM PATIENT ACCOMMODATION FOR ROYAL DARWIN HOSPITAL

The Federal Minister for Indigenous Health, Warren Snowdon and NT Minister for Health, Kon Vatskalis, today officially announced two new short-term patient accommodation facilities at the campus of the Royal Darwin Hospital (RDH).

At a sod turning event at the RDH, Mr Snowdon said the two facilities, worth a combined $26 million, will provide short term accommodation for people from rural and remote areas who require extended treatment at RDH.

He said construction of a 50-unit accommodation complex for patients from rural and remote areas will start next week and be completed at the end of 2011, while a 12-bed hostel which is specifically designed for expectant Indigenous mothers will start construction January 2011 and be completed by August 2011.

“These projects will be vital for those people living in remote and rural communities who need to travel hundreds of kilometres to Royal Darwin Hospital for treatment or birthing, and need appropriate and affordable accommodation close by,” Mr Snowdon said.

“The Indigenous mothers’ facility will provide affordable accommodation for Indigenous women from remote NT communities and WA communities who need to attend the hospital before, during and after the birth of their child.

“This facility will offer services such as meals, referrals, assistance with transport, and informal training and advice.

“A similar facility has been operating successfully in Katherine for 20 years, and I’m pleased that the operators of that facility, Aboriginal Hostels Limited (AHL), will also be operating and staffing this new facility,” Mr Snowdon said.

The Gillard Labor Government has provided $22.7 million in funding to these two projects, while the NT Government has provided a $3.4 million in-kind contribution of the land.

Mr Vatskalis welcomed the Gillard Labor Government’s contribution to improve access for patients to the hospital.
“The hostels will give patients adequate time to fully recover from hospitalisation before returning home to the community with ready access to medical care if needed,” he said.

“The hostel will assist improvements in hospital performance by freeing up hospital beds for acute patients.

“In addition, the project will help stimulate the local economy by providing employment for 15 people, including 5 apprentices.”

Ms Macklin said the initiative forms an important part of the Gillard Labor Government’s commitment to helping Indigenous children enjoy a healthy start to their lives – the sort of start already enjoyed by most of the nation’s children.

The Australian Government’s contribution to the Indigenous Mothers’ facility has been provided through the Indigenous Mothers’ Accommodation Fund (IMASF), which has also provided $273,000 for an upgrade and extension at a 10-bed facility in Katherine.

The Gillard Labor Government’s contribution to the 50-unit complex has been funded through the $3.2 billion Health and Hospitals Fund.

This Health and Hospital Fund is helping to boost the economy by creating new jobs while supporting long-term improvements to the health and hospital system.

In the Northern Territory, the fund has also provided:
- $27.8 million to build a dedicated network of hospital and community medical education facilities based around the Royal Darwin Hospital and Charles Darwin University,
- $34.2 million to construct a Centre of Excellence in Indigenous Health and Education that focuses on interventions to optimise physical, cognitive, social and emotional development of Indigenous children, including the purchase of new capital equipment, and

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Media Release

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Minister for Indigenous Health
Member for Lingiari

KON VATSKALIS MP
NT Minister for Health

23 September 2010

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