Newcomers Warned of Box Jellyfish Risk

Acting Minister for Health, Rob Knight, was today flanked by two box jellyfish, or stingers, at the Darwin Museum boat ramp in an effort to remind locals, and inform Top End newcomers, about the real dangers posed by box jellyfish in Territory waters.

“With the stinger season at its peak, now is the time to be vigilant in Top End waters,” Mr Knight said.

“The Territory is moving in the right direction, and many more people are now coming to the Territory to enjoy wonderful opportunities, and take part in our great Territory lifestyle.

"Stingers are often found close to shore, so wading in the shallows and tidal creeks, or using boat ramps can put you at risk of a painful sting," he said.

"Their name may suggest they only pose a minor risk, but an adult box jellyfish can have 40 or more tentacles, each up to two metres in length and loaded with a potentially lethal venom. Contact causes excruciatingly painful stings and can result in lifelong welts on the skin. There are also cardiac risks, and fatalities from box jellyfish have occurred.

"Small children are most at risk as the venom will have an even stronger effect in their small bodies than it would in an adult."

“Each year about 40 people present to Top End doctors and health facilities as a result of contact with stingers. Just this week a four-year old child was taken to Royal Darwin Hospital emergency department for treatment.

“If you can't avoid being in sea water, such as when you're launching a boat, it's important to cover up by wearing long sleeved tops and long shorts or trousers.

"It's also important that adults keep a close eye on children when they're at the beach or near waterways to ensure they stay well clear of the water at all times," Mr Knight added.

If someone does get stung:

• Douse the area with plenty of vinegar if you have it
• If any tentacles are on the skin you can pull them off (the skin on your fingers is too thick for the sting to penetrate)
• Take the person to hospital
• If they are really unwell you may need to do CPR or call an ambulance
• For information about stingers visit www.health.nt.gov.au/Stinger_Seaon