Royal Darwin Hospital Staff Retirement

Health Minister Kon Vatskalis today formally thanked one of Royal Darwin Hospital’s longest serving staff members for her 34 years of outstanding service.

Mr Vatskalis said Fidela (Dely) Ella held several positions with the hospital, both at the old Myilly Point site as a domestic in the staff kitchen and in the Central Sterilizing Department (CSD) where she reprocessed reusable surgical instruments before recently retiring.

“Dely will be sorely missed as a valuable member of the RDH team,” Mr Vatskalis said.

“She was a great worker and over the years the CSD enjoyed many of her delicious recipes of noodles and assorted cakes at many staff functions.

“But Dely’s life here would not have happened but for Gough Whitlam’s 1972 election win.

“In June 1968 Dely first came to Australia as a visitor from the Philippines to be with her husband Meno Ella.

“Meno a Filipino musician was admitted to Australia on February 22, to accept a six month engagement at a Sydney restaurant with a top Jazz Philippine group.

“The couple settled in Sydney and had two children Michelle and Meno junior. It was during this time that the couple had let their visitor’s passport lapse.

“Dely and her husband applied for permanent residency but were denied which led to an ongoing saga of the Ella family having to repeatedly apply for permanent residency to Australia and having their application denied.

“The couple was told by the Government at the time that they must leave Australia but the children were allowed to stay.

“In 1970 Dely, Meno and children moved to Darwin with the help of Bob Marshall, George Barker and Jim Murtagh.

“Following a front page article in the Northern Territory News the couple was overwhelmed by the support that was given to them by the people of Darwin.

“Brian Manning Snr was very prominent in the quest for the Ella family to remain in Darwin.
“At the Darwin air terminal in June 1971 the Qantas lounge was packed with hundreds of enraged Darwin people prepared to physically resist officials and police, to stop the departure of the Ella family.

“Dely’s husband decided then, to take his family and voluntary return to the Philippines with the promise from Gough Whitlam that should Labor win the coming federal election that he would have the family return to Australia.

“In 1973 Prime Minister Gough Whitlam sent his Minister Al Grassby to the Philippines to complete negotiations with its Government and fly the family back to the city they loved – Darwin.

“It was on her return flight to Darwin that Dely gave birth to her third child Leilani on the 4th July 1973 somewhere over South China Sea on Philippine Airlines.

“I wish Dely all the best in retirement and thank her for the contribution she has made to the successful running of Royal Darwin Hospital.”

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