DAVID TOLLNER
MINISTER FOR HEALTH

CARDIAC CARE LEADS HEALTH IMPROVEMENTS

December 4TH, 2012

Territorians will have improved access to healthcare and more services following the Country Liberals Government’s allocations in the Mini Budget today.

“Enhanced cardiac services, more elective surgery, suicide prevention, remote breast screening, and a new rehabilitation complex and program for problem drinkers are all major services we have budgeted for,” Minister for Health, Dave Tollner, said.

“A 10-year Framework for Cardiac Services, costing $6.5 million per annum, will put more cardiologists and nurses into Alice Springs and the bush, bring angioplasty surgery to Darwin for the first time and overall improve cardiac disease rehabilitation and detection.

“Nationally there is solid evidence that there is significant improvement in survival rates and changes to patterns of cardiovascular disease where a specialist cardiac service is in place,” he said.

Other sums allocated include:

- $4.46 million a year for 400 extra elective surgeries
- $35 million to build rehabilitation facilities for problem drinkers
- $15 million per annum for rehabilitation operational costs, once operational
- $2.36 million in 2012-13 for operation of the new Alice Springs Hospital Emergency Department
- $570,000 in 2012-13 for BushMob youth residential rehabilitation service
- $330,000 a year to consider the Gone Too Soon youth suicide report recommendations.

In acknowledging that waiting times for elective surgery are a source of public discontent the Country Liberals Government has budgeted for 400 additional surgeries costing $4.46 million a year.

Building rehabilitation centre facilities for problem drinkers is allocated $35 million.

“The Government is in the process of developing the mandatory rehabilitation policy as promised. We will be pursuing it under a health framework rather than placing it in the justice area,” Mr Tollner said.
2012-13
Mini Budget

The $24.9 million new Emergency Department at Alice Springs Hospital, expected to open in March 2013, will have 18 extra treatment spaces and a 10-bed short stay facility. A total of $2.36 million has been set aside for operational expenses in 2012-13 and more than $5.5 million ongoing from 2013-14.

“We all know about long waiting times and the pressure on EDs – this will streamline admissions, reducing frustration for people coming in, and make the working environment so much better for our hardworking medical staff,” Mr Tollner said.

The sole Alice Springs rehabilitation program for youth in trouble through petrol sniffing, crime and drugs is receiving $570,000 in 2012-13 and $940,000 a year from 2013-14.

“The BushMob youth residential rehabilitation service is a critical program, giving youth bush skills and getting them work ready,” Mr Tollner said.

“BushMob only had five funded beds - our backing will increase this to 20.

“These youngsters need help in getting through the pain they are suffering. It will turn them around.”

The Government has provided $330,000 a year for a small team to look at how best to implement the recommendations in the Gone Too Soon report on youth suicide.

The report was tabled in Parliament under the previous Labor government in March 2012.

The 100-bed Medi Hotel at Royal Darwin Hospital for short-term accommodation has been funded for operational expenses of $2 million in 2012-13 and $5.5 million ongoing from 2013-14.

The recently completed complex, built with Commonwealth funding of $18.6 million, will provide accommodation under varying circumstances, including being a home away from home for remote patients receiving treatment.

“This project went ahead, and another was planned for Gove, but there was nothing set aside by Labor for its operations, and now we have to find the money,” Mr Tollner said.

The Mini Budget has allocated $2 million in 2012-13 to review the Patient Assistance Travel Scheme.

“The CLP said before being elected that it was concerned about the scheme meeting the needs of Territorians,” Mr Tollner said.

“We are a small population with many people who live a long way from healthcare facilities. Sometimes there may not be enough assistance to cover some of the basic costs in travelling away from home for treatment.
“The review will determine whether more assistance is required,” he said.

Other costs budgeted for are:

- $503,000 ongoing from 2012-13 to meet increasing demand for the 24-hour supported accommodation for people with mental impairment under Supreme Court orders;
- $1.6 million in 2012-13 for more staff capability at Darwin and Alice Springs secure care facilities, rising to over $4 million a year ongoing by 2015-16.
- $725,000 a year from 2014-15 to continue remote mobile breast screening services and the Palmerston service.

Greater use will be made of schemes where Commonwealth benefits can be claimed, especially Medicare and the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, to secure an estimated additional $2.5 million in 2012-13, rising to $8 million a year from 2015-16.

A proposal is being developed to increase testing volumes from using the RDH Pathology Department service. This will earn $2 million in 2013-14, $4 million in 2014-15 and $5 million ongoing from 2015-16.

The Department is judiciously trimming its corporate operational costs to achieve savings of $2.061 million in 2012-13 increasing to $8.6 million a year from 2015-16.

These savings involve streamlining structural and operational processes in the areas of management, vehicles, travel, ICT and other central support functions.

By better managing use of overtime and use of agency staff in favour of more salaried staff, and other efficiencies in accommodation costs, the nursing model and rostering processes, the department finds savings of $1.47 million in 2012-13 and $3.98 million ongoing from 2013-14.

The department has reduced costs in providing prison health services by using its own team, and at the same time improving quality. Savings of $800,000 will be achieved in 2012-13 and $2.3 million ongoing from 2013-14.

Adjusting grants and services in dental, research, psychiatry, disease control and Palmerston GP hours will achieve savings of $500,000 in 2012-13, rising to $7.4 million by 2015-16 onwards.

Reviewing supply and procurement processes and ordering of diagnostics will realise savings of $700,000 in 2013-14 rising to $900,000 ongoing from 2015-16.

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