Robyn Lambley
Minister for Health

Progress in the rate of Indigenous Territorians accessing cancer treatment

29 June 2014

The number of Indigenous Territorians using radiation therapy services in Darwin has doubled over the last decade, leading to promising results in the fight against cancer.

Minister for Health Robyn Lambley said it was wonderful to see that the important work of the Alan Walker Cancer Care Centre was helping to close the gap in the NT.

“The Alan Walker Cancer Care Centre (AWCCC) has doubled Indigenous Territorians’ access to innovative radiation therapy treatment over the last 10 years,” Mrs Lambley said.

“The uptake of radiation therapy services among Indigenous cancer patients has risen from 22% to 48%.

“The rise is due to the centre installing state of the art technology and developing culturally sensitive outreach programs to regions.

“Studies show that Indigenous Australians have higher cancer death rates and lower survival rates than non-Indigenous Australians.

“The AWCCC has found that Indigenous Territorians with cancer tend to present with later stage cancers and are less likely to accept or receive adequate treatment due to cultural barriers and compliance issues.

“The AWCCC has developed programs, such as traditional arts sessions, to encourage Indigenous patients to stay and receive treatment."}

Patient Naomi Barba, who has travelled from Nhulunbuy for treatment, congratulated the AWCCC on doubling the number of remote residents taking up cancer treatment.

“It is great to see more Aboriginal patients are now coming forward to receive cancer treatment at the Alan Walker Cancer Care Centre,” Ms Barba said.

“I have received excellent care and treatment from all of the staff at the Centre.

“I was given cancer information on a DVD in the Aboriginal language Yolngu-Matha along with other Aboriginal cancer brochures.
“On a personal level, I am also working with the staff here to develop a DVD on my cancer experience with the purpose to increase cancer awareness in the Aboriginal communities.”

Mrs Lambley said the AWCCC has also created a remote consultation system to reduce the need for Indigenous Territorians to travel prior to and after treatment.

“22 Aboriginal Healthcare Workers have graduated from the AWCCC’s Clinical Experience Program in Oncology, to provide remote communities with information about treatment and support prior to travelling to Darwin to begin treatment.

“Aboriginal Healthcare Workers can also help remote patients to tele-health with clinicians at the Alan Walker Cancer Care Centre, and monitor patients for side effects or relapses.

“The AWCCC says their results show that 95% of Indigenous patients are completing the prescribed course of treatment, and this is fantastic news.”

Under Budget 2014, the Country Liberals Government has provided about $6 million to support the Alan Walker Cancer Care Centre.

“The Country Liberals Government is very pleased to continue its support for this important service for all Territorians,” Mrs Lambley said.

**Media Contact:** Phoebe Stewart   0438885774   (08) 8928 6649