Robyn Lambley
Minister for Health

**Extensive mosquito program for Darwin’s northern suburbs**

15 August 2014

Minister for Health Robyn Lambley says homes in Darwin’s northern suburbs will be better protected from high mosquito numbers thanks to an extensive controlled spraying program that was carried out this week.

“The salt marsh mosquito season is expected to start this month due to increasing monthly high tides,” Mrs Lambley said.

“Mosquito numbers are expected to increase in coastal areas of the Territory from Thursday, and will remain elevated for about seven days.

“The Department of Health has carried out intensive aerial and ground mosquito survey and control operations in the Leanyer, Holmes Jungle and Micket Creek swamps and Darwin urban areas.

“This intensive spraying stops large numbers of the insects emerging from the swamps and affecting residents of the northern suburbs.

“This $218,000 aerial spraying program is an important part of the mosquito program at the Centre for Disease Control (CDC).

“The Country Liberals Government has invested $17.5 million in the CDC’s work across the Territory.”

Centre for Disease Control Acting Director of Medical Entomology Bill Pettit said the larval control of salt marsh mosquitoes was the most effective way to combat the influx of this species, which could carry the Ross River and Barmah Forest viruses.

“Although Ross River virus can be contracted all year round, the current dry conditions are not optimal for the mosquitoes to transmit disease. However, once the humidity increases the mosquitoes will live long enough to transmit those viruses to humans,” Dr Pettit said.

“Salt marsh mosquito numbers will increase in NT coastal areas, and within 10 kilometres of large brackish swamps and larger tidal creeks and rivers.
“In Darwin, areas outside the 5 kilometre limit of aerial control from the edge of Leanyer, Karama and Muirhead suburbs are expected to produce an influx of salt marsh mosquitoes from the huge breeding areas around the mouth of Howard River and other areas around Shoal Bay.”

“People infected with Ross River or Barmah Forest virus may develop a wide range of symptoms, the most common of which are painful or swollen joints (particularly in the hands, ankles and knees), sore muscles, aching tendons, skin rash, fatigue, fever, headache and swollen lymph nodes.

“Symptoms generally last for a few weeks or months, though in some cases they can linger for up to 12 months.

“People in the Top End are advised to avoid locations near coastal swamps and mangrove areas, avoid outdoor exposure around dusk and at night near areas of dense vegetation and other areas of high mosquito activity.”

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