Media Release

John Elferink
Minister for Health

Cardio-thoracic and Neuro Surgery Services to commence at RDH

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The Northern Territory Government will invest $8.3 million in the 2016 Budget towards the establishment of cardio-thoracic and neurosurgical services at the Royal Darwin Hospital campus.

Having timely access to life-saving surgery on site at the Royal Darwin Hospital campus will play a key role in improving health outcomes for Territorians suffering from Cardiovascular disease (a major cause of death across Australia with one Australian succumbing to the illness every 12 minutes).

Currently Territorians requiring complex heart stenting services and cardiac surgery such as valve or bypass surgery need to travel interstate for treatment.

It is the same situation with those needing major and complex neurosurgical procedures such as back, head and neck surgery for spinal and brain injuries.

Each year the Territory makes over 600 acute, emergency and elective referrals to interstate hospitals for cardio-thoracic and neuro surgical procedures. This results in significant costs with spending on travel and accommodation amounting to $6.6 million a year.

“These savings will assist us to expand our services here in the Northern Territory,” Minister for Health John Elferink said.

“This is good news for Territorians and means that patients who would have had to travel interstate will now be able to receive treatment in the Territory and remain close to their families.”

“The development of the new cardio-thoracic and neurosurgical services will include the purchase of new equipment, some refurbishments and a number of surgical and associated positions.”

Having an on-site surgical facility will markedly reduce the significant social and psychological impact on patients who would otherwise be separated from their families at a difficult time.

The establishment of cardio-thoracic and neurosurgical services in Darwin would further enhance Darwin’s critical clinical position as a provider for, not only the Northern Territory, but also the Top End of Australia.

Making these services available will mean further opportunities as the service matures for the purchase of services by Western Australia, Queensland, and near northern regional neighbours.
The services are expected to commence within 12 months and will begin incrementally, expanding as positions are recruited to and staff are trained.

The implementation of cardiac and neuro surgery in the NT will also increase the potential to attract high-quality medical and nursing staff, recruitment is currently underway with a number of candidates expressing interest.

**Media contact:** Dimitra Grehl 0439 640 895