6 January 2005

**Why Are Alice Springs Hospital Staff Working Excessive Overtime If the Hospital is Fully Staffed?**

Shadow Minister for Central Australia, Dr Richard Lim has accused the Minister for Health of not telling the truth to Alice Springs when he said that the Alice Springs Hospital is adequately staffed over the Christmas – New Year period.

"Many staff had commented to me that it has been ‘Bedlam in ED’ over the Christmas – New Year period," Dr Lim said.

"There were between 10 – 15 patients waiting in the Emergency Department for beds in the wards on most days.

"I was told by a senior staff member that in the Emergency Department alone, this month’s roster was short of staffing for 150 shifts. That equates to more than 5 unfilled shifts each day.

"I know of senior nurse consultants and administrators who had to had to come back to work at the Hospital as nurses over the same period to fill the shifts in Emergency Department and in other wards.

"A nurse who was recruited from interstate said that over the last fortnight alone, she had to work three double shifts and a full day on overtime.

"Yet the Minister was prepared to claim that the Hospital was adequately staffed.

"What the Minister does not tell is that when a nurse works a double shift, that nurse is counted as occupying two positions. Thus a single nurse is counted as two nurses.

"Government is not telling the truth. It was a deceitful exercise in creative arithmetic which gives us misleading figures and tries to reassure us that the Hospital is well staffed.

"With the Health budget increased by almost $200m over the last three years, we have seen nothing for the money except for increased inefficiencies and continued poor staffing.

"This is just another indication of how the Martin Labor Government manages the Territory – badly."

Ends
Contact: Dr Richard Lim 0418 897 688