The Government has provided funds in the Budget to boost nursing levels in the Territory and implement new measures to improve the recruitment, retention and professional development of health and community services professionals.

Minister for Health and Community Services, Jane Aagaard, said the Government was committed to improving the health of Territorians. We have put in place an extension recruitment program.

Mrs Aagaard said health and community services professionals provided a tremendous service, often in extremely challenging and difficult circumstances, to people in all parts of the Territory, and it was important their contribution be recognised.

"It is also important to recognise the importance of attracting new staff and providing greater support for those already here so they stay in the Territory.

"That is why the Government has put extra funds into the Health and Community Services Budget and made specific allocations to support health professionals."

These include:

- $2.36 million to recruit an additional 20 nurses as part of the Government’s commitment to employ an additional 75 hospital nurses over its four-year term.
- An additional $5.68 million to increase the pay levels of nurses by 15 per cent by 2004.
- $730,000 for the professional development and training of health professionals, including such important factors as updating their qualifications and enabling them to undertake further study, an important element in the Territory’s bid to recruit and retain health professionals.
- $510,000 to employ additional staff at the Royal Darwin Hospital Emergency Department to overcome staff shortages and employ sufficient specialist staff.
- An additional $500,000 to employ eight new Family and Children’s Services staff, including four indigenous community workers.
- An extra $260,000 to provide additional ambulance services in the Darwin region.