16 February 2004
Building Healthier Communities: A 5 year framework

Minister for Health Dr Peter Toyne and Family and Community Services Minister Marion Scrymgour have unveiled a 5 year framework to deliver better health and wellbeing for all Territorians.

Dr Toyne said Building Healthier Communities – A Framework for Health and Community Services 2004 – 2009 is a signpost to the future direction of health and community services in the Northern Territory.

“This Government has already spent an extra $100 million to build a better system and this is another step towards ensuring Territorians enjoy long and healthy lives,” Dr Toyne said.

Ms Scrymgour said the Government is determined to support families and communities, and will also give them the tools to help themselves.

“Help will be provided for mothers even before their babies are born, young people will be given a chance to lead healthy lives so they can grow into productive adults, the elderly will have access to the best medical care, Ms Scrymgour said.

Dr Toyne said old problems will be tackled in new ways, in particular, the challenge posed by a small population spread over vast distances.

“One of the ways we can do this is by harnessing technology, using videoconferencing and the internet,” Dr Toyne said.

“We will also link our hospitals across the Territory to create a health network."

“This will allow a doctor in Tennant Creek to access the resources of Darwin and Alice Springs and vice versa.”

And it goes further than that, a specialist in the Northern Territory will be able to call on the expertise of specialists across the country,” he said.

Ms Scrymgour said the Government will implement changes that will work for the long term.

“The Territory can’t afford band-aid solutions,” Ms Scrymgour said.

“This is a whole new way of doing things, we want to put more emphasis on prevention rather than waiting until someone is sick,” she said.

Dr Toyne said this document ensures we will make the most of our workforce.
“We will call on all their skills and expertise,” Dr Toyne said.

“We will provide opportunities to help retain the quality staff we have and encourage more to call the NT home,” he said.

The implementation of the Bansemer report has set the scene for far reaching reforms in the Departments of Health and Community Services.

Now we have built a solid foundation, this framework is the next logical step.

The Department, in consultation with employees, doctors, communities, unions and peak bodies, will now use these priorities and directions in the framework to build a new system, which is accountable, effective and accessible.

**Building Healthier Communities**

**Giving kids a good start in life.** Protecting and nurturing our children is fundamental to making the next generation of Territorians healthier than this one.

**Strengthening Families and Communities.** We will support and strengthen the links of family and individual to help individuals lead healthier lives.

**Getting serious about aboriginal health.** The Government is committed to ensuring that our health and community service system delivers better health for all Territorians.

**Creating better pathways to health services.** We will provide appropriate care as close to Territorians homes as practically possible.

**Filling Service Gaps.** This Government will make sure that the system responds to the changing needs of Territorians and any gaps in services.

**Tackling substance abuse.** This Government will tackle substance abuse, including drinking, smoking, the use of illegal drugs, petrol sniffing and the misuse of prescription drugs.

**Building quality health and community services.** The Government will build effective, innovative and sustainable health and community services and will enforce high standards of accountability and quality.

**Creating better ways of working together.** By working with all areas of Government, and with the community and its organisations, we will build healthier and stronger communities.

**Valuing and supporting our workforce.** This Government will support our health and communities services staff in meeting the challenges and grasping the unique opportunities of the Territory.

**Creating a health information network.** This Government is dedicated to using knowledge and technology to build improved health and community