Commonwealth needs to address aged care responsibility

The Northern Territory Government has called on the Commonwealth to meet its obligations to senior Territorians at Tracy Aged Care, following the announcement of the closure of the facility last Friday.

Health Minister Jane Aagaard said she had many questions to ask the federal Minister for Ageing Kevin Andrews as to why a long-term, federally-funded facility was about to close its doors.

"The Territory Government’s primary concern is for the welfare of the many long-term Territorians and their families directly affected by this decision. My department is working very hard to ensure residents seeking placement are appropriately cared for," Mrs Aagaard said.

"However, I am writing to Mr Andrews to ask him why this long-term facility is being forced to close its doors. I want to know where is the accountability from the Commonwealth on this issue?

"At a time when the Commonwealth is asking states and territories to demonstrate additional accountability to health spending, questions surround why a large, well-established residential and hostel accommodation in Darwin is about to close its doors.

"The Commonwealth has primary responsibility for the delivery of aged care services in Australia.

"Tracy Aged Care reportedly has debts in excess of $3 million. How could this astounding situation have occurred?"

Mrs Aagaard said in late 2001 she was advised of operational and budget problems at Tracy Aged Care.

"The Territory Government then contributed an additional $120,000 on top of annual funding which is in excess of $200,000.

"We have worked very hard with Tracy Aged Care and its management team to maintain services.

"I am very disappointed Mr Andrews has been silent during the whole period in which Tracy Aged Care has been experiencing difficulties.

"This seems astounding given financial difficulties have been ongoing for a number of years."