The NT Minister for Health and Community Services Jane Aagaard today announced the first stage of an urban community health reform package aimed at improving service delivery to the people of Darwin.

The package is being developed by the Department of Health and Community Services in direct response to the Bansemer Review, which calls for Territory health service delivery to be more closely aligned with population growth and needs.

"After careful review and planning, I am announcing a new community health service delivery arrangement which considers population growth and usage trends, and therefore ensures best use of the public health dollar," Mrs Aagaard said.

Key components of this new arrangement include:

- Transfer of functions from Darwin Community Care Centre (DCCC) to the Casuarina Community Care Centre (CCCC), which has greater capacity to respond to local demand for services
- Relocation of Clinic 34 sexual health services to the existing DCCC, where it will be more visible and accessible to its target group
- A review of operating hours at Clinic 34 to improve accessibility
- Relocation of the Nightcliff Maternal and Child Health Centre to safer and more comfortable premises in Nightcliff (new sites are currently being considered)
- A joint feasibility study by the NT Government and Commonwealth to identify a model for delivering more services to the Palmerston community

The DCCC will be transferred to Casuarina from December 12, at which time the clinic closes each year for Christmas holidays, therefore minimising any inconvenience to clients and staff. The relocation of Clinic 34 will follow as soon as possible after December 12.

Mrs Aagar said it was important for Clinic 34 to be moved to a location where it could be identified and accessed more easily, particularly by young people.

"The clinic provides vital confidential and free sexual health services including advice, testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections such as HIV and Hepatitis C," she said.

"It’s important that people know where to come, and what services are available to them."

Mrs Aagaard said the decision to relocate functions of the DCCC to Casuarina...
was based on a significant drop in service utilisation during the past three years that had made the facility unsustainable.

Between 2001 and 2003 the DCC recorded a 7% drop in usage, compared to a 28% increase at the Nightcliff Maternal and Child Heath Centre, 10% increase at Casuarina Community Care Centre, 9% increase at Palmerston and 5% increase at the Karama Maternal and Child Health Centre.

"The Bansemer Review recommended we reconsider urban community health services in terms of demand and population growth pressures to ensure the most efficient mix of services is provided to the community," Mrs Aagaard said.

"Earlier this year the Karama service – which is limited to child and maternal health and is the base of the Community Midwifery Program - was reviewed. Changes were also made to the clinic to include an appointment system one day a week to improve service delivery."

The urban community health reform package will be phased in over time, enabling the Government to plan and implement changes to health service delivery which meet changing community needs and priorities.

"These initial reforms reiterate the Government’s commitment to effective and sustainable community health services in the Territory," Mrs Aagaard said.

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