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1600 NOW ON WAIT LIST FOR SURGERY AT ALICE SPRINGS HOSPITAL

Sixteen Hundred patients are now waiting for elective surgery at the Alice Springs Hospital and the escalating numbers is another example of the Health Minister’s poor handling of his portfolio, CLP Shadow Health Minister Jodeen Carney said today.

“In addition, information has now come to light that elective surgery is sporadic, having been cancelled at various times last year”, Ms. Carney said.

“A doctor at the Hospital has come out and said that they are ‘short of doctors, short of surgeons, and short of nurses’ This admission comes only weeks after 2 long-serving surgeons at the Hospital did not have their contracts renewed”, she said.

“Nurses at the hospital have taken industrial action because they were sick of working overtime, and concerned about there not being enough nurses.

“Last year when Perter Toyne was censured in Parliament over his poor handling of issues at the hospital, he told the CLP to ‘substantiate’ allegations that went to the heart of his incompetence. The facts were glaring then, and they are glaring now.

“When censured in June last year, the Minister told Parliament that 'It’s a great time for health in the Northern Territory’. "This was Government spin at its worst. Alice Springs nurses are telling an opposite story to the Minister.

Health Minister Peter Toyne should give the health portfolio away for compromising patient safety and for his negligent handling of the continuing crisis at the Alice Springs Hospital.

“The industrial action by stressed nursing staff at Alice Springs Hospital could have been averted if Health Minister Toyne had cared enough to listen to warnings voiced by staff at the hospital and the CLP over recent months.

“As recently as January the CLP warned Minister Toyne that a shortage of nurses in Central Australia was pushing hospital staff to breaking point. Instead of responding to the crisis the Minister refuted the CLP’s claims.

“Staff at the hospital care more about patient safety than Minister Toyne does and for this alone Minister Toyne should go.

“For too long Minister Toyne has ignored the staff of the Alice Springs Hospital and been playing down the serious problems.”

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