Dr Richard Lim  
Deputy Leader of the Opposition  
Chairman, Policy Development Committee  
Shadow Minister for Education, Employment and Training, Corporate and Information Services, Communications, Ethnic Affairs, and Central Australia  

*Health Minister must explain why elective surgery is cancelled once again in Alice Springs*  
11 May 2004

Shadow Minister for Central Australia, Dr Richard Lim has called on the Health Minister to explain why the Alice Springs Hospital has cancelled elective surgery yet again, on the same day he is telling Territorians he has created 63 new nursing positions.

“The truth is many of these 63 positions have no one working in them and the Martin Labor Government continues to mislead Territorians about what they have done for the health system,” Dr Lim said.

“The Health Minister has had its budget for 2003-04 increased by some $150million over 2002-2003, yet he is unable to ensure that Territorians get adequate health services.

“Alice Springs residents have to put up with cancellations of elective surgery time and time again.

“And it is not unusual to see 15 patients waiting in Emergency each morning for admission to a bed in the Alice Springs Hospital.

“And every time the Hospital is asked to explain what the cause or causes of long delays for admission to hospital or for cancellations of elective surgery, the reason given is that there is a shortage of staff.

“Yet on the same day the Martin Labor Government is declaring in the media that it has created 63 new nursing jobs, Alice Springs patients are being rung by staff to tell them that their elective surgery has been cancelled.

“What the Martin Labor Government is not telling Territorians is that it has not filled many of the job positions that it has created.

“Why is the Martin Labor Government not telling Territorians is that it has failed to fulfil its election promise, which it re-announces each year, to increase the number of nurses working in our hospitals?

“I could just as easily tell Territorians that I have created 1000 new nursing positions, and not deliver one nurse to fill the positions.

“As for the recently promised $2million for the Alice Springs Hospital ICU and other services, hospital management has been advised not to implement any procedures to recruit
staff until very late in the year as the money will not be available.

“The Martin Labor Government is playing bluff with the health of Territorians, announcing initiatives that it has no intention to undertake.

“It is time the Martin Labor Government brought to account, to follow through on budget announcements by advertising immediately for positions that they have created and filling these positions, in the name of open and accountable government.

“And as for the Minister for Health, it is no wonder he wants to retire from the Martin Labor Government. He is tired of the misleading statements that he has to make on behalf of his government,” Dr Lim said.

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