Jodeen Carney
Shadow Attorney-General,
Shadow Minister for Justice, and Health

Govt makes a farce of its call to "Get a Briefing!" I did, but where are the answers?

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Shadow Health Minister, Jodeen Carney, has questioned why the Minister for Health refuses to answer questions about his Department.

Ms. Carney attended a Government briefing on 26th October. Only one hour was allocated to the briefing at which Ms. Carney wanted to ask a number of questions following her appointment as Shadow Health Minister.

"As we ran out of time, I faxed through the remainder of my questions on the understanding that the answers would be forthcoming. I have waited 3 weeks, and it appears that the Minister does not want to divulge the answers, or he doesn't know them," Ms Carney said.

"The questions asked were fairly basic, such as how many hospital beds are at each hospital?; how many nurses have been recruited?; and where has the increase in health funding gone? The answers to these types of questions would be routinely transmitted to the Minister"

Ms Carney suggested that it was part of a Government strategy not to answer questions asked by the Opposition in an effort to restrict damaging information becoming public.

Ms Carney pointed to 70 questions she provided to the Peter Toyne as Attorney-General in June. She received about 40 answers earlier this month. She does not know when the remaining answers are going to be provided.

"It's a disgraceful situation when the Government of the day refuses, or delays and obstructs the delivery of answers asked on behalf of Territorians to prevent it being accountable to Territorians*, she said.

Below
Questions the Minister refuses to answer:

1. From Budget: where have increases gone to; and what services (acute and/or community services) have been increased, (across NT)? Provide specifics.
2. Have any services (Acute/community services) been reduced either in delivery or funding?
3. What is the status of industrial issues for those employed in health-EBA's: where are they up to?
4. What is being done re: issue of violence against nurses?
5. Provide details of all national committees the health minister of which the health minister is a member.
6. Provide details of all Special Purpose Payments (SPP’s) or Federal agreements to the NT.
7. There has been appears to have been an increase in the health budget to approx $680m. Where has money gone? Where are the people and what are the programs and where are funds being deployed?
8. What performance indicators exist in order to assess whether services (acute and community) are adequate?
9. Provide details of the length of stay, waiting periods for elective surgery at all hospitals in NT. How does it compare with national waiting times?
10. What is the bed occupancy for public hospitals and how do they compare with national benchmarks?
11. Re: nurses: how many extra nurses have been recruited. There seems to be conflicting numbers, ranging from 75 to 93. How many are actually 'hospital-based' nurses? (Detail at each hospital in NT)
12. How many hospital beds are there at each hospital in the NT?
   (a) How many beds are in mental health facilities in Darwin & Alice Springs?
   (b) Are those bed numbers included in the bed numbers for Darwin & A/S?
   (c) How many beds are there in Rehab facilities and are they included in total bed numbers?
   (d) How many beds are there in palliative care facilities in the NT and are those beds included in the total bed numbers?

13. What does the Rehab unit at ASH do and what is in there, and how many staff work there?
14. Public statements by Government members have claimed that mental health funding has increased by 90%. Detail how this has been done and whether it is reflected in the budget papers; and when the increase commenced?
15. Re: Community health- Have there been any funding increases in the area of remote health in the last 3 years? What has been done, (ie: detail any/all initiatives), what has been improved and how? What, if any, 'prevention programs' exist or have been implemented in the last 3 years, and what are the outcomes?
16. What has been done, how, and how much has it cost in relation to providing support to Indigenous communities to take a greater interest in their health?
17. What monies have been given to NGO's over the last 3 years-provide schedule detailing which NGO's have received funds (and how much) over last 3 years? ie: How much of the health budget is going to NGO's by category and organisation.
18. How do hospitals get revenue from private patients/insurers using the public health system? Is there a target, if so, what is it? (how to harvest them, ie: how do you get money from private insurers?)
19. What does the Office of Aboriginal and Social Policy do? What's their budget and what are the outcomes and how are they measured?
20. Provide annual reports for last 3 years.
21. Tours of hospitals: would like generic approval to visit hospitals.

Ends