Is the Labor Government Now Bullying Central Australian Cancer Victims?

Cancer patients in Central Australia have expressed growing concern about the insensitivity of the Labor Government over discussions that they may be forced to travel to Darwin for radiotherapy treatments.

“I have been told by several cancer sufferers in Alice Springs that Labor minders have been advising them, that in the event a Radiation Oncology service is established at the Royal Darwin Hospital, all Central Australian cancer patients will have to travel to Darwin to receive treatment.”, Shadow Health Minister, Richard Lim said today.

“It appears that the Labor Government is prepared to force all Central Australian cancer sufferers to get their treatment at the Royal Darwin Hospital, without any care or consideration for the long and extensive links that the Alice Springs Hospital clinicians and the patients have formed with Adelaide radiotherapy services.

“The Frommer Report strongly recommended that cancer sufferers from the Alice Springs region should be given the choice of receiving treatment from radiation oncology services in Adelaide or in Darwin.

“It further recommended that a Darwin Radiation Oncology service will have enough patients to utilise the facilities in Darwin with cancer patients coming in from northern Australia, particularly the Kimberly region.

“If it is the Labor Government’s policy to force all Central Australian cancer sufferers to get their treatment in Darwin, then it is clearly wrong. The Oncology Unit, which has yet to be built, should be there to enhance the quality of service to cancer sufferers in the NT, not to restrict the options that those sufferers have.

“I call on the Health Minister, Peter Toyne, who is also the Minister for Central Australia, to reassure Central Australians that the Darwin Radiation Oncology Unit will be used to improve services for Territorians and that the option to travel to Adelaide for similar services will not be withheld.

“I want the Minister to reassure Central Australians that patients will receive adequate support for travel to and accommodation costs in Adelaide to get these services.”