AT THEATRE DOOR OR ON DEATHS DOOR?

The revelation that 14 people have died awaiting elective surgery in the Territory during the last year emphasises just how long elective surgery waiting lists are.

“This figure confirms the nightmare many people face as they are left in limbo awaiting elective surgery," says Dr Richard Lim, Shadow Minister for Health.

“I want the Health Minister to reveal whether any of these deaths resulted from waiting for surgery.

“I’m also disappointed that the Minister for Health, Chris Burns, consistently refuses to take responsibility for sorting out the shambles that is our elective surgery system.

“The plight of 74 year old Darwin resident Dorothy Lloyd, raised during Estimates today, is a case in point.

“Dorothy Lloyd has been waiting since Christmas to have her pace maker repaired.

“In that time she has suffered the trauma of having her scheduled surgery cancelled twice – each time on the day of the operation.

“The first time Dorothy Lloyd had been at Royal Darwin Hospital since 7.00am and was prepared for surgery when at 1.30pm she was advised her procedure was to be cancelled.

“Then just 2 days ago Dorothy Lloyd was packed and ready to go to RDH when she was rung and told her procedure had been cancelled again, with no future date fixed for the operation.

“Not surprisingly Mrs Lloyd is at the end of her tether and is re-considering her role as Secretary of the Heart Foundation Support Group.

“Mrs Lloyd is in continual discomfort from the pace maker moving around in her chest and is worried that it might dislodge or fail to work.

“When confronted with these facts the Minister denied he could intervene to rectify Mrs Lloyd’s situation.

“The Minister’s views were echoed by his Department’s CEO, David Ashbridge, a medical practitioner, who labelled Mrs Lloyd’s needs as not time critical. I doubt he’d think that if it was his pace maker that is moving around his chest.”

Further comment: Dr Richard Lim 0418897688