11th October 2007

HEALTH REPAIR JOB NEEDS TO CONTINUE

The Territory Opposition has welcomed the news that the number of people on overdue elective surgery waiting lists in the Territory has dropped by 31% in the past 5 or so months but are cautioning that the job is far from over.

"Today’s announcement needs to be read in light of the fact the Report on Government Services 2007 found 61.4% of category 1 patients on the waiting list were subject to extended waits at 30 June 2005," says Matt Conlan, Opposition Health spokesperson.

"By way of comparison, just 0.7% of category 1 patients in Victoria were subject to extended waits.

"That figure starkly illustrates the room for improvement that existed in the Territory.

‘The Report on Government Service also shows large numbers of patients on waiting lists for elective surgery is largely a creation of the Martin Government.

“In 2000-01, when the Martin Government first came to office, just 17.5% of all patients on elective surgery waiting lists had extended waits. By 2004-05 that figure had risen to 55.9%.

“Given the huge blow-out in elective surgery waiting lists coincided with the massive surge in GST revenues, the Martin Government has been particularly poor in its management of our hospitals.

“I note Minister Burns has indicated the initiative has now finished every where except Alice Springs Hospital ‘where it will continue until the end of the year.’

“If that means the third operating theatre at ASH will be closed at the end of the year I urge the Minister to think again.

“It would be illogical for the Martin Government to reduce surgical capacity at the ASH at the very moment demand is set to rise significantly.

“The Federal intervention in remote communities and the ongoing battle against eye disease will increase demand for surgical procedures at the ASH.

“I will be watching the situation in Alice Springs, and the rest of Territory, very closely.”

Further comment: Matt Conlan 040 880 5338