14th November 2007

MINISTER MUST RELEASE INQUIRY FINDINGS

Family and Community Services Minister, Marion Scrymgour, must release the inquiry currently being conducted by her Department into the death of a mentally ill patient whose body lay in a Darwin flat for several days, says the Territory Opposition.

“The reported facts surrounding this man’s lonely death suggest a breakdown in the provision of suitable care for him,” says Matt Conlan, the Shadow Health Minister.

“There needs to be a frank and fearless investigation into all aspects of this tragedy and the written report of that investigation released for public scrutiny.

“As FACS Minister, Marion Scrymgour has said, ‘These complaints are of a serious nature’, which is all the more reason for the Departmental report to be released.

“I will be very interested in whether the investigation examines resourcing issues in any great depth.

“The Northern Territory has just half the number of hospital beds for mental health patients of every other jurisdiction in the country.

“There is no community mental health care residential facilities staffed 24 hours a day.

“Those gaps in the provision of care suggest a lack of resources for people suffering from mental health problems.

“Earlier this year Family and Community Services was exposed as lacking the requisite resources in the area of child protection.

“It was revealed that FACS was systematically failing to commence investigations within the Department’s own timeframe into children reported to be at risk of abuse.

“FACS was under-resourced to do the job on child protection – is it also under-resourced to do the job on mental health?”

Further comment: Matt Conlan 040 880 5338