10th September 2008

IS THERE A DOCTOR IN THE HOUSE

The ministerial career of Health Minister, Chris Burns, is on life support as a result of his bumbling handling of parliamentary questions concerning the death of Mrs Margaret Winter.

In Parliamentary question time today the Health Minister claimed he was totally ignorant about a two year crisis in nurse staffing levels at the Royal Darwin Hospital.

“He’s got to go as Health Minister,” says Matt Conlan, Shadow Minister for Health.

“Indeed it was telling that the Chief Minister, Paul Henderson, refused to express his support for the Health Minister is question time.

“The Chief Minister merely indicated his confidence in the Health Minister to implement the recommendations of the Coroner’s report - the Health Minister is living on borrowed time.

“The Health Minister’s cowardly refusal to accept any responsibility for the shortage of nurses that contributed to Mrs Winter’s untimely death is well short of the minimum standard of ministerial responsibility required under the Westminster parliamentary system.

“In effect the Health Minister is adopting the defence “I wasn’t there, and if I was I didn’t do it.”

“His first line of defence is to claim he had no knowledge of the nursing crisis.

“Yet the then Shadow Health Minister, Richard Lim, was well aware of the situation as indicated by numerous media releases and parliamentary questions on the issue.

“Indeed, virtually everyone in health knew about the problems at Royal Darwin.
“The Minister’s second line of defence is to blame the individual health bureaucrats.

“It’s particularly cowardly of the Minister to attempt to completely shift the blame to others when he is in charge.

“The fact is the buck stops with the Minister and if he won’t resign then the Chief Minister must sack him.”

To arrange further comment: Matt Conlan 0408 805 338