The emergency landing of the CareFlight aircraft in Katherine on Friday night raises serious questions about the Henderson Government’s failure to finalise the aero-med contract.

“The ongoing delays in signing off on a permanent provider draws attention to this Government’s competence and capacity,” says Shadow Health Minister, Matt Conlan.

“It’s more than two years since Health Minister Vatskalis first announced plans to seek a new operator, yet there is still confusion over the terms of the contract and delays in its finalisation.

“What’s more, the Government has been vague in explaining why these delays have occurred, on the one hand claiming the process is ‘on track’, and on the other saying they are changing the contract conditions.

“The Government has still not provided a plausible explanation as to why it now wants Health Department medical staff on board aero-med flights or why it wants to change the locations the aero-med service is based.

“This is on top of its earlier failure to allow single engine aircraft to take part in the tender process, despite their use by the Royal Flying Doctor Service and the Northern Territory Police.

“Given the Government has a record budget blow-out of its own making and is essentially cash strapped, I would hate to think its aero-med strategy was being driven by cost pressures.

“The staff and clients of aero-med need assurances from the Health Minister that safety is the Government’s number one priority.”

Further comment: Matt Conlan 0408 805 338