Bed shortage at hospital

Corey Sinclair

IP you are a patient at Alice Springs Hospital and they need an extra bed, you could be transferred to another hospital hundreds of kilometres away. Central Australian Health and Hospital Service’s Acting CEO Sharon Bykes admitted Alice Springs Hospital recently had a peak period of demand for inpatient beds.

‘Like most hospitals, the Alice Springs Hospital does experience periods of high and low demand for services,’ she said.

She said a range of strategies are in place to deal with peak periods of demand including ensuring patients who are ready to leave are discharged, or transferred to other hospitals where necessary.

Local indigenous man Joel Walker, 27, was told he would be transferred from Alice Springs Hospital to Tennant Creek Hospital against his wishes. Born and bred in Alice Springs, Mr Walker was distressed at the idea of being hundreds of kilometres away from his three young children and his family support group.

NT Minister for Health Robyn Lambley said patients from Alice Springs Hospital were often transferred to Royal Darwin Hospital if they require acute specialist care not provided at Alice Springs Hospital, for example certain specialist surgeries.

“During a recent period of high activity at AHU, two non-acute stable patients were transferred to Tennant Creek Hospital,” she said.

“The decision to transfer these patients to Tennant Creek was made in consultation with clinical staff involved in their care and the patients’ families.”

Mrs Lambley is aware of the case of Joel Walker and understands that a discharge plan is under way for Mr Walker and that he is involved in this planning.

In 2011, Alice Springs Hospital had to reschedule 29 surgeries due to bed shortages.

‘Panic’ diverts flight

Corey Sinclair

AN aircraft was diverted to Alice Springs airport on Wednesday afternoon after a 31-year-old male passenger had a panic attack.

The Qantas-operated plane was en route to Katherine from Brisbane when it was forced to make an emergency landing at 5.30pm.

St John Ambulance deputy operations manager Simon Cooper said the man had become agitated while flying on the plane.

‘Police and fries were requested to remove the passenger from the aircraft,’ Mr Cooper said.

“He appeared to be having a panic attack.”

Mr Cooper said the man was given medication to calm him down before he was transported to Alice Springs Hospital.

Alice Springs airport manager Katie Cooper said aircraft making unexpected stops at Alice Springs airport had happened much more frequently than most people would think.

“Alice Springs is often used in this sort of circumstance because we have a good hospital and we can take any aircraft type,” she said.

“We are often an alternative airport for airlines to stop in as we do have good services and infrastructure that is capable of assisting.”

An Alice Springs Hospital spokeswoman said the plane passenger was discharged Friday afternoon.

A Qantas flight from Alice Springs to Darwin was also diverted to Katherine on an emergency landing after an electrical fault in 2012.

Detonators nearly end up in a residential dumpster

Corey Sinclair

LESLEY Tickner was shocked when he discovered a bag full of detonators while cleaning up an Eastside home on Wednesday afternoon.

Mr Tickner was filling up a garbage bin when he saw a bit of silver hanging out of a bag.

“I picked up the bag to throw it into the dumpster and it fell onto the ground,” he said.

“I just saw a detonator. There were a lot of them.”

Mr Tickner had no idea where they came from.

“I was quite shocked,” he said.

Within five minutes, the Northern Territory Police were at the residence but had to wait for the Federal Police, who had been through bomb training.

Acting Superintendent Travis Wurst said NT Police and Australian Federal Police bomb technicians attended the location where they recovered 104 detonators.

The detonators are believed to be several years old and are the type used in mining operations.

They were removed from the site and disposed of by police.

“It is important not to move items of this nature. If you do find an ordnance or explosives mark the location of the object and call police, who will in turn alert the appropriate authorities and have them safely removed,” Acting Superintendent Wurst said.

Call to hand station back

CENTRAL Land Council Director David Ross has called for the return of Tennant Station to its traditional Aboriginal owners.

Mr Ross said the southern Arapunta people had been trying to regain ownership of the pastoral property south of Alice Springs for 40 years.

He said five sacred sites of cultural significance are located at the property, including three permanent waterholes.

“It’s extremely important country for them and we have nearly completed research to lodge a claim for recognition of their native title rights,” Mr Ross said.

He warned cultural and environmental values were at risk of being damaged by the impact of feral animals, bushfires and weeds.

Mr Ross said the property could provide indigenous employment and pastoral training opportunities.

Charity focus

CHARITIES in the Northern Territory are more interested in benefiting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people than anywhere else in Australia, a report shows.

The Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission analysed data about the first 1000 organisations that registered since it was established in December last year.

Of the 1000, 20 were based in the Northern Territory, with Tennant Creek being the most charitable place in Australia.

The majority of NT charities aimed to help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Education ranked second in the NT, with relief of poverty and social and community welfare equal third.

Art seminar for teachers

A DEVELOPMENT workshop for primary and early childhood teachers will be held at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart tonight.

The workshop will provide educators with strategies for enriching the visual arts curriculum.

They will learn skills to design and implement visual arts programs, employ visual literacy and artistic thinking, build links between art and education, and collaborate with artists.

Raquel Redmond will teach ways to transform a classroom into an artspace. It will be held from 8.30pm to 9.30pm at the OLSH Bath St campus.

Bring a plate of food to share. Ph 8952 3638.