Natasha Fyles
Minister for Health

**Improving Safety for Remote Area Nurses**

6 December 2016

The Northern Territory Government will mandate a ‘Second Responder Policy’ as part of its response to a report on remote area nurse safety.

The Minister for Health, Natasha Fyles, has released the *Remote Area Nurse Safety: On-Call After Hours Security* report, accepting all 14 recommendations.

“The murder of remote-area nurse Gayle Woodford in South Australia last year raised serious national concerns,” Ms Fyles said.

“In the Northern Territory we need to learn what we can from this tragedy and try to support and protect frontline staff.

“I have met with those representing staff on the ground, including the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation.

“I have listened to their concerns and work on recommendations will be prioritised accordingly.”

High priority recommendations include:

- *That the DoH establishes an NT-wide policy and works with Health Services to update and implement guidelines to ensure that:*
  - All remote health professionals attending after hours emergency call-outs are accompanied by a second responder
  - Wherever possible the second responder is a trusted local community member employed and paid for any call-outs by the health service

- *The immediate updating of existing programs to include mandatory safety, aggression minimisation and de-escalation training and procedures*

- *The development of a standardised mandatory online safety on-call orientation package and induction programs that focus on community practices and policies*

- *Re-establishing an expert internal relief pool of experienced ongoing tenured remote nurses to provide backfill and ensure that a second nurse is available in the community*
That each Health Service immediately address a number of infrastructure and equipment issues that increase risk for RAN’s living and working in remote communities

Ms Fyles said mandating a ‘Second Responder Policy’ is a key recommendation for all remote primary health centres.

“A second responder is an employee who is rostered on to provide cultural and physical support to the on call nurse,” Ms Fyles said.

“Adopting the recommendations will improve safety for remote area nurses and acknowledge the important part that Indigenous community members have to play in delivering and improving health services.”

An action plan is being developed to manage the implementation of all 14 recommendations, with work starting immediately.

A progress report is expected in March 2017.

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