Sue Carter
Shadow Minister for Health & Community Services, Senior Territorians, and Arts & Museums

Taxpayer forced to pay $2000 a day for crisis that is 'not a crisis'

19 January 2004

The Northern Territory Government is paying $2000 a day for the next 60 days for a specialist anaesthetist from Brisbane to work at the Alice Springs Hospital to overcome a crisis the Government says it doesn't have, CLP Shadow Health Minister Sue Carter said today.

Ms Carter said today's extraordinary personal attack by Health Minister Peter Toyne on the Australia Medical Association for daring to suggest Government needed to improve conditions for medical specialists if it wanted them to remain in Alice Springs was the sign of a Minister not coping with the issue.

"We have a situation where the shortage of specialist anaesthetists at Alice Springs Hospital is so critical taxpayers are going to have to pay $120 000 to fly a Brisbane specialist in for just two months," Ms Carter said.

"The going rate around Australia for a full time specialist anaesthetist is $220 000 a year. Anaesthetists have expressed an interest in working full time at the Alice Springs Hospital as long as they get the going rate.

"The Government refuses and instead is paying, $120 000 for just two months to fly a specialist anaesthetist in from Brisbane.

"Rather than launch a personal attack on the AMA for calling on the Government to improve conditions so that specialists will work and stay at the Alice Springs Hospital the Health Minister would do well to address the issue.

"When ever the Government receives criticism for its behaviour it seeks to denigrate the person making the complaint rather than addressing the problem.

"Now the AMA is the subject of a personal attack.

"It pretty much reflects just how the Martin Labor Government bullies its way through Government".

Ends.