Health matters: From crisis to confidence
A Better Hospital System

A CLP Government will improve medical services across the Territory.

Annual additional funding - $14.6 million

We will closely examine the current priorities of Health expenditures. We believe that there are significant inefficiencies in the outlays as they stand.

The outcomes being achieved simply do not stack up with the amount being spent. Our additional budget provision is a contingency increase in the event we find that there is insufficient funding capacity once the full picture is known.

The health status of Territorians is determined by a number of factors including access to services, lifestyle, the effectiveness of health promotion campaigns and the standard of treatment and care in our hospitals.

Despite enormous increases in funding, under the Martin Labor Government services have been cut, health staff morale is deteriorating and there are increasing indications of worrying erosions in health standards in some areas. Key problems include heavy workloads of hospital staff and unacceptably lengthy waiting times for hospital beds.

Among the services cut by ALP are Men’s Health programs, suicide prevention programs, drug and alcohol programs, closure of the 24 hour clinic in Palmerston, closure of Community Care Clinics, including the clinic in Darwin’s CBD.

The long standing CLP initiated programs of community nurses visiting mothers and new born babies in their homes has also been cut and is no longer available for some mothers and rehabilitation services have been reduced.

Despite more funds to health, less is being done.

The Martin Labor Government has described the health sector as being “in crisis” and like “a war zone”.

More Territorians are being sent south for treatment than ever before. This is not a health strategy acceptable to the CLP in 2005.

The mess in health services is an indictment of Territory Labor’s gross mismanagement in this crucial area.

We will urgently address major crisis areas in Territory Hospitals

Royal Darwin Hospital and Alice Springs Hospital suffer a continual chronic shortage of general hospital beds.

This has resulted in the need for patients needing admission via emergency wards having to wait up to three days for a proper hospital bed. The CLP in Government will as a priority, take steps to address this problem.

This will include review of options for improving the discharge planning process, expanding the hospital-in-the-home program and reopening one of the currently closed wards in each of the hospitals.

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The CLP will return to a focus of sharing the responsibility of health provision with the private sector, the non government sector, the Commonwealth government, community groups, individuals and families.

We will provide more choice, including increased private hospital services in Darwin and Alice Springs, with the view to provision of satellite services in Katherine, Nhulunbuy and Tennant Creek.

We will improve access to Specialist Medical Services in the Territory

In 2005, Territorians can reasonably expect to have local access to most common health services at standards available to Australian’s elsewhere.

The CLP believes that specialist medical services in Darwin should be as good as any other Australian capital city.

We will accelerate development of full service availability for common specialist services for coronary, cancer and similar serious ailments. Patients should not have to travel south for treatment other than for highly complex specialist services.

We will increase specialist services by direct employment or by visiting practitioners to reduce waiting times in each our hospitals. If necessary, additional beds will be provided, along with increased private services.

A CLP Government will implement a full public cardiovascular facility within four years with upgraded Oncology facilities to follow. We will work with the Federal Government to establish Darwin as a regional specialist centre for North Australia and the near Asia region.

We will address the Problem of Recruitment and Retention of Nurses

A CLP Government will introduce a comprehensive package of specific options to make the Northern Territory a preferred destination for nursing staff.

Issues to be included will be workloads, wages, and promotional prospects, rewarding further education, employment conditions, safety, and financial incentives for staying in the territory, helping new nurses adjust to their work environments.

We will recruit, train and retain a highly skilled health workforce

The CLP believes that there is scope to increase the numbers of medical, nursing and Allied Health practitioners in both the public and private sectors.

We will undertake an immediate review to identify a strategy to increase these services to levels commensurate with other states. Issues we will consider are scholarship programs, initiatives to reduce the cost of indemnification, bonuses for long service, and more effective recruitment programmes.

Health matters: From crisis to confidence
We will focus on a number of community health areas which need attention

We will review existing birthing services to ascertain other and better options for expectant mothers.

We will increase community health based services such as nursing support, respite care and hospital in the home. It is anticipated these initiatives could reduce the necessity for people to attend hospital.

We will increase funding for disability service and establish a Disability Services Bureau. Adequate resources will be provided to the TIME (Territory Independent Mobility Equipment) Scheme.

The CLP strongly supports the need for our community to care for our carers. Increased resources for respite care (both for children and adults with disabilities) will be provided, as will an increased effort by Government to ensure an enhanced role for community health nurses to assist our carers. The CLP will pass a Carers Recognition Act so that carers can be assured that their views and their needs are seriously considered when management plans for those they care for are being developed.