Patients who are transported to and from Katherine by the Northern Territory Aeromedical Service have a dramatically improved service following the opening of a hangar at Tindal airport.

Minister for Health Dr Peter Toyne said the wait for patients will be safer and more comfortable.

“Patients and medical staff often had to wait in a plane on the tarmac in 40C heat – this was not only uncomfortable but unsafe,” Dr Toyne said.

“This meant patients and staff could have to wait for up to an hour in boiling temperatures should the ambulance be called out on an emergency – a dangerous situation when somebody is sick.

“Our remote residents have come to count on the Airmed plane in medical situations and emergencies - this new facility will mean response time and turnaround ability of the plane will be increased significantly.

“Air Medical staff will now also have their own dedicated work space to store equipment at the hangar complex, so they will not have to drive back and forth to Katherine Hospital to access urgent medical supplies.

The new facility is part of the Pearl Aviation-NT Government $56 million-10 year contract to provide aeromedical services in the Northern Territory.

Minister for Health Dr Peter Toyne said Pearl Aviation should be congratulated for meeting its obligations.

The NT Aeromedical Service transports about 3000 patients each year - 80% of these are medivacs and the other 20% are inter-hospital transfers, mainly between Gove, Katherine and Darwin hospitals.

Pearl Aviation flies an average of 3600 hours per year covering a distance of 766,000 nautical miles a year – the equivalent of flying 35 times around the world.