October 19 2005.

**Urgent need for Palmerston 24-hour medical service**

The health of Palmerston residents continues to be put at risk by the Government’s refusal to fund a 24-hour medical service, according to the Member for Blain Terry Mills.

Mr Mills said more than 8000 people had signed five separate petitions calling for the reinstatement of the 24-hour service. These petitions have been presented to Parliament.

“It is certain that sooner or later a Palmerston citizen needing urgent medical treatment will die because the medical centre is closed,” Mr Mills said.

“The 24-hour service was started in April 2001 and was then closed six months later after the Labor Government came to power.”

Mr Mills said the Government should stop wasting Territorians’ money on the futile challenge to the Federal Government’s decision to site a nuclear waste facility in the NT. That money should be spent on issues like the 24-hour medical centre and a cancer treatment unit for the Royal Darwin Hospital.

He said the Palmerston doctor-to-population ratio is appalling.

“The Territory-wide practising full-time General Practitioner to population ratio is 1 per 1601,” Mr Mills said.

“That Territory average falls below all proposed national benchmarks. For Darwin it is one GP to 1343 and for Palmerston it is one GP per 1999.

“If you take the Palmerston and rural area it is one GP to 2949.”

Mr Mills said that if between 65 and 140 extra doctors were to begin work in the Territory tomorrow it would only just match national benchmarks.