5th July 2005

Elective Surgery Waiting Lists Continues to Grow Under Labor Government

At Estimates today, Member for Greatorex, Dr Richard Lim was repeatedly interrupted by government members when he tried to raise the issue of increasing waiting lists for elective surgery at Northern Territory hospitals.

“Waiting lists for elective surgery have gone up consistently over the years across all hospitals in the Northern Territory,” Dr Lim said.

“In Alice Springs alone, waiting lists for elective surgery have gone up almost 4 times in the four years of the Labor Government and it looks like the list will continue to grow.

“The Opposition sought a table of the number of patients on waiting lists for elective surgery for the years 2001-02, 2002-03, 2003-04 and 2004-05 for all Territory hospitals so as to ascertain the rate of increase in the number of patients.

“The Minister for Health decline to provide the figures except for the years ending June 2004 and June 2005.

“Even these tables show that there are increases of patients on elective surgery waiting lists across the board, this in spite of government boasts that its health spending has gone up by almost $240m since this government came to power in 2001.

“One patient in Alice Springs complained to me over the weekend that his elective hip replacement has been put off 6 times in the last 12 months by the Alice Springs Hospital.

“In June 2004, he was assessed by the Alice Springs Hospital orthopaedic surgeon as requiring a hip replacement. He was then booked by the Alice Springs Hospital with an Adelaide hospital for surgery. That was later cancelled and deferred to November 2004.

“That was again cancelled and he was rebooked for the same surgery at the Alice Springs Hospital in January 2005. For the third time, the surgery was cancelled and he was booked for surgery in February 2005.

“When the February 2005 was cancelled he was given an appointment for April 2005 for surgery at the Alice Springs Hospital.
“The patient presented to the hospital for a pre-surgical assessment, and at that stage, was told by the surgeon that he now no longer required a hip replacement. This is beyond belief, that almost 12 months previously, he was told that he needed hip replacement, and had four bookings for the surgery made and cancelled.

“The Alice Springs Hospital obviously changed its mind as the patient was then contacted by the hospital and booked for surgery on 4 July 2005.

“He the presented at the hospital for a pre-surgery assessment, and up to that point, he was under the belief that he was at long last getting to have his surgery.

“Last week, he was contacted by the hospital to say that his surgery was cancelled once again and that his surgery will now be on 8 August 2005.

The Minister’s claim that everything is fine at the Alice Springs Hospital is simply unbelievable.

“Patients are put through great distress, and waiting lists continue to grow,” Dr Lim said.

Ends.

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