23 March 2006

Commonwealth Government to the Rescue

The Shadow Minister for Health, Dr Richard Lim welcomes the announcement today by Member for Solomon, David Tollner of the $65.8 million to establish a critical care and trauma response centre at the Royal Darwin Hospital.

“The establishment of the critical care and trauma response centre at the Royal Darwin Hospital will relieve the congestion that now occurs and it now up to the Northern Territorian Government to make sure that it works for the benefit of Territorians,” Dr Richard Lim said.

“The creation of 10 new beds in emergency care will provide extra intensive care and high dependency unit facilities and relief from the frequent occurrences of bed block at the hospital. I expect that these 10 new beds will be in addition to the 24 new beds that the Martin Labor Government has promised to deliver. (8 in 2008 and 16 in 2009).

“There will be more capacity in surgical and orthopaedic acute care beds, which will be able to better cope with the increased capacity in the operating theatres.

“It was because of the failing Territory Health system that David Tollner was encouraged, with the support of the NT Opposition, to convince the Commonwealth Government to bring this project on now rather than later.

“My concern is that the Martin Labor Government will not have the capacity to manage this project properly. In the first instance, it will need to be able to recruit the expertise to staff the new facilities. It is struggling now to find the appropriate clinical staff for Territory Health.

“I am also concerned that the Martin Labor Government might divert from the Commonwealth Government funding into its own projects.

“This bail out by the Federal Government is essentially the second time the Territory has received money from the Federal Government for the same thing. The first set of funds came in the form of GST allocations for health.

“I will be seeking a briefing from the NT Government on how it proposes to maximise the benefits of this commitment from the Commonwealth Government for all Territorians,” Dr Lim said.

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