The Health Minister Chris Burns says there is no case for Canberra to take over the running of Territory hospitals.

“Territorians should be running Territory hospitals,” he said.

Dr Burns said the Territory Government is focused on expanding and building on existing services in the hospital system.

“Our hospitals are the busiest in the country,” he said.

“We have increased the health budget by 73% to $838 million and significantly increased the budgets of individual hospitals.

“At Royal Darwin Hospital, in particular, the Territory Government has introduced initiatives to cope with the increasing demand.

“Stage one of the Rapid Admission and Planning Unit was set up last year to aid patient flow through the hospital. The unit cut waiting times for surgical patients presenting to the ED from 18 hours to 6. Stage two with an extra 15 beds will be coming on line later this year.

“An extra ward at RDH is set to open within the next couple of months. It will house the 12 extra fully-staffed beds announced in Budget 2007.

“The Territory Government introduced an initiative to cut elective surgery waiting times and this has had very positive results. So much so, that the initiative has been extended for an additional two months.

“In contrast, the Federal Government’s contribution to public hospital funding across the country has failed to keep up with inflation. As a result, the states and territories have had to make up a yearly shortfall of $1.1 billion.”

Dr Burns said there were also an additional 121 doctors and 350 nurses in the Territory health system since 2001.

“The Territory Government is committed to providing quality health care for all Territorians.
Canberra should be ensuring we have adequate GPs, better bulk-billing services and higher Medicare rates."

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