



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

Petition

Registration No:	7
Title:	Palmerston 24 hour emergency medical service
Presented on:	19 October 2005
Presented by:	Mr Mills
Referred To:	Minister for Health (Toyne)
Response due:	28 March 2006
Response received:	28 March 2006
Response presented:	29 March 2006

Petition

Palmerston 24-hour emergency medical service

To the Speaker and Members of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly

We the undersigned citizens do respectfully request that a 24-hour emergency medical service be established in Palmerston so that residents of Palmerston and the rural area have access to this regional facility instead of relying solely on Royal Darwin Hospital for after hours medical assistance.

And your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray.

Response

The provision of medical services (including after-hours) is important to Government and initiatives are continually being monitored to ensure that we provide the most effective health services possible.

Following a trial period, the Northern Territory Government ceased the overnight (10pm-8am) medical service at the Palmerston Precinct in 2001.

The review of this service identified that the service was underutilised with usage tapering off dramatically after 10pm. It found that the overnight service was not sustainable in terms of both throughput and cost. The decision to close the overnight service was supported by the Medical practitioners who provided the service and the Top End Division of General Practice.

There are now a total of seven General Practitioner (GP) services in the Palmerston/Greater Darwin area. Clients are able to access after-hours GP services from four of these practices during the following times:

- Two practices open during weekday evenings (one between 6-10pm and one between 6-9pm);
- Three practices open in the mornings on Saturdays, Sundays and Public Holidays (9-12midday/10-12midday); and
- One practice opens on Saturday afternoons (1-4pm).

In addition, the Government continues to provide a subsidy for the provision of a GP service between the hours of 6 to 10pm daily at the Palmerston Health Precinct. This is the only GP practice in the area that receives Government support.

I should however take a moment to emphasise that the primary responsibility for the provision of GP medical services (including after-hours) lies with the Australian Government, and with this in mind I continue to advocate for the development of sustainable GP models appropriate to the needs of the NT.