



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

No. 112

WRITTEN QUESTION

J Davis to the Minister for Health, Hon Steven Edgington MLA:

Pathology, Mortuary and Bereavement Facility

1. **The 2024/25 Budget allocated \$22.6 million for upgrading the forensic mortuary, pathology, and bereavement facility.**
 - a. **Why does this funding not appear in the 2025/26 Budget?**
 - b. **Please clarify why the \$22.6 million allocated in 2024/25 was removed from the 2025/26 Budget?**
 - c. **Has this funding been reallocated elsewhere, and if so, where?**

Construction funding for a new facility has been withdrawn following the reprioritisation of Major Works through the Budget 2025 development process, as there was insufficient funding allocated to the program to delivery all committed works.

2. **What is the current status of the facility upgrade—has any work started or is it still pending?**
 - a. **Has the upgrade project been delayed or reprioritized, and if so, why?**

As of 30 June 2025, the design was at 95 per cent. Improving the Royal Darwin Hospital facility is a priority for the agency and after a review of processes is completed, advice will be provided to Government with options to address capacity issues.

3. **Given the urgent need to attract and retain pathologists, how is the government managing the risk of staff shortages?**

There is currently no shortage of Forensic Pathologists in the Northern Territory. The Forensic department has a full-time equivalent (FTE) of 2.0, with both positions currently filled.

4. **What steps is the government taking to ensure current facilities meet professional requirements?**

NT Health forensic facilities meet standards as part of the Australian Council on Healthcare Standards accreditation for NT Health Hospitals.

5. How will the current state of pathology and mortuary facilities affect service delivery across the Northern Territory?

NT Health is unable to respond to this question noting the 'current state' of pathology and mortuary facilities is not affecting service delivery.

NT Health is currently reviewing its policy on cadaver storage, including medicolegal release processes, funeral director collection procedures, off-site storage options, and length of stay timeframes. This review aims to align NT Health's practices with those of other jurisdictions.

6. What plans are in place to provide culturally safe bereavement services for communities in the NT?

The scope of work for future bereavement areas will be based on the outcome of the work NT Health are doing, with the Department of Housing, Local Government and Community Development, to review the morgue movement policy and responsibility of agencies as part the end-of-life services available in communities.

7. Is there a new timeline for completion or commencement of the upgrade project?

No.

8. How is the government addressing risks to public health and forensic services due to any outdated or inadequate facilities?
a. Please provide the full risk assessment if possible.

In early 2023, the current facility was refurbished to address health and safety requirements associated with safe manual handling procedures for body transfers and insufficient drainage of fluids, lack of privacy in the changing facilities, ventilation and the replacement of flooring to maintain a clean workplace.