

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

WRITTEN QUESTION 137

Ms J Carney

to Minister for Health

Alice Springs Hospital - Repairs and Maintenance

1. In response to one of the many reports about the hospital falling into the hands of media and others, your CEO was reported in the *NT News* on 7th Feb that some defects had been repaired, but others had not:
 - (a) It was known that the switchboard was faulty since April 2003, and on 7th Feb your CEO said that is 'due to be redesigned'. Has that now been done, and if not, why not?
 - (b) It was known since April 2003 that the hospital pager system was faulty and your CEO said on 7th Feb that it is 'being reviewed'. Has that been done and has it been fixed?
 - (c) Has the fire detection system been replaced?
 - (d) What other repairs need to be done? Are there any risks to patient, staff or visitor safety?

ANSWER

In response to Ms J Carney:

- (a) The problems with the switchboard have now been rectified.
- (b) The paging system's intermittent faults have been rectified.
- (c) The present fire system at Alice Springs Hospital conforms to standards in place at the time it was installed. During the rectification works, the fire detection system is being upgraded in the Main Ward Block to include addressable sensors enabling fires to be located to specific points within wards.
- (d) Repairs and maintenance are ongoing features of the management of all public assets, including Alice Springs Hospital. These can range from broken power points through to major items of operating infrastructure.

In the context of the Alice Springs Hospital redevelopment, a comprehensive investigation has been undertaken into all aspects of the construction and installation of equipment, using the Clinical Management Ward as the test case. Similar issues have been identified across the Hospital where redevelopment affected the layout of the building, although their extent cannot be determined until wards are empty and wall and ceiling panels removed.

Extensive remedial works are currently underway in the Clinical Management Ward to ensure the *Building Code* is met. This ward will then be used to decant other areas of the hospital over time to enable repairs to be made across the entire facility, in particular fixing the breaches in standards regarding fire penetration. Action has already been undertaken across the hospital to upgrade the air conditioning, hydraulics and hot water system where these items can be improved without decanting wards.

Fire safety is made up of a number of components, including fire compartmentation, early warning systems, sprinkler and hydrant systems, and evacuation procedures. The Hospital is working closely with the NT Fire Service to ensure fire safety is maintained throughout the rectification process. Independent consultants, Warrington Fire Research and the NT Fire Service have both stated that a reasonable level of fire safety is being provided in the interim while rectification works are completed.