

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

### WRITTEN QUESTION

Mrs Lambley to the Minister for Health:

#### **Allied Health Services for oncology patients in Central Australia**

**1. What is the long term plan for sustainable allied health Outpatients services for oncology patients in Central Australia?**

Alice Springs Hospital (ASH) Allied Health provides a range of outpatient services with priority for oncology patients:

- Speech Pathology Outpatient service has been recently established
- Dietetics.
- Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy provide an enhanced lymphoedema service.
- Social Work will provide support from July 2018

Central Australia Health Service continues to monitor allied health service needs for oncology patients in Central Australia.

**2. How are you ensuring allied health expertise in Alice Springs based oncology services?**

Each of the allied health team members rotates through various positions, ensuring that all staff have an understanding of the complexities of each area and are able to provide backfill in the occurrence of vacancy or leave.

**3. What networks or process is there in place in the NT to collect statistics on cancer diagnoses, and not allow patients to fall through the gap.**

The Northern Territory participates in national cervical, breast and bowel cancer screening programs. Northern Territory cancer statistics are maintained in the Northern Territory Cancer Register. The aim of the Register is an epidemiological tool for public health planning.

General Practitioners are the primary care providers and refer a patient to a specialist for diagnosis and treatment to prevent patients from falling through the gaps.

**4. What process does the NT Government use to ensure that cancer patients are followed up and provided options of treatment and care?**

Referrals made to specialists for cancer patients are managed through the outpatient department at Alice Springs Hospital and are triaged and managed through a waitlist process according to triage category.

Territorians who are eligible for national cervical, breast and bowel cancer screening programs are invited to participate in the screening programs which include recall mechanisms to ensure patient follow up. For example, the breast and cervical cancer programs include recalls of women who have a positive result or who do not attend at first invitation.

**5. How many specialised oncology positions are funded by the NT Government in Central Australia?**

**Please provide a list of all these positions with a breakdown of medical, allied health and nursing positions, plus support services.**

See response to question 1 above regarding allied health.

There are three oncology nurses and a Breast Care Nurse funded by the McGrath Foundation. An Administrative Officer has recently been recruited to support oncology day service. These positions support visiting medical officers.

**6. Is there a plan for the NT Government to fund more specialised oncology positions in Central Australia?**

No immediate plans, however, Central Australia Health Service continues to monitor service needs for oncology patients in Central Australia.

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