

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY**WRITTEN QUESTION**

Ms J Carney

to Minister for Health

Waiting Lists

1. What initiatives can be found in the 2005/2006 Budget that is targeted at addressing waiting lists, waiting times or nurse shortages?

ANSWER**Waiting Lists and Waiting Times**

The 2005/06 Budget includes a range of initiatives which will assist in reducing waiting times on elective surgery waiting lists. These initiatives include:

- Funding of \$0.97M for the completion of the hospice at Royal Darwin Hospital to enable palliative care patients to be treated in an appropriate environment and free up beds to allow for more surgical patients;
- Continued funding of \$0.5M to support the NT Health Direct service. Public access to the service should reduce attendances in Emergency Departments, reduce inpatient-bed access block and allow for additional capacity for surgical patients;
- \$2M funding to develop renal dialysis services closer to people's homes in order to improve long-term wellbeing of patients, which may prevent hospital admissions;
- \$2M to upgrade and expand renal facilities in Alice Springs, again reducing frequency with which people will require admission to hospital;
- \$7.12M in capital works for construction of health centres in remote communities including Milikapiti, Minjilang, Daly River, and for upgrading existing health centres in Central Australia and East Arnhem. This increased focus on primary health care should enable more health problems to be identified at an earlier stage and reduce the need for admission to hospital for surgery, thus improving waiting times;
- It should be noted, however, that the priority in terms of surgery will always be for emergency patients.

Nursing Shortages

Initiatives within Budget 2005/06 to address nurse shortages in the NT, include:

- a \$1.94M allocation to Alice Springs Hospital (ASH) to include recruitment of nine new nurses together with a part-time second intensivist nurse;
- a \$200K allocation to upskill local nurses in midwifery, therefore increasing the local skills base;
- progressing the upgrade of single nurse posts.