



## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

### Petition

Registration No.	29
Title	KATHERINE AERO MEDICAL SERVICE
Presented on	25 November 2009
Presented by	MR WILLEM WESTRA VAN HOLTHE
Referred to	Minister for Health (Vatskalis)
Date referred	25 November 2009
Response due	5 May 2010
Response received	25 March 2010
Response presented	27 April 2010

#### Petition

TO THE HONOURABLE THE SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

WE THE UNDERSIGNED RESPECTFULLY SHOWETH

That we seek the Northern Territory Government to put true their work and listen to the people of Katherine, the Katherine region and the Top End of the Northern Territory by acknowledging the concerns of said people with regard to the withdrawal of the Northern Territory Aero-Medical Service aircraft from Katherine.

YOUR PETITIONERS THEREFORE HUMBLY PRAY THAT

We the undersigned call on the Minister for Health to direct that the Department of Health

- Direct the Air-Med contractor to maintain a full-time physical presence of the fixed-wing Northern Territory Aero-Medical aircraft in Katherine
- Securely employ sufficient flight-trained doctors and nurses at the Katherine Hospital so as to adequately staff said Air-Med plane on a 24 hour basis
- Demand of the Minister for Defence in the Federal Government that all required actions are undertaken to reduce the wallaby population to the level required by the Air-Med contractor for safe 24 hour operations at the Tindal Airbase

AND YOUR PETITIONERS AS IN DUTY BOUND WILL EVER PRAY

#### Response

I write to inform you of the significant progress that has been made, as safe, reliable air retrieval services are of critical concern for this Government.

Last December, I announced the advertising of the Top End Aero Medical Service tender, closing 31 March 2010. I also confirmed that the Top End Aero Medical service will continue operating from the Katherine base with additional services provided by Careflight Helicopter and a fully medically equipped spectrum aircraft from Pearl Aviation.

From 1 July 2010, Careflight will provide the Top End Aero Medical service from Darwin, Katherine and Gove bases on an interim basis until the new service contract commences. Careflight is a highly

experienced and skilled provider of these services and has been operating in the Northern Territory for several years.

Aero Medical Services is a specialised field of operation. Medical practitioners capable of undertaking aero medical retrievals are specially trained and experienced in critical care and emergency medicine, including advanced airway skills. Given the national critical workforce supply issues in this specialist field, it has proven most reliable to support the Katherine region with expert retrieval doctors from Darwin.

Significant effort to remove the wildlife risk at the Tindal airstrip has been undertaken by Defence Tindal with the installation of an airstrip fence and an ongoing Wildlife Management Plan for wallaby removal and culling strategies.

I understand the aviation providers continue to conduct safety assessments of the airstrip for night time retrievals. Air medical services will resume to 24 hour use of the Tindal airstrip as soon as it is assessed safe to do so.

Thank you for raising these matters with me. I wish to assure you that every effort is being made to ensure these services are of high standards for quality and safety for the entire community.