

## LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

### WRITTEN QUESTION

Mr Guyula to the Minister for Health:

#### Community morgues

Please advise what the department is doing to provide freezers that can hold a body for several months to allow time for funeral preparation, as well as wait for the opportunity to hold the funeral due to the high numbers of funerals happening in Yolngu communities.

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### RESPONSE

As part of the remote morgues upgrade project, three Arnhem Land communities, Alyangula, Gunbalanya and Jabiru received upgrades to existing morgues. In addition, Galiwin'ku, Maningrida and Numbulwar received new morgue facilities.

The majority of mortuary facilities in remote communities are positive temperature refrigeration units, as per the NT Health Primary Health Care Mortuary Facilities in Remote Communities Guidelines. The Guidelines state there is a limit on how long a body can be held in the mortuary to maintain condition of the body and to ensure the mortuary is available for further deaths when limited space is available. This time frame is between 21-30 days.

During the design phase of the remote morgue upgrades project, the decision to install refrigeration units for body storage was made by the morgues project control group. The decision was based on all other morgues being refrigeration units. Approvals to proceed with this design occurred with community consultations and local health service infrastructure representatives prior to construction.

In May 2018, during the service agreement negotiation period, Miwatj Aboriginal Health Organisation raised preference for freezer capacity in the new Galiwin'ku facility. Top End Health Service have negotiated with Miwatj to upgrade the Galiwin'ku morgue to provide half freezer capacity. This will enable a longer period of time for body storage at this facility.