

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

WRITTEN QUESTION

Air-Medical Flights

Mr Willem Westra Van Holthe, Member for Katherine

1. When is the expected completion date for the wallaby fence at Katherine airport?

Australian Government Department of Defence advises the wildlife exclusion fence will be completed by the end of April 2009, subject to weather.

2. When is the expected re-commencement of nighttime air-medical flights at Katherine?

Once the Tindal Airstrip is assessed as safe for night landings by the service provider the Aero Medical services fixed wing aircraft will recommence night flights.

3. What is the cost of housing air-medical pilots and support staff in Darwin that are otherwise based in Katherine?

Costs incurred by Department of Health and Families to date, are estimated at approximately \$173 000. This includes costs for accommodating NT Government nursing staff and transfer of base operations from Katherine to Darwin.

4. What are the specific procedures and measures that have been put in place to evacuate critical patients from Katherine during night time hours while the air-medical service cannot operate from Katherine at night?

On 14 November 2008, I announced an after hours helicopter medical retrieval service for the Katherine region. The Department of Health and Families has established an interim agreement with Jayrow and in December the Northern Territory Government committed to extend the overnight service until the middle of 2009.

In addition, Careflight based a fully medically equipped helicopter in Darwin, which is available to NT Aero Medical Services on a 24/7 basis. The inclusion of the Careflight Helicopter service to Darwin substantially increases the availability of helicopter retrievals across the Top End of the NT.

5. What is the cost of these additional measures referred to in question 4?

To date the Katherine helicopter night medical retrieval service has cost approximately \$110 000.