



# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

## Petition

Registration No:	1
Title:	Funding for after hours bulk billing medical services in Palmerston
Presented on:	10 September 2008
Presented by:	Mr Mills
Referred To:	Health (Burns)
Response due:	26 November 2008
Response received:	14 October 2008
Response presented:	21 October 2008

### Petition

PETITION TO NORTHERN TERRITORY GOVERNMENT TO REINSTATE FUNDING THEY WITHDREW FOR AFTER HOURS BULK BILLING MEDICAL SERVICES IN PALMERSTON

To the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory:

We the undersigned respectfully showeth

The Northern Territory Government no longer provides after hours bulk billing medical services at the Farrar Medical Centre in Palmerston. Medical services in Palmerston have been reduced and there are insufficient after hours services for the community.

YOUR PETITIONERS THEREFORE HUMBLY PRAY THAT

We, the undersigned, ask the Minister for Health Dr Chris Burns MLA to restore funding to this valuable community service.

AND YOUR PETITIONERS AS IN DUTY BOUND WILL EVER PRAY

### Response

Thank you for your letter dated 10 September 2008, enclosing Petition number 01 presented by Mr Terry Mills MLA, Member for Blain, in the Legislative Assembly on that day. Petition number 01 requested that the NT Government reinstate funding for after hours bulk billing medical services in Palmerston.

The Northern Territory Government is working with the Australian Government to develop an urgent care after hours medical service for Palmerston, which will bulk bill clients requiring urgent care.

The Australian Government has committed up to \$10million for the development of the Palmerston Super Clinic, an integrated primary health care service. The urgent care after-hours service will be the first stage in the delivery of a comprehensive range of primary health care services for Palmerston and Litchfield residents. It is expected that the urgent care after-hours service at Palmerston will be operating within the next few months.

In addition to the urgent care after hours service, the Health Direct Australia telephone advice service continues to operate and can be accessed for free by all Northern Territory residents. This service provides professional health assessment, information and advice 24-hours a day. Experienced registered nurses, specifically trained in telephone-based health care, provide callers with information about the acuity of their health issue and direct them to the appropriate level of care whilst also providing information about self-care. This service has now been operating for three years and has proven popular.

The NT Government recognises that residents across the NT, including those in Palmerston, may encounter problems in accessing timely and affordable GP services. I will continue to work with the Australian Government and the General Practice Network Northern Territory to advocate for improved GP access for NT residents through sustainable and equitable strategies and models.

I trust that this response will reassure you that the provision of medical services for Palmerston and surrounding districts is important to Government and that we are taking steps to implement coordinated care closer to home.