



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

Petition

Registration No:	8
Title:	Royal Darwin Hospital Review
Presented on:	12 February 2009
Presented by:	Mr Styles
Referred to:	Minister Vatskalis
Date referred:	12 February 2008
Response due:	10 June 2009
Response received:	10 June 2009
Response presented:	11 June 2009

Petition

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

WE THE UNDERSIGNED RESPECTFULLY SHOWETH that we are angry and upset by the avoidable death of 64 year old Margaret Winter at the Royal Darwin Hospital in 2006. We are alarmed by Northern Territory coroner Greg Cavanagh's findings that indicate that the conditions in the Royal Darwin Hospital were dangerous due to inadequate staffing.

YOUR PETITIONERS THEREFORE HUMBLY PRAY that the Northern Territory Government immediately commission an Independent Review to assess the adequacy of the resources, policy's, procedures and systems at the Royal Darwin Hospital and Acute Care Services to deliver safe health care to all Territorian's. As a matter of urgency the review should investigate the staffing levels of nurses and doctors to assess whether patients are at risk due to low staffing levels.

We request that the Independent review be made public in its entirety and that the recommendations be implemented immediately.

AND YOUR PETITIONERS, AS IN DUTY BOUND, WILL EVER PRAY.

Response

I note the concerns raised by those who have petitioned for an independent review to assess the adequacy of the resources, policies, procedures and systems at the Royal Darwin Hospital and Acute Care Services.

The Henderson Government considers patient safety and the quality of health services as a key priority and we have taken assertive action to ensure Royal Darwin Hospital provides the best care possible for all Territorians.

Since 2001, this Labor Government has increased resources to the Department of Health and Families by 117%, to a record budget of \$1.05 billion in 2009/10. Nearly one-quarter of these funds are dedicated to Royal Darwin Hospital.

We have provided growth funding to Royal Darwin Hospital every year since 2001, to a record \$245 million budget in 2009/10, an increase of 118%. These resources have increased the RDH workforce to a record high of 1800, with more frontline staff than ever before, including an additional 247 nurses and 113 extra doctors.

Royal Darwin Hospital has faced many challenges over the years. It is a busy hospital and provides expert care for an increasing number of people each year with high health needs. We are committed to ensuring that the care provided is safe and of high quality.

In response to the Coroner's recommendations regarding the death of Mrs Margaret Winter, this Government commenced a process of thorough, serious and independent review into Royal Darwin Hospital.

In March 2009, I released the full reports of these four expert reviews into the quality, management and safety at Royal Darwin Hospital. The reports are:

- Australian Council on Healthcare Standards (ACHS) Governance Review;
- Nursing Hours Per Patient Day implementation (Professor Christine Duffield);
- Security Audit Stage 1 – RDH Security (Mr Jim O'Sullivan); and
- Complaints Management Review (Mr Ray Norman).

The reviews sought critical input from the public and key stakeholders. It was extremely disappointing the Opposition did not make any effort to contribute to this process for the future of RDH.

Concerns in several areas of operation at Royal Darwin Hospital were detailed and importantly, the reports outline a way forward. We have commenced plans to implement the recommendations, supported by a new management team, led by the newly appointed Head of NT Hospitals, Mr Alan Wilson.

Mr Wilson will report directly to me and will ensure better governance and communication with all Territory Hospitals and the Department of Health and Families.

Copies of the reports can be found at www.health.nt.gov.au

I welcome community interest in the conduct and operations of our Royal Darwin Hospital and I trust that the community will welcome, as I do, the dedicated work we are putting in towards improvement.