

Hospital good to go, but when?

By CLAYTON BENNETT

THE Territory Government committed to the Palmerston hospital for the first time yesterday, but refused to say when the facility would go ahead.

The call came after Opposition Leader Delia Lawrie warned the Territory would miss out in federal funding if the hospital was scrapped.

"The mini budget needs to have funding for the Palmerston Hospital in it or else we run the real risk of Canberra ripping the funding out of the Territory and putting it elsewhere in Australia where a state government is prepared to get on with the job," she said.

Chief Minister Terry Mills said the facility would go ahead. "There will be a hospital in Palmerston make no mistake about that," he said.

The \$110 million project was announced in May last year when Labor was in government. It was to be completed by 2016.

But the proposal was left in doubt when NT Health Minister Dave Tollner revealed the Government was broke last October.

Mr Mills said there had been "no correspondence" between Health Minister Dave Tollner and Federal Health Minister Tanya Plibersek regarding the withdrawal of funds.

Today marks the CLP's 100th day in government, but the Opposition Leader was critical.

"The CLP have been an appalling government that has shown absolute arrogance and contempt for the Territory," she said.

"We've had 100 days of broken promises."

The Chief Minister said the CLP had implemented almost all measures in their 100-day plan.

"We've got a job to do and a major part of that is cleaning up the mess left by 10 years of Labor," he said.

Mini budget will be all heart to Royal Darwin



Royal Darwin Hospital head of medicine Dr Nada Rajah Kangaharan and cardiology director Dr Marcus Ilton with patient Laurie Webb Picture: MICHAEL FRANCHI

By NIGEL ADLAM

HUNDREDS of heart patients won't have to go interstate for treatment following a Territory Government decision to boost cardiac services at Royal Darwin Hospital.

Treasurer Robyn Lambley will announce in her mini-budget tomorrow that \$6.5 million has been set aside for the project.

Health Minister Dave Tol-

ner said the initiative was a CLP election promise.

"I'm delighted we're able to do this so soon after getting into office, especially considering the pressures on the budget," he said.

Patients will still have to go interstate for quadruple bypass surgery.

But many other procedures — such as stenting, using stainless steel to keep arteries open — will be available at Royal Darwin.

"There's long been a need for more cardiac services in the Territory," Mr Tollner said. "We've got the highest number of cardiac episodes in the country."

"This initiative means many patients won't have to go through the inconvenience and trauma of flying to interstate hospitals for treatment."

"They'll be able to have the surgery near home." Twice as many Territor-

ians go interstate for heart procedures as cancer sufferers.

Mr Tollner began pressing for greater cardiac service in Darwin in 2007.

He also campaigned for an oncology unit to be built in Darwin when he was in federal politics.

The push was continued by Labor and the cancer ward was opened next to Royal Darwin by then Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in 2010.



There's long been a need for more cardiac services in the Territory




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