

MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday 30 January 2025

Concern Raised Over Removal of Torres Strait Islander and LGBTQI+ Flags from Royal Darwin Foyer & Palmerston Hospital Foyers

AMA NT, ASMOF NT and our members have expressed deep concern over the recent removal of the Torres Strait Islander and LGBTQIA+ flags from the front foyers of Royal Darwin Hospital & Palmerston Regional Hospital. The removal of these symbols of inclusion and representation has sparked fears about the impact on patients and visitors who identify as Torres Strait Islander or LGBTQIA+.

These flags have served as a vital message of visibility, respect, and safety for members of both communities. Doctors have raised concerns that the removal and absence of these flags creates an unwelcoming environment for patients who already face systemic barriers to healthcare. The loss of visible representation leads to alienation and will discourage some individuals from seeking medical assistance when needed.

"It is crucial that all patients, regardless of their background or identity, feel safe and respected in our public hospitals," said Dr Robert Parker, AMA NT President. "The removal of these flags sends the wrong message at a time when inclusion in healthcare settings should be prioritised."

"Instead of dealing with pressing healthcare issues such as the lack of hospital capacity in the NT, the government has chosen to engage in culture wars around symbols" said Dr Tom Fowles, ASMOF NT President. "The priority of this government needs to be the provision of safe healthcare for Territorians".

The AMA NT and ASMOF NT are calling on hospital management and the Northern Territory Government to clarify the reasons for this decision and to engage in meaningful dialogue with the affected communities. They urge decision-makers to reinstate the flags and take proactive steps to ensure that Royal Darwin Hospital and Palmerston Regional Hospital remain safe and inclusive spaces for all.

"We strongly encourage the hospital and health authorities to reinstate the flags and reaffirm their commitment to diversity and inclusivity," Dr Parker added. "Representation matters, especially in healthcare, where trust and visibility can make all the difference in a person's willingness to seek care."

The AMA NT and ASMOF NT are calling for transparency and a formal response from hospital management regarding this issue.

Media Contact:

Fiona Crombie

0419 827 350

fcrombie@amant.com.au