

MEDIA RELEASE

NT Doctors Warn Patient Safety at Risk as Health Strikes Loom, Blame Systemic Government Neglect

The Australian Medical Association Northern Territory (AMA NT) and the Australian Salaried Medical Officers' Federation Northern Territory (ASMOF NT) today expressed grave concern over the impending and current industrial action announced by Northern Territory pharmacists, pathology services, and allied health professionals.

While any strike action will inevitably disrupt patient care and place further strain on our already overstretched hospitals, doctors say the blame lies squarely with a government that has failed to prioritise the health of Territorians.

The medical associations stand in solidarity with their hardworking colleagues, who have been forced into this position as a last resort.

"Let us be perfectly clear: our pathology, pharmacy, and allied health colleagues are the canary in the coal mine for a health system on the brink of collapse," said AMA NT President, Dr John Zorbas.

"These are dedicated professionals who have been sounding the alarm for years. The failure to offer conditions that are competitive with their counterparts down south is not just disrespectful; it's dangerous. It fuels a constant 'brain drain' that we simply cannot afford, leaving Territorians in the lurch."

ASMOF NT President, Dr Tom Fowles, said "the government's rhetoric about improving the Territory does not match the reality for frontline healthcare workers."

"The government boasts about its vision to 'restore the Territory lifestyle', but there is no lifestyle without a functioning health system. You can't have a healthy community when patients face delays in getting crucial pathology results, can't access physiotherapy to recover from injury, or find their local hospital pharmacy understaffed," Dr Fowles said.

"For too long, this government has focused its attention and budget on other areas while allowing the foundations of our health system to crumble. This chronic underfunding and neglect have left our colleagues with no other option but to take this drastic step."

AMA NT and ASMOF NT warn that the failure to retain these essential health workers has a direct and serious impact on the work of doctors and the safety of patients. Delays in diagnostics, medication management, and rehabilitative care lead to poorer patient outcomes, longer hospital stays, and a system spiralling into perpetual crisis.

Australian Medical Association – Media Release

“We urge the government to stop the spin and start listening to its frontline staff. Health must become its number one priority,” said Dr Zorbas. “It is time to come to the table with a genuine offer that values our healthcare professionals and makes the Northern Territory a competitive and attractive place for them to work.”

“Investing in our healthcare workforce is the single most important investment the government can make in the future and well-being of the Northern Territory.”

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