

POLICY STATEMENT

HEALTH

The Country Liberal Party believes government should work hard towards the very best health outcomes for all Territorians. From prevention to treatment, we need to find innovative ways to address health issues as well as adequately resource those programs and services working well. We will work to maximise the best mix of public and private health services so that Territorians can choose the type of service they wish to use. We are committed to the provision of world class hospital services which are accessible to all Territorians.

We are serious about tackling the areas of alcohol harm, mental health services, aged care, disability services and sexual health. We will continue to support our hardworking medical and health support staff and focus on what works for Territorians – from cradle to rocking chair. The CLP believes Territorians deserve the very best of health programs and services, no matter where they live in the Northern Territory. We will work hard to deliver those programs and services.

COVID-19

The health crisis posed by the COVID-19 virus has had worldwide repercussions. In the Northern Territory, through the hard work and forethought of our medical professionals, and the direction provided by the Federal Government through the National Cabinet, we have been fortunate to have never had community transmission.

A Country Liberal Government will continue to actively participate in National Cabinet, and act on the best health advice from the Chief Health Officer and the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC).

A Country Liberal Government will continue to have police on the borders, statutory declarations for those entering the Territory, hot spot management, expanded testing and mandatory quarantine for anyone deemed a risk to the Territory.

Hospitals and Health Clinics

A Country Liberal Government will ensure that primary health services and hospital networks across the Territory can meet the growth in demand for services.

Community Controlled Health Clinics

Aboriginal community control and delivery of health services has proven to be a successful model. The social determinants of Aboriginal health are complex and we will take a holistic view of healthcare including the physical, social, spiritual and emotional health of Aboriginal people.

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Over the past four years, we have unfortunately seen reports of safety concerns amongst remote clinic staff stemming from incidents as break-ins, thefts, and violence, some leading to the removal of staff from the community, leaving residents with no clinic access. This is simply unacceptable. A Country Liberal Government will work with police and local communities to ensure that health staff feel safe and residents are never left without health services due to safety concerns.

Expanding Telehealth

Because of the Territory's small, wide-spread population, the provision of visiting services and Telehealth services are necessary. The safe provision of health services is just one challenge the Territory has faced as a result of COVID-19, but out of this crisis has been innovation and initiative. The expansion of visiting services, mobile surgery, telephone counselling and telehealth services should be expanded not only as a response to crisis, but as ongoing services.

Cardiothoracic Surgery program at Royal Darwin Hospital

Every Territorian should be able to access life-saving procedures as close to home as possible. The Country Liberal Government has a plan to progress the establishment of a cardiothoracic surgery program at Royal Darwin Hospital, unlike Labor who secretly scrapped the program after purchasing expensive equipment.

When the program was first conceived by the Country Liberal Government, it was as a smart upfront investment in line with the long-term vision to not only serve the people of the Northern Territory with life-saving procedures, but to help position Darwin as an attractive medical destination for our neighbours in Asia and the economic benefits that would bring. A Country Liberal Government is committed to seeing that vision become a reality for the economic and health benefit to all Territorians.

We will:

- Progress the establishment of a cardiothoracic surgery program at Royal Darwin Hospital
- Build the capacity of communities to support local and regional solutions for health outcomes, and work towards all health centres being controlled by local communities
- Commission empty or underused wards in Royal Darwin Hospital and Palmerston Regional Hospital to help ease bed block, and review the operations of Palmerston Regional Hospital to ensure the facility is adequately resourced
- Work with and support non-government organisations to increase programs and services which help assist the recovery of inpatients
- Work with the Commonwealth to ensure fair and equitable funding for the Territory's six hospitals
- Work with the Public Health Network to examine the feasibility of a health clinic at Dundee

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- Investigate the viability of establishing a mobile surgery to visit regional and remote area clinics
- Expand Telehealth services for increased access to specialist care
- Implement a priority hiring target for medical staff in the Territory's six public hospitals
- Deliver training and professional development in communities for nurses and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners
- Conduct a facilities audit in remote communities
- Work with remote community leaders on safety agreements for health clinic staff and facilities
- Explore models for introducing altruistic surrogacy legislation in the Northern Territory
- Explore options for better access to dialysis services, including the expansion of home and community self-care dialysis therapies, remote clinic capacity, and transport services
- Trial a rollout of defibrillators in Barkly Region schools in communities that do not have a health clinic

Primary and Preventative Care

We will develop and expand a stronger, more accessible Primary Health Care system to underpin better health outcomes for Territorians. We believe in strong local decision making in our communities. Staff and service providers should be enabled to make operational decisions and to use initiative and innovation, and frontline workers should be supported by a system which empowers them to make local decisions which suit their communities' needs.

We will:

- Re-invest in and expand preventative health programs such as Strong Women, Strong Babies, Strong Culture, STI education, and breakfast programs at school
- Support and lobby for the addition of Meningococcal B immunisation on the National Immunisation Program
- Investigate the expansion of Telehealth services for increased access to primary care
- Build the capacity of communities to support local and regional solutions for health outcomes
- Ensure that delivery of health is aligned with education and housing to create improved environments to enable children to grow and meet their potential

Alcohol and Other Drugs – treatment and care

A Country Liberal Government will ensure targeted treatment and care options to reduce harm from alcohol and other drugs are a primary focus. There is no single answer to addressing the harm caused by alcohol, which must be addressed through comprehensive supply, demand and harm minimisation measures.

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We will:

- Accelerate the implementation of the FASD recommendations in the Riley Review
 - Early intervention strategies
 - Protocols for screening alcohol use, support and referral
 - Audit professional development needs of FASD health workforce
 - Expand Families as First Teachers
 - Expand Family Nurse Partnership Program
- Increase access to alcohol and other drugs treatment services including in remote communities
- Provide professional development for nursing and Indigenous Health Practitioners in remote and primary health centres to ensure they have the skills to provide on-site treatment for alcohol and substance abuse
- Investigate the need for a cultural health centre and an alcohol and other drugs facility in remote communities

Disability Services

The CLP is committed to ensuring people with disabilities are supported and have options to participate and work in the community.

We will:

- Increase employment opportunities in the NT Public Sector for people with a disability
- Retain the portfolio of the Minister for Disability and develop a disability strategy for the Northern Territory
- Work with the Commonwealth to ensure that Territorians are supported to navigate NDIS packages
- Support service providers to plug the gaps in disability services while growing the market to cater for National Disability Insurance Scheme planning, especially in remote areas
- Investigate the development of a community purpose built residence for those with disabilities who can live independently but require full time support services
- Conduct a survey of disabled Territorians to gain an updated and true picture of needs and wishes

Mental Health

The Northern Territory has unique characteristics, priorities and challenges in the disability sector, including a highly vulnerable population and a high cost of service delivery. A Country Liberal Government is committed to ensuring the overall mental health of Territorians is met and will work to maximise the best possible mental health services are available for Territorians.

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We will:

- Work with the Commonwealth to ensure Territorians can access a range of mental health services including health promotion, illness prevention, treatment, community development, advocacy and rehabilitation
- Work with the Commonwealth to build a new mental health inpatient facility in Darwin, and trial eight community mental health centres
- Investigate and plan for additional mental health treatment facilities in Darwin and Alice Springs
- Develop a clear action plan including timeframes to address suicide prevention in the Northern Territory
- Continue to fund the Suicide Prevention Community Grants
- Increase ongoing funding to enhance mental health services in the Northern Territory
- Fund services to continue and expand more person-centred holistic care which is culturally appropriate

Aged Care

We want to invest in the care of senior Territorians. Senior Territorians deserve to live in dignity and comfort in the Northern Territory. We want more seniors to stay here and be a vital part of our communities.

We will:

- Facilitate increased private investment into residential aged care facilities in the Northern Territory
- Investigate ways to expand home care options for the aged
- Partner with non-government organisations to trial an aged care facility in a remote community
- Work with the Commonwealth on aged care solutions designed to address the Territory's unique circumstances
- With the relevant non-government organisations, develop a priority action list for addressing the gaps in services for the aged including those under the National Disability Insurance Scheme