



19.04.05

## **IT'S YOUR CALL – INSTANT HEALTH HELP**

A 24 hours a day/7 days a week toll free phone number has been launched for people who need health help in the Northern Territory.

Minister for Health Dr Peter Toyne said from today Territorians will be able to get instant help from an experienced registered nurse by simply dialling **1800 186 026**.

*“NT HealthDirect allows people to get access to advice in the time it takes to dial a phone number,”* Dr Toyne said.

*“The launch coincides with an advertising campaign to ensure everyone has the NT HealthDirect phone number on the fridge, by the phone or in the memory of the mobile.*

*“This will deliver a high quality service for the Northern Territory community and builds on the extra \$154 million and 100 extra nurses already in the health system,”* Dr Toyne said.

*“More than 600 calls were received during a month-long trial of the service, which re-directed all calls from Emergency Department’s to NT HealthDirect.*

*“The launch of the number means all Territorians can now call the service directly to get help with health problems.*

*“Emergency Departments will also benefit with the start of the call centre,”* Dr Toyne said.

*“The service is based on the same model used in Western Australia which has resulted in only half the callers who planned to visit the Emergency Department actually attending.*

*“The Emergency Department doctors will now be able to focus on the patients in front of them, instead of also being required to provide telephone advice service.*

*“We are hoping for the same results and will use the WA call centre facilities to draw on the experience and expertise gained over 6 years.*

*“Calls to NT Health Direct will be answered by an experienced triage nurse who is registered in both jurisdictions and has been trained specifically for the unique circumstances found in the Territory.*

“This service supports rather than replaces other health initiative and people should always call 000 in an emergency,” Dr Toyne said.

*Contact: Richard O’Leary 0401 119 586*

**(Shane Dawson, CEO Top End Division of General Practice is also available for comments on the service.**