



The Hon Justine Elliot MP
Minister for Ageing

Mr Damian Hale MP
Member for Solomon

MEDIA RELEASE

14 April 2009

Minister Opens Extension to Largest Nursing Home in NT: More Aged Care Beds for Darwin

Minister for Ageing, Mrs Justine Elliot today officially opened a new nursing home extension in Darwin – bringing the total number of aged care places in the city to an all-time high of 276 places.

Masonic Homes “**Tiwi Gardens Lodge**” is the largest nursing home complex in the Northern Territory.

The total facility cost \$16.125 million with the Australian Government providing almost \$3.4 million in capital grants to help fund construction of the extension.

Mrs Elliot said: “This project is an example of the Federal and Territory Governments working together in a three-way partnership with an aged care provider to deliver more aged care places,”

(The land for the extension, the new villas and the mews was provided by the Northern Territory Government under Crown Lease in perpetuity.)

Mrs Elliot expressed her support for Masonic Homes’ chief executive officer, Mr Douglas Strain’s comments that he was examining a possible further expansion into the Darwin suburb of Palmerston – within the next five years.

Mrs Elliot was expected to be joined at the official opening by Federal Labor MP for Solomon, Mr Damian Hale and the NT Minister for Health, Mr Kon Vatskalis.

The Masonic Homes complex is expected to employ up to 57 staff – with 12 new jobs created as a result of the extension, including roles for care coordinators and enrolled nurses.

By-mid 2009, Masonic Homes expects to be employing 150 staff directly and indirectly relating to their Northern Territory operations – making it one of the largest non-government employers in Darwin.

Masonic Homes estimates that the service would be injecting about \$12 million a year into the Northern Territory economy.

Federal Labor MP for Solomon, Mr Damian Hale said the development created local jobs and was a significant boost to the local economy.

“This is a great example of a financial and social investment for the future of the Northern Territory.

“This is great news for older Territorians and the wider community,” Mr Hale said.

The new extension would accommodate 50 residents who have transferred from the Darwin Nursing Home and an additional 35 new aged care places allocated through the Aged Care Approvals Round.

Mrs Elliot said, “In the past, if older people in the Territory needed to enter a nursing home, many had to move to Adelaide and Melbourne. This project means they can now be near their children and grandchildren,”

The transfer of the 50 residents was the largest transfer of people since the Royal Darwin Hospital moved to Tiwi in 1980.

The new extension is part of a larger complex that can now accommodate 135 older people in total through an ageing-in-place model.

It is also the base for The Masonic Homes Community Care Program, which includes:

- 15 Community Aged Care Packages;
- 28 Extended Aged Care at Home;
- Five Extended Aged Care at Home Dementia; and
- National Respite for Carers Program Day Respite.

It builds on the 241 aged care places in Darwin provided by four aged care homes.

Tiwi Gardens Lodge was previously a 20 high care and 30 low care place aged care facility which was opened on June 21, 2003.

Tiwi Gardens Lodge is co-located with the Masonic Homes Retirement Village. Masonic Homes acquired the Darwin Nursing Home, a 50-bed high care facility in August 2006. Extensions to the building to accommodate the expansion began in 2007.

Masonic Homes plays a vital role in caring for older Australians throughout the Northern Territory and South Australia, with more than 450 people a day being cared for in their aged care homes.

“I want to officially welcome all of the residents to their new home,” Mrs Elliot said.

“In addition, I congratulate the staff and volunteers for their hard work in the development and completion of this project,” Mrs Elliot said.

The new complex will include modern facilities and a communal area comprising a recreation room, swimming pool and barbecue.

“Darwin, like many parts of Australia is facing the challenges of an ageing population,” Mrs Elliot said.

“This is about responding to the challenges of Australia’s ageing population. Australians now have the longest life expectancy in the English speaking world,” Mrs Elliot said.

The Rudd Government is planning for the future and expanding existing services in both residential and community care.

Aged Care in Darwin

Darwin with a population of 132,308 has an aged population of 5,945, which is expected to reach 6,519 by 2010.

There are currently 241 residential operational aged care places in Darwin; of which 140 are high care and 101 are low care.

This will increase by at least 35 places which will include 20 high care and 15 low care places once Masonic Homes brings online the places granted through the ACAR.

The Australian Government's financial support for aged care in The Northern Territory aged care providers will total \$285 million over the next four years.

Over the next four years, funding for aged and community care would reach record levels of more than \$41 billion – with \$29.4 billion of that on nursing homes and hostels alone.

For more information, contact Mrs Elliot's office on (02) 6277 7280