THE HON PETER DUTTON MP
MINISTER FOR HEALTH
MINISTER FOR SPORT

MEDIA RELEASE

22 October 2014

Ebola – The Facts

The Deputy Opposition Leader Tanya Plibersek and Labor’s Shadow Health spokesperson Catherine King should cease playing politics with the serious health issue of Ebola.

Today Ms Plibersek and Ms King appear to be trying to denigrate our national capabilities and our dedicated and highly skilled health workforce – the doctors and nurses and support staff who would volunteer to treat and care for patients who may be stricken by Ebola.

It appears they are prepared to do and say anything without regard to the possible consequences - today stating that Australia could not assist our neighbouring countries in the event of an Ebola outbreak in our region.

As the Secretary of the Department of Health Martin Bowles told Senate Estimates hearings today – a team of 20 health workers can be dispatched from Australia as a first immediate response to our regional neighbours should there be an Ebola outbreak and should Australia be asked for help.

Mr Bowles told the Estimates hearing these health workers are fully trained to deal with Ebola.

As with any emergency situation – a first response team is dispatched to a crisis and further support is then drawn in behind them.

The federally funded National Critical Care and Trauma Response Centre in Darwin has trained clinical staff in Ebola specific PPE equipment and they are able to be deployed at short notice.

On standby are infectious diseases and emergency specialist doctors and nurses who could be deployed from Darwin. They are vaccinated and heat acclimatised for a four week deployment.

Labor – in particular Ms Plibersek and Ms King - have played politics over this serious health matter from the start and appear determined to continue to do so. Both previously held senior Ministerial responsibilities in the health portfolio and should be aware of the damage their reckless statements can cause.

Their statements today are simply wrong. They should acknowledge this and correct the record.

Australia is ready and able to assist our neighbouring countries across our region should this terrible disease appear here.

Media Contact: John Wiseman – 0401 776 108