New Laws to Toughen Property Damage

New laws will broaden and strengthen property and arson offences in the Territory.

The Minister for Justice and Attorney-General, Delia Lawrie, said the Criminal Code Amendment (Criminal Damage) Act today passed in the Territory Parliament.

“The laws covering criminal damage and arson have been modernised and are more consistent with community expectations,” Ms Lawrie said.

“The offence of arson has been broadened and now includes damage caused to motor vehicles by fire or explosives.

“Arson now applies to specific forms of property including setting fire to another person’s house or workplace, motor vehicles and attached trailers, aircraft and motorised vessels.

“Would-be arsonists should be warned as the maximum penalty for arson remains life imprisonment.

“The new laws also simplify penalties for criminal damage with single maximum penalty of 14 years imprisonment, rather than the current varying penalty of between two and 14 years imprisonment depending on the type or value of the property damaged.”

Ms Lawrie said the Act creates a new offence of sabotage which aims to fill the gap identified in Australian domestic law in relation to acts of terrorism.

“Currently in most jurisdictions, property damage only relates to relatively minor offences and therefore the penalties don’t reflect the seriousness and gravity of terrorist and potential terrorist acts,” she said.

“The new offences of sabotage and threatened sabotage are directed at terrorists and others who attempt or threaten to destroy public facilities, infrastructure, government offices or services with the maximum penalty life imprisonment.”

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