MEDIA RELEASE

FERRY SILLY TENDER PROCESS

November 10th, 2011

The Chief Minister should explain how his Government has managed to bungle what should have been a straightforward tender process.

Member for Port Darwin, John Elferink, said the Labor Government under Paul Henderson is so incompetent that a simple ferry contract becomes a source of embarrassment.

“On October 28th, the Department of Lands and Planning issued a media release saying that Sydney-based company Fast Ferries had been chosen as the preferred tenderer to operate the Darwin-Mandorah ferry,” Mr Elferink said.

“This was despite the existing operator – who has had the contract for more than a decade – also seeking to have the contract renewed.

“The Government then appointed one of its own, Local Member Rob Knight, to chair the committee formed to oversee the tender process. A fairer and democratic approach would have seen the chair-person elected.

“It also came to light that the ferry selected for the Mandorah-Darwin run was still in dry dock – even though the contract is set to begin on January 1st.

“The October 28th media release flagged the commencement of ‘commercial negotiations’ with Fast Ferries to ‘finalise a contract in sufficient time to ensure a January 1st start date and the ongoing provision of services’.

“But yesterday the Chief Minister tried to distance himself from the mess, saying Fast Ferries was:

‘…still the preferred tenderer, contracts have not been let yet and the Department is in discussions with this company about its ability to meet the terms and conditions which it has bid through the tender process.’

“The most basic test of competence would have seen Fast Ferry’s capacity to deliver the service finalised before it was chosen as preferred tenderer.”

Further comment: John Elferink 0418 406 400