MEDIA RELEASE

STOPPING THE BUCK

Saturday July 28th, 2012

Opposition Leader, Terry Mills, says the Henderson Government and in particular the Housing Minister, must take responsibility for ending the wages stand-off that has seen up to 40 remote housing (SIHIP) workers unpaid for the past month.

Mr Mills said an accountable Government would have been front and centre in resolving the pay dispute that has affected the livelihoods of workers and their families.

"I would have thought a priority of any Labor Government would be to resolve a pay dispute that affects working people," Mr Mills said.

"Certainly that’s what the Federal Government believed, with Indigenous Affairs Minister Jenny Macklin saying last week Henderson Labor was ‘working through’ non-payment issues.

"Despite SIHIP being managed by the Territory Government, Housing Minister Chris Burns left it to a senior bureaucrat to comment to the press.

"Minister Burns has done plenty of SIHIP-related media when houses are being opened, but ducks for cover when the going gets tough.

"A responsible, accountable Minister would be actively involved in negotiations to settle the pay dispute, not lurking in the background leaving it to media to carry the can.”

Mr Mills said Labor’s lack of accountability surrounding SIHIP is a snap-shot of how the Government has ducked and weaved to avoid responsibility over
more than a decade.

“Instead of acknowledging and acting upon the housing and rental affordability crisis that has forced thousands to leave the Territory, Labor has blamed the banks.

“For years Labor talked down the crisis in child protection, only reluctantly holding a full investigation after sustained pressure from the community and Opposition.

“Labor blames poor NAPLAN outcomes on remote schools; the tourism downturn on exchange rates; soaring Government debt on the GFC; Darwin Harbour pollution on bats and cats; systemic power failures on the previous Government; the Alice Springs crime wave on police…

“Labor’s attitude to accountability was summed up best by Minister Kon Vatskalis who, when asked if he took responsibility for system failures that led to the Montara oil disaster, replied:

‘I’m the first one to say that the Department was at fault’.

“The Country Liberals will provide Territorians with accountable, responsible Government – in stark contrast to Labor’s model of buck-passing, spin and deceit.”

Further comment: Terry Mills 0418 833 594