NEW TIWI FERRY PROPOSED

6 March, 2013

A commercial operator is being sought for a passenger ferry service to run as an extended trial between Darwin and the Tiwi islands.

Transport Minister Adam Giles said the NT Government will assess expressions of interest (EOI) received from prospective ferry operators over the next four weeks to 3 April 2013.

“Under the EOI proposal a ferry service would travel between Cullen Bay and Wurrumiyanga at least three days a week,” Mr Giles said.

He said demand for a daily service will also be assessed.

Arafura MLA Francis Xavier said an extended trial over the dry season would allow the Northern Territory Government time to consider the viability of a new service.

“The Country Liberals have a plan to create a three hub economy based on mining and energy, tourism and education and food exports – and the Tiwis will play a key part in that.”

Tiwi Islands were left without a permanent ferry service last year after the previous Labor Government re-negotiated a new contract for the Mandorah Ferry – without including the islands in the new arrangement.

The former Labor Government later paid $443,000 to subsidise a ferry trial from late August to early November with a total of 431 passengers using the service during the three-month period. Passenger numbers did not exceed 25 for a single trip and the average was five passengers per trip.

Key criteria the NT Government will assess in the EOI process includes commercial sustainability of operating the service, stakeholder engagement and marketing plans, vessel specifications and the ability to provide regular financial reporting and passenger data to the Department of Transport.

Media Contact: Bruce Cutler 0457509133