MEDIA RELEASE

Ken Vowles
SHADOW MINISTER FOR LANDS AND PLANNING

14 May 2014

CONCERN OVER TOTEM ROAD CLEARING

Shadow Minister for Lands and Planning, Ken Vowles, today questioned the decisions being made by the Minister for Lands, Planning and Environment, in relation to land opposite the corner of Totem Road and Dick Ward Drive.

“People are concerned that they woke on the morning of 4 May this year to read a NT News report of the clearing of this land and Larrakia action to protest that work,” Mr Vowles said.

“Clearing of this land was denied by the Lands and Planning Minister in 2010 because of the status of the land as a conservation zone and storm surge constraints on land development.

“This land is known to include the burials of Larrakia and other Aboriginal people, potentially hundreds of burials held by the Gwala Dariniki Association, a local Aboriginal Association representing the residents of Kulaluk and Minmarama Park.

“On 7 March an application for subdivision and expected sequential commercial development was rejected by the Development Consent Authority on the basis that a required master plan for the whole site had not been completed or endorsed by the Consent Authority.

Mr Vowles said curiously, on the same day, the Minister for Lands Planning and the Environment signed off on an older and separate application to amend the Planning Act to change the status of another smaller parcel of land on the Gwala Dariniki lease from Conservation Zone to Specific Use – Light Industry.

“The change enables the use of this land for development of a light industrial park, like others in nearby Coconut Grove,” Mr Vowles said.

“Is this another case of a developer jumping the gun and getting ahead of the land development approval process?

“Did his department recommend that further work should occur to properly consider the heritage values of the site; for example the use of ground penetrating radar to identify burial sites outside part of that land already known to be a burial place?”
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“Why weren’t the wider Larrakia community able to make their views known on their attachment to that site before your change in land use and clearing commenced?”

“Why did the Minister write to Dr Bill Day on 1 May saying that “any future use will be subject to a period of public exhibition, where the public will be invited to make a submission in respect of that proposal?”

“The actions of the Minister have caused great distress to many Larrakia people, and have led to application to the Federal Court for an injunction to stop work and mediation recommended by the Court.

“Why can’t the Minister take the time to understand the history of this place and ensure proper consideration of the heritage values of this land to the Larrakia?”

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