Media Release

John Elferink
Attorney-General and Minister for Justice

**Labor ignores big issues during Budget Estimates**

4 June 2015

Tourism, northern and central development, correctional services and domestic violence were among the important issues Labor failed to ask questions about during Budget Estimates Hearings despite having 55 hours to grill Northern Territory Government Ministers.

Leader of Government Business John Elferink said Budget Estimates was an opportunity for the Opposition to hone in on Government spending in key areas, but Labor squibbed it.

“Over the past two weeks of Budget Estimates hearings, Labor has shown their inexperience and proven they are just not ready for Government,” he said.

“While the CLP Government is working hard to deliver better services and create jobs for Territorians, all Labor is interested in is scoring petty political points and talking down the Territory.”

Mr Elferink said in 55 hours of Budget Estimates Hearings over two weeks, Labor had failed to ask Ministers questions about a range of important issues including:

- Northern and Central Australian Development;
- Correctional Services in the Northern Territory;
- The ice epidemic and taskforces set up to tackle the problem;
- Domestic violence and women’s policy;
- Home ownership support and bond assistance programs;
- Veterans Support;
- Tourism;
- Aboriginal Area Protection Authority; and
- Indigenous employment exceeding targets in remote contracts.
Mr Elferink said Labor’s failure to ask any questions about domestic violence, correctional services or what was being done to tackle the ice epidemic shone a spotlight on their soft on crime approach to major law and order issues.

“Aside from ignoring these important issues, the award for the most inane question posed during Estimates without doubt goes to the ludicrous lanyard debate. Arguing about the replacement of unsafe lanyards for those with safety release clips for Department of Children and Family staff was simply mind boggling,” he said.

Mr Elferink said only the CLP had the determination and focus to tackle crime and keep Territorians safe.

“Labor were more worried about the Segway trial than anything to do with the current ice epidemic, illicit drug seizures or the task forces that are saving Territorians’ lives,” he said.

“In the area of women’s policy, Labor’s Shadow Minister for Women’s Policy Lynne Walker didn’t even bother turning up to ask any questions.”

Mr Elferink said the Opposition failed to ask the Chief Minister any questions on major projects that would transform the Northern Territory economy, and spent just 30 minutes quizzing the Transport Minister about the record $587.1 million on transport infrastructure that will better connect Territorians.

“Defence is another area of critical importance to the Northern Territory, but Labor displayed a callous disregard for defence personnel and their families by failing to ask even a single question about Veterans’ Support,” he said.

Mr Elferink said the Opposition’s lack of preparation was starkly on display when Lynne Walker raised questions about the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Provision of Hospitals, but couldn’t confirm she had actually even read the document.

“Lynne Walker also broke a promise to Territory paramedics when she failed to raise the issue of their wages in Estimates,” he said. “Perhaps though this was belated recognition the issue is not one for the Northern Territory Government and that her political grandstanding was completely unnecessary.”

Mr Elferink said the Budget Estimates Hearings had exposed a clear contrast between Labor and the CLP.

“The CLP is getting on with the job of making Territorians’ lives simpler and safer, while Labor has no plans of their own and no interest in the issues that really matter to Territorians,” he said.

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