Home grant to lift sales

Jim Robertson

A CASH boost for first-home buyers would be welcomed within the industry, according to an Alice Springs real estate agent.

Labor plans to bring back the First Home Buyers scheme if elected in tomorrow’s Territory election, offering up to $34,000 in saving to first-home buyers from September 1 this year.

Elders Real Estate sales manager Jo-Anne Pulford said a reintroduction of the scheme would provide the housing industry with a much-needed boost.

“In the 18 months since the homeowners’ grant was abolished, the market has slowed considerably in the lower end and for younger buyers,” Ms Pulford said.

“When the CLP brought back stamp duty concessions it did go someway to improving the market – but ultimately fell short. Absolutely, the industry would welcome extra support for first-home buyers.”

Opposition Leader Michael Gunner said Labor’s plan meant the first $500,000 of a purchase would be stamp-duty free, a saving of $24,000 per first-home buyer.

“In addition, Labor has pledged to replace the CLP’s Home Improvement Scheme by making $80,000 available, over the next two years, to first-home buyers of existing properties for renovations, adding up to a total of $34,000 in savings under the plan.

However, CLP Minister for Business Peter Styles saw the plan as misguided.

“The Home Improvement Scheme has generated more than $15 million in total work for trades so far, attracted over 12,000 registrations from trades and more than 3000 home-owner applications have been received,” Mr Styles said.

“A key success of the Home Improvement Scheme was the leveraging of government investment through the condition that homeowner occupiers must contribute at least the same amount as their voucher. Labor’s plan includes no element of leverage, would abolish the trades voucher, and slow down the economy.”

Safe streets top priority

ALICE Springs is now safer than Australia’s capital cities “by a mile”, claims Chief Minister Adam Giles.

“You turn the television in the morning and you have murders, stabbings and drive by shootings in all our capital cities,” he said.

“I am not saying all crime is fixed here, but it is a long way away from where it was.”

Mr Giles pointed to the rape by gunpoint of two European backpackers in Mount Johns that created worldwide headlines in 2012. He said the town was still feeling the ramifications of German tourist numbers declining.

“We had to make it so people felt safe — the spirit of the town starts coming back,” he said.

Mr Giles listed making the streets safe as the most important issue for Centralians.

He said violence, public drunkenness and a lack of investment hurt Bratling before he was elected.

“The whole thing has changed,” he said.

Mining lease slammed

THE CLP has played down publicity surrounding a 35,000 sqkm piece of land, south of Alice Springs, which has been made available under a Mineral Authority.

The announcement appeared in the NT Government Gazette on August 5, with Texas based coal miner Tri- Star applying for the lease on the same day.

Chief Minister Adam Giles said the lease was one of many which occurred in the NT.

“There are leases issued for mining exploration in the Territory all the time, it doesn’t come to cabinet. I didn’t even know about it until I read about it in the paper,” he said.

Bratling candidate Dalton Dupuy (Greens) said the CLP was “secretly signing the Territory away”. He said “normal practices” had been bypassed.

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