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High fuel costs threaten Territory tourism

Soaring fuel costs may cause the cancellation of airline flights into the Territory resulting in a serious tourism downturn, according to Shadow Tourism Minister Fay Miller.

Mrs Miller said interstate motorists were already facing extremely high petrol prices and could be reviewing their holiday plans as a result.

“The Government must address this threat urgently,” Mrs Miller said. “The Tourism Commission should be preparing a strategic plan in the event that a major airline either cancels its flights or restricts them. Perhaps this should focus on Darwin and Alice residents inviting interstate relatives to visit them this Christmas?”

American Airlines announced recently that it was cancelling 15 domestic services in the US and dropping one of its flights into Japan. Other carriers were reported to be considering similar moves after the price of jet fuel soared to almost $US125 ($164) a barrel.

“The American Airlines decision may seem a long way from Darwin and the Territory,” Mrs Miller said, “but all international airlines will be very carefully monitoring load factors.

“I think it would be prudent for the Government to instruct the Tourist Commission to immediately consider strategies for handling any tourism downturn caused by high fuel prices.

“Our tourism industry has been in the doldrums for several years and is only now starting to improve. We must ensure we are proactive – anticipating the market’s movements. The Chief Minister should give fuel GST relief to Territorians which at current prices would be at least 8c a litre, just as the Beattie Government does in Queensland.

“This would help to alleviate some of the fuel price pressures on interstate motorists, not to mention the benefit to local families. Government needs to cut unnecessary spending and give those savings directly back to the community.”