Gerry Wood, the Independent Member for Nelson, says the big rush by the Government to shorten the tender process for ‘project leader services’ for the new prison development shows why this $300m project firstly needs proper and transparent scrutiny.

Gerry says that the Government has not released all the proposed sites for the prison, nor has it released any figures or a cost benefit analysis to show why building at Weddell instead of Berrimah is the least expensive option.

Gerry says there should be a Parliamentary Committee set up to investigate the costs of building the new prison at Weddell, the cost of relocation for other Departments and other service providers, the cost for prison officers travelling there and a scrutiny of the reasons the Government has given for the relocation.

For instance, in relation to building the new prison at the existing site, the Government said that to build on the existing land would require a mountain of fill

- **how then will the land be suitable for housing which is the intended use of the land by the Government?**

The Government has said it will be unsatisfactory to have a construction site near an operating gaol

- **if it was built on Berrimah Farm land next door, it would not interfere with the existing prison.**

The Government has said that it will be too close to any residential or commercial development

- **the prison is already next to commercial land and that works okay and the only reason that housing development would be close by is if the Government sells Berrimah farm for housing something which Gerry says is shortsighted.**

The Government says it would cost more to build at Berrimah than at a Greenfield site such as Weddell.

- **the Government has not released any figures that this is the case, even though Gerry has tried to get a briefing from the Department for some time.**
Gerry says there has also been no response from Government about what will happen to newly renovated Don Dale Juvenile Facility, or what will happen to the 2 year old $7m minimum security prison, nor has it said what will be the extra costs on other Departments that will be automatically required to service a prison nearly four times further away from Darwin as the existing prison?

**Note: Berrimah is 10km from Darwin; Noonamah near Weddell is 46km from Darwin.**

How much will it cost to take a prisoner to and from the prison to court in Darwin – fuel, time and wages?

Gerry says that an open and transparent Government should allow public scrutiny of this $300m project before any tenders are let, to make sure that the arguments the Government has put forward for relocation stack up.

By the time this project gets to the Estimates Committee later this year it will be too late.