Jodeen Carney
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GERRY: THE JAILS ARE OVERFLOWING!

Current prisoner numbers highlight the folly of the Henderson Government’s failure to establish a prison farm near Katherine, says Opposition Justice spokeswoman, Jodeen Carney.

The latest ABS figures show the Territory had 1,042 prisoners in December last year.

“I understand that this week, the numbers at Alice Springs have peaked at just over 480, and at Berrimah, they have peaked at 650, pushing the total to over 1,100, the highest ever”, says Ms Carney.

“According to last year’s Budget papers the total daily average prisoner rate for 2007/08 was 850. The estimate for 2008/09 was 925”. (Budget Paper # 3, page 172, 2008/09).

“The sharp increase in the number of prisoners in the Territory indicates the proposed prison at Weddell will be full as soon as it opens.

“Rather than wasting $300 million on a prison that will be full from day one the Henderson Government should build a prison farm near Katherine and keep Berrimah in operation.

“It’s clear the jails are overflowing and the new Minister can’t just sit back and say a new jail will be built in 2012.

“Action is needed immediately to reduce the overcrowding. That means more money will be spent on upgrading a prison that will be bulldozed in the near future.

“On February 12th, Government announced a ‘new era’ in Corrections, but the plan to build a new jail does not address the immediate problem of overcrowding”.

“The ‘new era’ seems to be a ‘new era’ of unprecedented overcrowding and a Government unable to cope”.
“Gerry McCarthy’s announcement to trial a ‘work camp’ in the Barkly had no start date. He said the work camp would accommodate only 24 people, so how is Government going to deal with the current, and increasing overcrowding problem?”

“The high rate of prisoners shows, once again, that crime is out of control in the Territory. Despite the Henderson Government’s rhetoric, the fact is you don’t have such high numbers of prisoners in jails if crime is under control”.

“Prisoner numbers have been climbing since Labor came to office. The Government has known about the steadily increasing prisoner numbers for years, and the best it could do was last month to promise a ‘new era’...in the future”.

“Territorians shouldn’t be duped by Government’s long-term plans. The question is: what is Government going to do to address this problem, now?”

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