LABOR’S DAY OF RECKONING

After years of financial irresponsibility, the Labor Government will tomorrow bequeath Territorians a massive budget deficit and record debt levels that will take years to repay and which, with sound economic management, could have been avoided.

Shadow Treasurer John Elferink said the Northern Territory Treasury and the Country Liberals have been warning Labor for years of the dangers of relying on revenues from the Goods and Services Tax.

“Labor has consistently ignored those warnings and tomorrow, we’ll learn the true extent of their failure,” Mr Elferink said.

“During the life of this Government, it has pocketed $1.2billion more in Commonwealth revenues than it expected – but spent the extra money like there was no tomorrow.

“In February, Delia Lawrie was told that the Territory would lose at least $190million in GST revenues this financial year.

“By the time Treasurer Delia Lawrie delivers the budget, that figure could be much higher.

“Last year, there were rivers of gold flowing through the Northern Territory budget but this year, courtesy of Labor’s inability to plan for the future, we’re facing a fiscal dust bowl.”

Mr Elferink said a look at public servant numbers highlighted the extent of Labor’s mismanagement.

“Over the years, Labor luminaries such as Clare Martin and Syd Stirling have promised to ease pressure on the budget by cutting public service numbers – and failed,” he said.

“After lying to Territorians about their plans for the public service during the 2008 election campaign, Chief Minister Paul Henderson and Delia Lawrie have recently adopted the Country Liberals’ policy to reduce numbers through natural attrition.”
“Despite that, public service numbers continue to climb. At the end of last year there were 17,021 public servants employed in the Territory, an increase of 869 over the previous 12 months.

“Had Labor been able to freeze public sector numbers at 2007 levels, they would have saved around $70million in recurrent expenditure from the budget in this and subsequent years.

“One of the problems with Labor’s free-wheeling spending and lack of planning is that there’s precious little to show for it.

“Levels of violent crime have risen by 83% over eight years, hospital waiting lists are the country’s worst and school results continue to decline in the bush.

Further comment: John Elferink 0418 406 400