September 16th, 2009

PLAN FOR TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

Opposition Leader Terry Mills said the Henderson Government’s failures on land release are causing widespread hardship across the Northern Territory.

Mr Mills today unveiled a plan to establish a transitional housing village near Palmerston for people unable to afford to buy or rent a house in the Top End during the current prices blow-out.

The village would be a temporary measure while the Henderson Government finally does something about the chronic land shortage that’s caused the housing crisis.

“There are numerous accounts of people struggling to find suitable accommodation when they arrive in the Territory or when they’re forced to vacate an existing home,” Mr Mills said.

“Many of those leave the Territory altogether, others are forced to move into caravan parks or live in tents.

“Darwin’s rents are the highest of any capital city in the country and the median house price is also very high.

“This appalling state of affairs is made worse by the large amounts of undeveloped land around our population centres and the Henderson Government’s failure to immediately act when it became clear there was a serious land shortage in the Territory.

“For the best part of two years this Government has let the crisis surrounding land release spiral out of control.

‘It’s been two years since Labor announced the new suburb of Bellamack – only now are headworks being done. The first houses are unlikely to hit the market until next year.”

Mr Mills said it took until Labor’s near-death experience last month for this arrogant Chief Minister to finally admit his Government had failed.

But instead of an apology to those people struggling to find an affordable house, the best Paul Henderson could manage was to say:

*Land release is an area where we could have done better …*
“While Territorians wait for the Government’s woefully late land release programs to take hold, the Country Liberals transitional plan will provide an additional 60 housing options for families in the Top End,” Mr Mills said.

“Today I have written to the Chief Minister outlining a proposal to place 60 one, two and three bedroom demountables in a transitional accommodation village situated near Palmerston.

“The Country Liberals’ preferred site for the village is the Palmerston Gateway – once home to an estimated 1000 workers during construction of the Wickham Point LNG plant.

“If the Government believes this site is unsuitable, it should find an alternative site.”

Mr Mills said the site could be cleared and the first demountables put in place within a matter of weeks.

The facility would have 24-hour security, alcohol restrictions and transport assistance. Demountables would be fully serviced and provide a comfortable level of accommodation while the Government’s promise to ratchet up the pace of land release is put in place.

Tenants would be charged rent of between $250 and $300 depending on the size of demountable in which they live.

“In an ideal world, such a measure would not be required and Territorians would be able to find homes to either buy or rent within an affordable price range,” Mr Mills said.

“The housing crisis is hitting Territorians so hard, emergency measures are required to ease the burden on individuals and families.

“I hope the Chief Minister puts party politics aside and works with the Country Liberals to put our transitional housing plan in place.”

Further comment: Terry Mills 18 833 594