TELSTRA HANGS UP ON LABOR

The announcement by Telstra that it’s closing its Darwin call centre is another high-profile failure for the Henderson Government.

Shadow Communication Minister Ross Bohlin said Labor has a history of announcing big budget deals that either expire at the end of the contract or are never fulfilled.

He said the big losers in today’s announcement are the 67 workers employed at the call centre.

“When then Communications Minister Paul Henderson announced the call centre back in 2005, he promised the deal would inject about $60million into the Territory economy,” Mr Bohlin said.

“He should now outline whether that target was ever achieved.

“The human cost of Telstra’s decision is that nearly 70 Top End workers will be out of a job when the call centre closes its doors.

“This is hard on the employees and their families who are already battling the highest costs of living in the country.”

Mr Bohlin said the high cost of housing in Darwin and Palmerston could have contributed to problems identified by Telstra with the recruitment and retention of staff.

“Call centre workers require affordable housing – something that’s virtually non-existent in the Top End,” Mr Bohlin said.

“The median cost of a house in Darwin is $540,000 – way out of the reach of low income earners.

Mr Bohlin said the Territory Labor Government has a history of touting high-profile corporate deals – which either never eventuate or are wound-back once the contract has expired.

“Labor threw millions of dollars at Virgin when they first came to Australia, only to see them roll-back services.

“Low-cost airline Tiger pulled the pin three years after securing Darwin as its first Australian base and during the 2008 election campaign, Paul Henderson announced JetStar would set up a hub in Darwin – a deal that subsequently withered on the vine.

“On top of that, where still waiting for the Harbour Town development in Darwin, which the Government first flagged in 2008.”

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