LABOR SHOULD COMMIT TO SCHOOL BASED POLICING

The Henderson Government should commit to retaining – and expanding – the school-based officer program in Northern Territory schools.

Member for Sanderson, Peter Styles, said the Government should clarify its plans for the program, which has been rolled-back over recent years because of Labor’s lack of commitment

“Since Labor won office, the focus of class-room involvement by officers has been significantly downgraded,” Mr Styles said.

“The 2003 police annual report showed there were 20 school-based officers in the Northern Territory.

“As at May 31st 2009, the establishment number for the School Based Policing Unit was 13, although there were only 11 actual officers involved in the program.

“This is almost a 50% reduction in the size of the school policing unit – even though the Government has never formally announced a roll-back plan.”

Mr Styles, who was a school-based police officer for 19 years, said a police presence in schools is an investment in the future.

“Labor’s policy of downgrading the status of school based policing by stealth is a major policy mistake and should be reversed,” he said.

“School-based officers, especially in a class-room situation, are able to build a
rapport with school-aged children which can be beneficial in identifying incidents within and outside the school grounds before they occur.

“Under the Country Liberals, school-based policing was well resourced and conducted the DARE program (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) in classrooms, which gave officers a tool to teach primary students life skills and to strengthen their ability to say ‘no’ to drugs, bullying and other issues affecting young people.

“These values and strengths were the tools young people took with them into adulthood.

“This type of early intervention opened up opportunities for police to liaise with students which had direct benefits in the school ground and in later years when students have left school.

“This Labor should commit to strengthening the school policing unit as well as to boosting its resources.”

Further comment: Peter Styles 0411 640 660