The release today of Labor’s five-year Aviation Futures strategy must now be followed up with real commitment by the Henderson Government.

Shadow Transport Minister, Adam Giles, said at just over 20 pages – and with a number of those blank or containing colour imagery – the strategy paper is light on detail and falls a long way short of providing a comprehensive master plan for the future direction of the Territory’s aviation sector.

Mr Giles said the report fails on a number of fronts to provide a comprehensive outline of the Territory’s aviation needs.

“For instance, it says it wants a full-service international carrier to land in the Territory, but makes no mention of where those arrivals would be accommodated,” Mr Giles said.

“It barely mentions regional centres like Katherine and Tennant Creek and totally ignores the requirements of the 20 proposed growth towns.

“If the Government was serious about developing a whole-of-Territory aviation strategy it wouldn’t have released an indulgent, navel gazing document like this one.”

Mr Giles said the Territory Government must focus on two fronts:

• Negotiations to invest more money into Darwin airport; and
• Development of tourism facilities that attract some of the hundreds-of-thousands of passengers who pass through the Territory to stay here en route to other destinations.

“The Government must ensure there is no repeat of the embarrassing failure by the Commonwealth Government’s Infrastructure Australia Fund to provide a much-needed cash injection into the re-development of Darwin airport.

“In order to meet the anticipated growth of the facility, more Commonwealth and private sector money is required to ensure the late-night passenger bottlenecks are eased.

“With an anticipated 10% growth in passenger numbers next year, there is a clear need for money to be spent at the airport.”

Mr Giles said the Territory Government also played a key role in the promotion of the Territory in Australia and abroad.

“We’ve got a great product here and we have to maximise the use of every dollar we spend on tourism promotion,” he said.

“What we don’t want to see are tourists just transiting in the Territory, en route to other holiday centres.”

Further comment: Adam Giles 0421 588 118