"An accelerating collapse in the number of dwellings approved for construction in the Northern Territory is bad news for first home buyers and people in the rental market," says Kezia Purick, Deputy Opposition Leader.

"Australian Bureau of Statistic figures released today show that during March the number of homes approved for construction in the Northern Territory fell by 17% in trend terms. That builds on falls in the previous 3 months.

"In the past 12 months there were just 1235 homes approved for construction in the Territory.

"2009 Treasury forecasts indicate that Darwin alone needs at least 1700 new homes annually just to keep pace with demand.

"In 11 out the last 12 months the number of dwelling approvals fell below the 140 necessary to keep pace with forecast demand.

"2010 has been particularly bad with January, February and March producing dwelling approvals of just 51, 49 and 64 respectively.

"On these figures Darwin is set to retain the unwelcome distinction of having the most overpriced real estate of all the Australian capitals.

"There is a tragic human cost as a result of this profound failure of Government policy.

"Too many Territory families are being squeezed by monstrous mortgage repayments and ruinous rents.

"Yesterday we had the ludicrous sight of the Chief Minister spruiking shoebox apartments costing up to $540,000 as his version of affordable housing.

"The Chief Minister needs to get his head out of sand and start living in the real world where the increase in the price of housing in the Territory has long and significantly outpaced the growth in ordinary wages."

"The Chief Minister should be explaining how his Government has created a housing crisis in Darwin, Palmerston and Alice Springs – then he should apologise for it."

Further comment: Kezia Purick 0407 035 976