Local Government Minister Malarndirri McCarthy’s claim that the Territory Government will continue to fund the CDEP-to-jobs transition program is misleading and deceitful.

“What Minister McCarthy's actually doing is using money that would otherwise go to the shires to fund this scheme,” says Shadow Local Government Minister, Willem Westra van Holthe.

“It’s a classic case of robbing Peter to play Paul. This isn’t additional money to the shires -- it’s money the Government’s taking from the shires.

“The Minister has already conceded that Commonwealth funding for this program ends on June 30th and that the Territory Government will not take over the Commonwealth portion of the dollar for dollar funding.

“But it was left to a Department of Local Government bureaucrat to concede that Labor was committing a sleight of hand.

Mr WESTRA van HOLTHE: So they have not been funded by the Northern Territory Government additionally to what they would have received from their operational funding to employ people under this program?

BUREAUCRAT: Correct.

“Also:

Mr WESTRA van HOLTHE: So what I am now hearing then is that this dollar for dollar matching by the Northern Territory Government was coming effectively out of the operational budgets of the shires? So they could choose whether they put it into operational services or employed an Aboriginal person to transition them off CDEP.

BUREAUCRAT: Correct …

“Minister McCarthy has failed dismally to persuade the Commonwealth to maintain its share of funding for the program.

“The Government’s efforts to lobby the Commonwealth consisted of two letters and a visit to Canberra. This is pitiful, considering the importance of the scheme to Indigenous people.

“Now, in an attempt to conceal the fact that Labor is responsible for the loss of at least 250 indigenous jobs, the Minister has simply re-announced what is actually Shire operational funding.

“This deceitfulness is not lost on the shires, their staff or the Indigenous people who will be forced back onto the dole as a result of this Government’s half-hearted approach.”

Further comment: Willem Westra van Holthe 0414 778 430