LOCAL GOVERNMENT MIRED IN DEBT

Willem Westra van Holthe MLA
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The Country Liberals Shadow Minister for Local Government Willem Westra van Holthe today called upon the Northern Territory Government to table in Parliament the Deloitte Audit report of the Barkly Shire accounts.

“The selected statements of the Local Government Minister on the Deloitte report go nowhere near demonstrating to the community that the Barkly Shire is operating as a going concern.” Mr Westra van Holthe said

“It is imperative that the “accounting problems” of the Barkly Shire Council are fully explained

“One has to wonder, and the Deloitte report should be able to say, what the Net Assets and Net Liabilities are of the Shire and it is particularly important to know what the expected income and expenditure commitments are of the Shire.

“The member for MacDonnell brought this issue to the Estimates Committee last week and it was only with much wriggling and writhing that the truth came out from the Department that auditors had been appointed to look at the Shire.

“I still find it quite extraordinary that the Minister denied in one breath during Estimates that any of the Shires had reported being in financial difficulty, and in the next breath blurted out that they had appointed auditors for the Barkly

“This is typical of the culture of cover-up that we are becoming all too accustomed to under the Henderson Labor regime” Mr Westra van Holthe stated.

“It is also symptomatic of Labors’ failed implementation of the Shire amalgamation that we need a special investigation into the Barkly.

“Why is it only now that the shire is receiving administrative support to get its books in order” he said

Millions of dollars have been expended on flawed governance systems since 2007

“It took some 18 months of Shires living in the financial dark before they were able to produce reliable budget figures for Councillors to examine, and a balancing of income and expenditure and a public forecast of shire expenditure.

“To further add to the Shires’ woes, the Minister expects the shires to maintain the CDEP transition employment program, after the Commonwealth pulls the pin in just 5 days time.

“The Minister’s assertions that the NT Government is picking up the tab is nothing more than a smokescreen.

“I understand that the NT Government is providing nothing more than the funding it always provided and that money was coming out of the Shires’ operational budgets anyway.

“If the Minister was serious, the commitment would be to fund the withdrawn Federal component as well.

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