LEASE PAYMENTS ON GOVERNMENT FACILITIES

Gerry Wood, the Independent Member for Nelson, says he will introduce today a motion about lease payments for Government facilities on Aboriginal Land.

Gerry says that the under the Township lease for Nguiu on Bathurst Island the Executive Director for the Township Leasing (EDTL) is asking for lease payments based on either Improved Capital Value or Unimproved Capital Value on Government facilities in the town. Facilities such as schools, aged care, child care, women’s centres, hospitals, pumping stations, sewerage ponds, etc could all be subject to lease payments.

He says it is understanding that if this principle of charging for leases was applied to all Government facilities across the NT it could as Bob Beadman, Coordinator for Remote Services said, cost tens millions of dollars.

Gerry says that Governments have built these facilities on Aboriginal Land for the benefit of Aboriginal people and he believes that for the EDTL or Land Councils on behalf of Traditional Owners to then hit the Government for a lease payment is like saying ‘thanks for the hospital now here’s the bill’.

He says the Government should pay a peppercorn rental which recognises two things, that the land on which the lease has been granted is Aboriginal Land and secondly that the facilities provided by the Government are not there for profit but to help aboriginal people.

Whilst some may argue that the Government should pay rent, Gerry says that many communities would not have these facilities if they were located in other parts of Australia and if Governments now have to pay rent they will think twice about building facilities in communities.

Gerry says if the Government is forced to pay rent it could always hand the facilities to the EDTL or the Traditional Owners so that they can run the facilities.

Gerry says he will also be asking why the Land Councils are attempting to charge barge operators $0.75 per $100 of freight at seven barge landing across Arnhem Land.