The Government’s decision to sign up to the National Agreement on consumer law will see dodgy traders who rip off Territory consumers face fines instead of jail.

Shadow Justice Minister, John Elferink, said where jail was an option for serious offenders under Territory law, sentencing judges under the Commonwealth agreement will only be able to issue fines.

“This agreement means the Territory’s laws will be repealed,” Mr Elferink said.

“Currently in the Territory if a person demands payment for a service that’s not provided, the offender can go to jail for up to 6 months.

“The Commonwealth will now only proceed with fines for offences such as bait selling, making false and misleading statements or issuing false invoices.

“While the Country Liberals support national legislation to cover consumer law, clearly there was little resistance offered by Attorney General, Delia Lawrie, in protecting the idea that a rip off merchant should be jailed.

“Jail provides a deterrent that fines don’t, and it is a shame that the relationship between the Federal and Henderson Government is all one way traffic.

“The Henderson Government should be standing up for the rights of Territorians, not bending over backwards for the Commonwealth.

“I hope in the future the Attorney General does more to protect the interests of Territory consumers.”

Further comment: John Elferink 0418 406 400