MEDIA RELEASE

GROUNDHOG DAY ON TRUANCY

Peter Chandler MLA

Date 18th March 2011

The Government’s announcement of eight new truancy officers bears a striking similarity to a 2004 Budget commitment.

Shadow Education Minister, Peter Chandler said the Government committed $680,000 for eight school attendance officers ‘to deal with truancy and re-enrolling students back into school’ (see attachment).

‘Whatever happened to that money? Was it ever used to employ the eight truancy officers that were promised and what was the outcome of that commitment in getting children into school?’ Mr Chandler said.

‘Why has it taken this Government until mid March to announce the appointment of eight new truancy officers?’

‘How long will take until these officers are operational?’

‘Despite the significant investment of taxpayers’ money in 2004, 7 years later school attendance remains one of the most significant problems in the Northern Territory.

‘There’s no point pumping money into truancy officers if their effort isn’t supported by the law and the will to follow-up.

‘School is compulsory. Parents should be prosecuted if their children don’t have a good reason to not attend.

‘The Government has to bite the bullet and begin fining parents if their children are not at school.

‘Figures released recently by the Opposition show that approximately 11,600 school age children in the Territory – approximately one-third – will miss two or more years of schooling between the ages of 5 and 15.

‘Of those, 2700 school age children aren’t even enrolled at school.

‘The 2004 budget promise was hollow and lacked substance. I hope today’s announcement doesn’t suffer a similar fate.’

Further comment: Peter Chandler 0429 076 493