Opposition Leader, Terry Mills, says calls for a bi-partisan political approach to resolving issues in Alice Springs and other Territory towns have been wasted on the Chief Minister.

“Paul Henderson admits the problems are ‘complex’, but then chooses only to focus on alcohol,” Mr Mills said.

“Instead of engaging in a meaningful discussion, he opts for rhetoric.

“Federal Liberal Leader, Tony Abbott, has sought to strengthen the bi-partisan links forged during the 2007 Intervention by proposing a number of reforms which would improve safety and provide long term outcomes for the Northern Territory.

“Law and order is a key issue in Alice Springs and other Territory towns.

“The Country Liberals have a long-standing policy to locate 20 extra police in Alice Springs, and additional officers funded by the Commonwealth would provide an extra layer of community protection.”

Mr Mills said the 2007 intervention has improved health outcomes for Indigenous children – but education outcomes remain a significant problem.

“Tony Abbott’s plan for an influx of experienced teachers into Alice Springs and other Territory towns makes sense – especially when combined with tough welfare quarantining measures to compel parents to send their children to school,” he said.

“Compulsory work programs will help end the culture of people coming to Alice Springs to drink, and the Country Liberals support moves to increase rehabilitation facilities across the Northern Territory.

“The appointment of a senior Commonwealth officer under the direction of Traditional Owners would help co-ordinate Government programs and dovetails with the Country Liberals plans for a Joint Office of Indigenous affairs.

“Tony Abbott should be commended for adopting a broad-based approach and for proposing direct action to tackle the serious law and order issues that confront the Northern Territory.

“Paul Henderson has no new ideas – but is critical of any proposal that could bring about change.”

Further comment: Terry Mills 0418 833 594