Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show the high price of houses in Darwin has led to a significant slow-down in the number of people buying and selling homes.

Opposition Leader, Terry Mills, said the ABS March quarter figures show only 339 houses were transferred in Darwin, compared with 363 in the December quarter 2009 and 425 for the same period last year.

It is the lowest house transfer figure since at least March 2002 and shows the impact of high housing prices is a slowdown in economic activity.

The ABS says the March quarter Darwin median house price was $529,000 – the third highest in the country.

Other recent surveys show Darwin’s house prices are similarly out of reach for people entering the housing market, APM putting the median house price at $556,831, RPData calculating it at $535,000 and the Northern Territory Treasury showing $581,290.

“This data makes nonsense of claims by Treasurer Delia Lawrie that a recent slight decrease in Darwin’s median house price is a result of Government land release policies,” Mr Mills said.

“This is desperate and deceptive because nobody’s living on the land the Government has belatedly released.

“For years the Labor was in denial about the urgent need for land release, and when it finally did respond, house and unit prices had sky-rocketed and ordinary Darwin residents were forced to live in caravans, tents or cars.

“Despite the so-called fast track, there’s not one single person living at Bellamack, Johnston, Zuccolli or Muirhead.

“As a result, over the past six months, 700 more Territorians have moved interstate than have moved here, in part because of high housing costs.

“It’s unusual for a Treasurer to boast about a reduction in house values, but the Government is so desperate for a glimmer of hope after years of housing policy failure that it is prepared to fabricate the facts.”

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