MEDIA RELEASE

WE ASKED FOR IT...YOU IGNORED IT...NOW WE NEED IT!

January 12th, 2012

The lack of strategic planning in Katherine during 10 lacklustre years of Labor has been highlighted by the debacle that’s unfolded since the Edith River flooded and the train derailed two weeks ago.

Member for Katherine, Willem Westra van Holthe, said recent events have highlighted the need for an integrated freight hub to service the town’s present and future transport needs.

“Since the derailment, freight trains have been arriving in Katherine most days of the week and loading goods onto trucks, creating chaos at the rail terminal," Mr Westra van Holthe said.

“From the middle of each day, triple road trains are lining up for hundreds of metres and spilling onto the Victoria Highway.

“On top of the traffic hazard this is creating, truck drivers are queuing for up to 12 or more hours to be loaded for their trip to Darwin.

“They have no ready access to food or water, and a single port-a-loo in 37 degree heat could hardly be described as a comfort stop.”

“This was made all the more difficult yesterday when the Ghan passenger train was in station, leading to even longer delays.

“At 9.30 last night, there were around 20 road trains still waiting to be loaded, with some having been there since around lunchtime.

“The first truck didn’t leave for Darwin until around 9.45pm.

“The rail line from Katherine to Darwin has been inoperable since December 27th and isn’t likely to be open until at least the end of the month.

“Had this Government listened to calls from the Katherine Economic Development Committee to build a business park adjacent to the rail freight terminal, this debacle may have been avoided.

“The Committee has virtually stopped functioning because of the Government’s lack of interest in Katherine and hasn’t met for around two years.

“Before it became defunct, the Committee listed a business park as its main priority for the town. Unfortunately, its recommendations have been completely ignored by a Government that has no vision or interest in developing
Katherine.

“Ironically, the relevant Department’s website still lists the business park as the Committee’s main priority (see attached link).

“Labor has failed on all levels. It failed to flood proof the Territory’s main artery, the Stuart Highway; and it failed to build infrastructure in Katherine to mitigate the risks associated with the Top End’s harsh and unforgiving climate.”

Further comment: Willem Westra van Holthe 0414 778 430