18 November 2013

CLP ABANDONS INDIGENOUS ARTS CENTRES

Shadow Minister for the Arts, Natasha Fyles today slammed the CLP for abandoning support for Indigenous arts business in remote regions.

Ms Fyles said it was disgraceful that the Minister for Business Dave Tollner said arts centres in remote communities should run as commercial businesses so they do not need government funding.

“It is just not good enough for the CLP to say Merrepen Arts at Nauiyu, Injalak Arts at Gunbalanya and Elcho Island Arts at Galiwin’ku don’t need government support,” Ms Fyles said.

“These are businesses in remote locations that need to have funding for their co-ordinator positions so that they can support local Indigenous artists and tackle the tyranny of distance to secure sales. It is not viable for them to go it alone without Government support; which is why they’ve had funding to date.

“What will the CLP Territory Government do to ensure that these Indigenous arts centres can continue to employ local artists and develop their businesses?

“Instead of sitting on his hands watching Indigenous businesses collapse, the Business Minister should ensure that his department assists the centres to grow and he should be lobbying his mates in Canberra to continue funding.

“The fabrics of Merrepen Arts has put the Territory firmly at the forefront of national fashion when Territorian Chloe Moo wore their work to win Fashions on the Field Women’s Racewear competition in Melbourne’s Spring Racing Carnival.

“Two artists, both employed by Elcho Island Arts, are travelling to Melbourne for an exhibition which has already sold out in advance of the opening on Wednesday.

“What would possess any Government to cut their funding when they are on the verge of going global with success and ensuring the Northern Territory gets the business and tourism benefits?

“Where are the local MLAs Francis Xavier and Gary Higgins, why aren’t they standing up and fighting for their arts centre’s funding like my colleague Lynne Walker is doing?

“It is hypocrisy in the extreme for the CLP to rant on about how they want to remove Indigenous Territorians from welfare dependency and then close the doors of great local enterprises that provide real income.”

Media Contact: David Halliday 0409 324 127