MEDIA RELEASE

Delia Lawrie
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION

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BLACKOUT SIGNALS POWER CRISIS DEEPENING

The Leader of the Opposition, Delia Lawrie, said today’s catastrophic and unprecedented blackout of the Territory’s top end shows PowerWater is in crisis and the CLP need to immediately abandon plans to split it up and focus instead on system reliability.

“Today’s blackout that affected the entire Darwin, Palmerston and Katherine regions is shocking proof that PowerWater is an essential service that affects all our lives dramatically,” Ms Lawrie said.

“Territorians need PowerWater. It is not a luxury item that the CLP Government can be careless with.

“Territorians want to know what is happening to their essential service. We have never before experienced the loss of power to 130,000 customers and this deserves a public and independent Inquiry.

“The CLP Government has been damaging PowerWater Corporation through massive budget cuts in Repairs and Maintenance and crucial Capital improvements.

“The CLP have sacked experienced management and its expert board and now we suffer a catastrophic failure. There are some big questions that need honest answers.

“CLP Treasurer took to PowerWater with an axe, slashing the budget and jobs saying the system was “gold plated”.

“Have there been capital works items and repairs and maintenance cuts that could have prevented this catastrophic blackout?”

Ms Lawrie said that the CLP Government is rushing headlong to pass legislation to split PowerWater Corporation into three separate entities in the next fortnight of Parliament Sittings.

“Surely this catastrophic blackout shows there are serious problems with the network and generation which need to be dealt with as a priority. This can’t occur if PowerWater is being split up into three separate entities at a huge effort and cost,” Ms Lawrie said.

“Territorians are already paying excessive costs for power and water; the least the CLP can do it keep the lights on and they’ve failed this most basic test.”
Ms Lawrie pointed out the CLP had reduced spending on repairs and maintenance at PowerWater by 10 percent to $80 million and is cutting further this financial year.

Ms Lawrie asked what the CLP Government is going to do to compensate families and businesses affected by the lengthy blackout.

“Families and businesses will have lost food, stock, a day’s trading from this event,” Ms Lawrie said.

“Will the CLP Government have a good hard look at their priorities and shift their focus from splitting PowerWater to ensuring a reliable PowerWater service for Territorians to ensure these families and businesses do not suffer further?”

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