MEDIA RELEASE

Kon Vatskalis
SHADOW MINISTER FOR ASIAN RELATIONS AND TRADE

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WATER ALLOCATION INQUIRY NEEDED FOR GILES’ NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT

Shadow Minister for Tourism, Asian Relations & Trade, Infrastructure & Transport, Kon Vatskalis, today said the issue of water allocation in the Territory should have been at the top of the Chief Minister, Adam Giles’, agenda when he faced the Joint Select Committee Inquiry into the Development of Northern Australia.

“Today while fronting the public hearing of the Joint Select Committee Inquiry into the Development of Northern Australia, the Chief Minister, Adam Giles, failed to recognise how important the Territory’s water resources will be to facilitating any of the resulting plans for developing Northern Australia,” Mr Vatskalis said.

Mr Vatskalis said the CLP Government is jeopardising the future of developing Northern Australia by handing over water licences at an alarming rate with no regard for future planning or science.

“Water is such an important resource and will be essential in the development of any industry in the Territory,” Mr Vatskalis said.

“If Adam Giles and the CLP Government were serious about the development of Northern Australia they would call for an inquiry into water allocation in the Territory.

“Given the allegations of the last couple of weeks an open and independent inquiry into the process for granting water licences, potentially worth millions of dollars, is needed to ensure that a transparent and fair process is occurring.”

Mr Vatskalis said organisations such as the Northern Land Council had also raised their concerns with the water allocation process in the Territory and the failure of the CLP Government to set aside Strategic Indigenous Reserves.

Mr Vatskalis said that the Chief Minister also missed an opportunity to advocate to his Federal Liberal colleagues for the needs of Territorians who are facing massive funding cuts under the Federal budget.

“The Territory will take a massive hit to health and education under the federal budget,” Mr Vatskalis said.

“Tourism in the Territory will also suffer with the fuel excise raising the cost of the already very expensive fuel in the Territory.
“Mr Giles raised the importance of roads and infrastructure in unlocking the potential of the Territory’s development so should be lobbying for more infrastructure funding as it was revealed in the hearing the ACT receives more infrastructure funding than the Territory despite being smaller in geographic size.”

Mr Vatskalis said the Chief Minister also failed to highlight the importance of Asian engagement in the development of Northern Australia.

“Despite being the Minister for Asian Engagement and Trade Adam Giles failed to highlight the importance of Asian Engagement to developing Northern Australia,” Mr Vatskalis said.

“The CLP Government should be taking advantage of the Territory’s proximity to our Asian neighbours.

“But the CLP Government has turned a blind eye to the value of Asian Engagement programs, such as the Arafura Games, by denying it funding in their budget.”

Mr Vatskalis said that the CLP Government had budgeted $5.88 million for the Northern Australia Development Office but has failed to detail what this office will actually do other than create a logo.

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