Adam Giles
Chief Minister of the Northern Territory

Government considers formal response to Stella Maris Inquiry

24 June 2014

The Department of Chief Minister has been asked to prepare an options paper on possible Government responses to the serious findings of the Stella Maris Inquiry.

“The inquiry found that Labor’s conduct in granting a rent-free 10 year lease to Unions NT on the eve of the 2012 election was not ‘accountable, responsible or in the public interest’,” Chief Minister Adam Giles said.

“Territorians deserve better from their elected representatives and both Opposition Leader Delia Lawrie and her Deputy Gerry McCarthy need to consider their future in Parliament.

“Commissioner John Lawler concluded that Delia Lawrie ‘acted with bias’ towards the Union movement and that her intervention in this issue on behalf of Unions NT was ‘not proper’ or fair to other community groups.

“The Commissioner also found that the then Planning Minister Gerry McCarthy’s decision to grant the lease was ‘unreasonable because he did not have the necessary information to justify selectively choosing Unions NT over any other group.’

“The report notes that ‘[i]t is difficult to understand how the Cabinet ministers could have reasonably rejected’ advice about the need ‘to have an open and transparent expression of interest process.’

“It’s a damning litany of failures which I know will worry the majority of Territorians who have a right to expect Government decisions are made in the best interests of the community, not Union mates.

“The Government is now considering Commissioner Lawler’s 21 formal recommendations and I have asked my department to prepare an options paper on possible responses.

“This includes a recommendation that the matter be referred to the Parliament’s Privileges Committee for it to consider any alleged breaches of the Northern Territory of Australia Legislative Assembly Act 2008.

“It also includes a recommendation that Union’s NT be asked to relinquish its claim on the site and that the Government consider starting a fresh expression of interest process, allowing community groups to apply for use of Stella Maris.
“The Government will outline its formal response in the coming months but there seems little doubt that Labor’s ‘unfair’ and ‘biased’ Union deal amounts to a gross breach of public trust.”

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