Port lease legislation referred to Parliamentary Committee

13 February 2015

Legislation enabling a possible lease of the Darwin Port will be referred to a Parliamentary Committee to ensure the proposed model offers the best outcome for Territorians.

“I have heard loud and clear that people don’t want the port sold and I want to reiterate that what we are talking about is a lease NOT a sale,” Mr Giles said

“Our port must grow so that it can meet the needs and opportunities of the future and I want Territorians to be confident that any lease arrangement we enter into is in their best interests.

“There are different ways to structure a lease and I want Territorians to have faith that the model that is ultimately chosen is the best one available after considering all the evidence.

“As such, debate on the enabling bills currently before the Assembly will be deferred until a Parliamentary Select Committee has had the opportunity to examine what’s being proposed, as well as alternative models.”

The Committee will look at options for enhancing the model to ensure that any partner is focused on growth and development of the port, has competitive prices and follows international best practice in safety, environmental and operational efficiency.

The Committee will also consider existing Northern Territory public/private partnerships such as the Marine Supply Base and what lessons can be learnt from the process undertaken by the former Labor Government to set it up.

“I’m particularly keen to see the Committee’s recommendations about the duration of any lease,” Mr Giles said.

“Whilst a 99 year lease has been floated previously, there are many time frames used around the world and I’m interested to get feedback on the preferred length of any lease.

“The key to this will be giving sufficient certainty to any potential partner while retaining the Government’s ability to consider the partner’s performance against pre-agreed benchmarks.

“Ultimately, we want to maximise the benefit to Territorians from any partnership both in terms of ongoing financial returns and long term expansion of the Port.
“Our economy needs a port that is efficient and competitive and any lease agreement must be focused on achieving that goal.”

It is proposed that the four person Select Committee will be chaired by Member for Blain Nathan Barrett. He’ll be joined by one MLA from Government and Labor, as well as an Independent.

The Inquiry will run for five weeks with the final report to be presented by 20 March 2015.

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