Minister for Justice Dr Peter Toyne today questioned Denis Burke’s soft on drugs line and failure to grasp the community feeling on illicit drug use and its link to property crime.

"Burke has a blind spot when it comes to admitting to a drug problem in the Territory and he is clearly ignoring the evidence.

"The fact is the new drugs laws are targeted towards dealers, manufacturers and traffickers of illicit drugs not the personal use of cannabis – for which the laws have not changed.

"The Martin Government makes no apologies for targeting the illicit drug trade and the link between drug use and property crime through a law enforcement strategy of zero tolerance on drug production and distribution.

"Financing a drug dependency is costly so it is no news to anyone, except Denis Burke, that there is a strong link between drug use and property crime – and the evidence is there to prove it.

"Through the new drug laws – the first part of a three pronged approach to drug related property crime – the Government is delivering on our promise to tackle the causes of crime.

National research found 86% of adult males detained on property offences tested positive to a drug of some type (excluding alcohol and tobacco). (Australian Institute of Criminology 2000)

"The evidence is also clear that the Territory has a significant illicit drug problem and high numbers of young people using drugs."

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare reported late last year that the Territory has the highest rate of young people using illicit drugs in the nation, and overall the highest rate of illicit drug use in the nation. (AIHW 2001 National Drug Household Survey)

"The new drug laws are addressing community concern about high drug use among our youth and the propensity for drug dependency by stemming the tide of drugs getting to our kids.

"The new laws have given police the powers they need to tackle the illicit drug trade and impact on drug related property crime.

"Mr Burke should remove his blinkers and stop ignoring the evidence that illicit drug use and related property crime is a blight across Australia, including the Northern Territory.

"Burke’s comments today show he clearly hasn’t learnt and has no new
ideas to tackle crime," Dr Toyne said.