The Minister for Lands and Planning, Dr Chris Burns, said today he was appalled at the Opposition’s failure to understand how native title impacted on planned land releases in Alice Springs.

“It’s no wonder the CLP left Alice Springs landlocked – they simply refused to deal with native title issues and processes, preferring an adversarial approach.”

Dr Burns said claims by Member for MacDonnell John Elferink that the Government could compulsorily acquire land at Larapinta by merely signing a directive were completely wrong.

“The simple facts of the matter are that moving to compulsorily acquire the land at Larapinta at this stage could add years to the process of releasing land for residential development,” Dr Burns said.

“The public statements members of the Opposition have made about compulsory acquisition show that despite having had a decade to do so, they still don’t have a basic understanding of how native title works,” he said.

“Land availability is one of the most important issues facing Alice Springs which is why the Government moved quickly to negotiate with native title holders on releasing land at Larapinta for development.

“That the Opposition thinks all it takes is a signature and a payout to native title holders shows they’ve made no attempt to deal with an issue vital to Central Australia’s future. This shows an appalling lack of understanding about land development issues.”

Dr Burns said the Opposition had displayed no understanding or interest in the native title process or the time frames involved.

“If the Opposition is taking their advice on native title from the Member for MacDonnell, I’m not surprised they keep getting it wrong,” he said.

“His claims about the length of time it would take for compulsory acquisition are nonsensical and he hasn’t even bothered to find out which Acts apply to such a procedure.

“The plain fact is that the legislation lays down minimum timelines for the processes that have to be gone through and it would take from 18 months to upwards of three years to resolve.

“We are in the final stages of negotiations with native title holders about the release of land at Larapinta.

“The process may be slower than we would have liked but significant
agreements have been reached and good progress is being made on the development of Alice Springs residential land.

“This progress will pave the way for stable and secure land releases for Central Australia into the future,” Dr Burns said.