Territorians have been short changed because the Martin Government failed to negotiate a legal contract with the Australian Cricket Board before spending more than a million dollars of taxpayer's funds on bringing Test cricket to Darwin, CLP Leader Terry Mills said today.

Mr Mills said Government, and in particular "accident" prone Sports Minister John Ah kit, deserved a kick in the pants following today's news that no Test cricket will be played in Darwin again before 2007.

"The Martin Government promised Territorians Test cricket four years out of five and had put Territorian's huge investment at risk by not negotiating a legal contract before spending taxpayer's money," Mr Mills said.

"What we see today is yet another blown deal.

"It is laughable that the biggest business in town, the Northern Territory Government, would do business on a wink and a nod whilst giving false assurances to Territorians that there would be regular international matches in the Top End."

Mr Mills called on the Government to make public the full terms and conditions of the contract it has put in place with the Australian Cricket Board guaranteeing Test cricket being played in Darwin – if it has a contract.

"Territorians now have a right to know just what it is the Martin Government has agreed to on taxpayer's behalf with taxpayer's money," Mr Mills said.

Ends

*Attached Hansard of 25/06/03 Government confirming that it had been agreed that Test cricket would be played in Darwin four out of the next five years yet no legal contracts had been signed.

Territory Parliament
Estimates 25/06/03

Mr DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Are there any questions?
Mr MILLS: Yes, Mr Chair. I think it was on Monday, minister, I read with concern the headline here on the back page: 'The ICC reviews world wide roster'. Has the Northern Territory government signed any contracts with the ICC with regards to this test match and future test matches? If you have, could you please indicate what security we have with regards to the use of that facility for cricket for the longer term?

Mr AH KIT: Okay. I will pass that on to Phillip as the Executive Director. Phillip has been involved in the early discussions and what we have been able to put in place.

Mr LESLIE: First, may I say that a lot of the hoo-ha relating to this has been generated by the media in response to a general feeling that Bangladesh are going to be the whipping boys in international cricket and that has been repeated up until now. That said, the ICC had been under some pressure from that, but I do not believe they are resiling from their stance to maintain Bangladesh as a fully paid up member, if you like, of the ICC.

In relation to the reduction in tournaments, the tournaments they are referring to are generally the ones that are played at various places around the world, often out of the blue. The ones that are under the main scrutiny of the ICC, as I understand it, not representing the ACB or the ICC, competitions for cash, for example, played in Sharjah such as the one that was organised in Morocco at the end of this year. The main reference to the ICC is to – in some people's minds – the pointless round of one-day internationals being played all over the world, be it in Canada or wherever else. As we understand it, the home and away series of test matches, which is a home and away series for every test playing nation played over five years, is not under threat at this point.

Mr MILLS: Through the Chair, no contracts have been signed in terms of future engagement?

Mr LESLIE: To follow on from that, in terms of next year, there is a commitment. It has been agreed and we are awaiting the Australian Cricket Board to announce it. In terms of the four years out of five, that has been agreed between government and the Australian Cricket Board. That was agreed previously, however we have been insisting upon having that in a legal document, and that is with us at present and it is a matter of sorting that out in a legal context.

Mr MILLS: Minister, not believing everything I read, can you confirm this: you have an assurance that there will be cricket beyond the Bangladesh match, but nothing is signed.

Mr AH KIT: That is what I understand my Executive Director to have said. We are looking to get that in a legal document so we can have a legal commitment, but that doesn't detract from my department, especially Sport and Rec, developing Marrara Oval as a top national and international facility that we can use for a number of sports.

Mr MILLS: I am happy to support you on that.

Mr AH KIT: I would like Phillip to have the last response on that.

Mr LESLIE: We have an agreement with the Cricket Board that it will
continue in four out of five years. We are seeking to make that a legal agreement.

Ends