13 March 2003
Stick to the facts on crime stats, because there are more in jail than ever before

Minister for Justice Dr Peter Toyne said Denis Burke’s attempt to deliberately mislead the public to the extent he is doing reeks of arrogance - he still hasn’t learnt, and hasn’t changed.

"Mr Burke fails to admit to the fact mandatory sentencing has been proven to not work - ABS statistics released last year for the year 2001 showed a close to 20% rise in property crime during the CLP’s last year in office - compared to the 22% drop in house break-ins across the Territory last year compared to 2001.

"In comparison under the Martin Government we have unprecedented numbers of serious offenders in our jails, currently there are 128 adult and 15 juvenile prisoners being held in remand pending court appearances for mostly property and assault type offences.

"Denis Burke is trying to muddy the waters by drawing totally inaccurate conclusions and misreading the statistics, the most comprehensive and easily understood statistics ever released in the Territory.

"The report provides data on all property offences across the Territory with sentencing outcomes provided for those serious offences that fall under aggravated property offences, not sentencing outcomes for all property offences.

"Over 70% of the property offences Denis Burke refers do not fall under the aggravated property offences and therefore the sentencing outcomes are not reported in this report, so it is difficult to understand how he can make that conclusion," Dr Toyne said.

More than two thirds of property offences are made up of theft and property damage offences for which sentencing outcomes are not reported in the quarterly Crime and Justice Statistics.

"It is clearly not true that property offenders are walking free – serious property offenders are going to jail under the Martin Government - we are about serious time for serious crime.

"There has been a change in the way we deal with property offenders, gone is mandatory sentencing, replaced with a regime that targets serious property offences and repeat offenders with clear guidelines for the courts on how to deal with those, including sending them to jail.

"We have moved away from the one-shot-in-the-locker approach that acted as a dragnet for all property offences resulting in people going to jail for trivial offences to a more targeted regime that is proving effective.

"We are seeing in the figures the result of the Martin Government’s
targeted and tough approach to serious property offenders, with the high numbers in our jails, and an 22% reduction in house break-ins Territory wide last year compared to the last year of the CLP government in 2001," Dr Toyne said.