Former Planning Minister Kon Vatskalis has become an albatross around the neck of Chief Minister Clare Martin, CLP Leader Terry Mills said today.

Mr Mills said Minister Vatskalis, who was the focus of a censure in Parliament today, was not fit to be a Minister and should have been sacked when the Chief Minister carried out her reshuffle at the end of last year.

Mr Mills moved to censure Mr Vatskalis over his role in the application to rezone eight blocks of land at Tiwi from R3 to R2.

In his censure today Mr Mills accused Mr Vatskalis of: “Scheming to undermine the integrity of the Planning process by instigating an application to amend the planning scheme, which was outside the proper purposes of the Planning Act and not on a proper basis.

The censure motion also alleged:
• As the Planning Minister you acted in a dishonest manner and in doing so threatening the integrity of good government in the NT.
• Acted unlawfully and contravened Section 12 of the Planning Act
• Using his powers as the Minister for Planning to act unlawfully in an unprecedented way for political gain.
• And by his conduct the Member for Casuarina has abused his Ministerial powers in such a manner that he has demonstrated that he cannot be relied upon to carry Ministerial responsibilities on behalf of Territorians and should be removed from Office.

“Kon Vatskalis’ rap sheet as a Minister is abysmal and the fact that he is still a Minister is a damning indictment on what Chief Minister Clare Martin is prepared to accept from her Ministers,” Mr Mills said.

“This is not the first time Minister Vatskalis has had questions raised over his actions over land dealings.

“He was the centre of controversy over the decision to give away a block of land to Danila Dilba Medical Services, the same organisation he worked for before the Territory election.

“Time and time again Mr Vatskalis has shown he is not fit to be a Minister.

“The Chief Minister would well remember being misled by Minister Vatskalis in Parliament over claims he made about a website identifying him as a translator for hire. The website’s creator refuted allegations made by Minister Vatskalis.

“And of course Minister Vatskalis showed how he gets things done when he was caught
in an embarrassing letter writing episode to The NT News. Minister Vatskalis’ office
drafted a letter attacking a letter writer over comments they made in The NT News.
Rather than the letter carrying the Minister’s signature it was forwarded on to someone
else to sign and submit to The NT News. Unfortunately for Minister Vatskalis that person
also submitted to The NT News the cover note from Minister Vatskalis’ office as well.

“Deputy Chief Minister Syd Stirling would remember only too well the embarrassing fiasco
around Minister Vatskalis’ attempts to ban commercial flights over Katherine
Gorge/Nitmuluk National Park without a permit. “The Deputy Chief Minister had to mop up
the mess created by Minister Vatskalis.

“Other embarrassing botch ups by Minister Vatskalis include:

• His handling of the sacking of the former Director of the Parks and Wildlife, Bill
  Freeland.
• His handling of Commercial passenger Vehicle licensing issues and his subsequent
  backflip
• He compounded this by taunting taxi drivers over the Government’s plan to introduce a
  free bus service to the wharf precinct.
• His arrogant dismissal of thousands of signatures on a Save the Harbor group petition.
• His signing off on the acquisition of 3 houses in the rural area.
• The compulsory acquisition of land from householders near Rapid Creek. • his claim
  power and water late fee charges had been rejected by government
• A backflip on the promise to seal the Outback Highway.
• His handling of a lethal cyanide spill in Central Australia that within 24 hours he first
  blamed on a truck driver and then on eco-terrorists. It then took 12 months to get a report
  on the spill that could not identify who was to blame.

Ends