26 March 2004

Jack’s your uncle - Storm brewing over rush appointment of Ah Kit’s nephew to six figure job

Embattled Labor Government Minister John Ah Kit, the centre of damning accusations by the Territory Ombudsman, is about to be caught up in another storm – the appointment of his nephew to a six figure paying job as head of one of his uncle’s departments.

CLP Shadow Minister for Community Development and Housing, John Elferink, has called on Minister Ah Kit to explain what role he played in the lightning fast appointment of his nephew Kym Hill, to the key position of Director of Indigenous Housing.

“Uncle Jack has plenty of explaining to do already about his gifting to a friend of a new four wheel drive. Now we find out that he has given his nephew a six figure paying job as the Director of Indigenous Housing,” Mr Elferink said.

“The way this appointment has been rushed through smacks of nepotism.

“I’d like Uncle Jack to explain how widely the position was advertised, because complaints I have received lead me to believe it was virtually a closed shop. How many people were interviewed for the position, and importantly what qualifications does Uncle Jack’s nephew have to hold such a position.

“I know Kym Hill was a former ATSIC Commissioner, but he was also Uncle Jack’s electorate officer for a while and neither position qualifies you for a senior management position like this. Interestingly enough Uncle Jack was also instrumental, through his lobbying, in Kym Hill being elected an ATSIC Commissioner.

“As Director of Indigenous Housing Kym Hill will have charge of a multi-million dollar operation. Yet what senior position, requiring this high level of management, has he previously had. I question whether Kym Hill actually meets the requirements of the job.

“There is a whole sea of senior Indigenous people who could have been given a go at running for this position, but because of the closed shop approach in advertising the position they were excluded.”

Mr Elferink said he knows members of the Indigenous Housing Authority Board are angry at the jobs for the nephew appointment.

“They believe they were deliberately shut out by Uncle Jack. They were not consulted at any stage,” Mr Elferink said.

“This appointment has more to do about politics than it does about who is the best person to guide the future of Indigenous housing in the Territory.”