January 2004

Let Territorians decide at the polls on park giveaway

The Chief Minister Clare Martin should let the people of the Northern Territory decide at the coming Territory election if they want their parks given away, CLP Leader Terry Mills said today.

"The Chief Minister’s grand plan to give away 31 of our parks is unravelling with the breakdown in negotiations over yet another national park, Keep River. The Chief Minister’s assurances given to Territorians look shakier and shakier," Mr Mills said.

"Clare Martin’s original package of 31 parks to be given away has collapsed around her ears."

"The Chief Minister has no right in the first place to be giving away our parks to Aboriginal Land Councils without the OK from Territory voters."

Mr Mills said the Chief Minister’s plan to give away 31 Territory owned parks was flawed from the beginning.

"Now we have had three extensions to the Chief Minister’s ‘firm’ deadlines and negotiations about a fourth park have collapsed," Mr Mills said.

"I remain opposed to minority ownership and control of what should be a public asset. Clare Martin’s plan to give control of Territory parks to Aboriginal Land Councils is wrong."

"The CLP remains opposed to it. The Territory parks are the heritage of ALL Territorians, indigenous and non indigenous. Clare Martin does not have to give the deeds of publicly owned parks to Land Councils in order to have Aboriginal involvement in park management."

"In November 2003 this was sold to Territorians as a 'package' with the withdrawal of the fourth park from the framework it is no longer a package."

"The Chief Minister has been played like a fool. The Aboriginal Land Councils will happily take all the publicly owned parks Clare Martin gives them but four it believes it has strongest claim over are non-negotiable. Once the first park was withdrawn by the Land Councils the Chief Minister’s deal should have been off. Only a fool would play on."

"Chief Minister the game is over and you should have the courage to let the people of the Northern Territory now decide if what you are doing is right."

"Chief Minister Clare Martin has failed to keep the promises she made to Territorians when she announced she was giving away 17,000 square kilometres of our national parks to Aboriginal Land Councils and the looming fight over Litchfield and Elsey National Parks, the Daly River Conservation Area and now Keep River is proof," Mr Mills said.

"The dispute over Litchfield, Elsey, the Daly Conservation Area and Keep River highlights the Government’s inability to actually make their own joint management plan work."