Thursday 19th October 2006

CHIEF MINISTER PAPERING OVER THE CRACKS

Today’s statement on Indigenous Affairs by the Chief Minister is a desperate attempt to reassert her authority in the ALP on indigenous issues and cling to her leadership.

“This is policy making on the run and it shows,” says Jodeen Carney, Leader of the Opposition.

“Since the 15th of May this year the Chief Minister has been engulfed in a rolling crisis that has divided her Party and undermined her leadership.

“Yesterday’s fiery Cabinet meeting was just the last of a series of clashes inside the Government.

“Indeed the Member for Arnhem, Barb McCarthy, chose to ignore 5th floor pressure and appear with McArthur River Mine protestors on the steps of Parliament House.

“Earlier, Matty Bonson’s memo calling on the Chief Minister to hand over the Indigenous Affairs portfolio and the alleged subsequent leaking of that memo by the Member for MacDonnell, exposed the building tensions in the Government.

“The reality is, from the moment the Chief Minister pretended to be shocked by allegations of child sex abuse in indigenous communities, when she had previously been briefed on those allegations; her authority was on the wane.

“Many in her Party would have been fully aware and very unhappy that the Chief Minister was sitting on her hands regarding child sex abuse at Mutijulu.

“The memo, in the Chief Minister’s own hand revealing her deception, has stripped her of any remaining public credibility and further encouraged her critics within the ALP.

“That’s why the Chief Minister has been forced into today’s hasty and shallow policy announcement.

“In February this year the Minister for Housing, Elliot McAdam, called for the establishment of a ‘kind of Marshall Plan’ for the bush and estimated $180 million would need to be spent over the next 10 year just to catch up.
“Today the ‘Martin Plan’ commits just $20 million per annum of the $180 million per annum identified and fails to address any of the underlying factors that plague housing outcomes in the Territory.

“It should be remembered that currently the Territory Government spends a mere $4.7 million of the $94.9 million dollars allocated by the Federal Government for indigenous housing.

“So today’s announcement takes the total spend to just $20 million of the $94.9 million of untied Federal grants provide for that purpose.

“Further, the Martin plan does nothing about the cancer of joblessness and welfare dependency.

“It will have no impact upon the law and order catastrophe engulfing indigenous communities that results in so much indigenous housing being trashed.

“In short, $100 million is being sacrificed to quell the Chief Minister’s political problems.

“Today’s feeble effort will do nothing to fend off her critics inside or outside the Labor Party. The Chief Minister needs to resign from the Indigenous Affairs portfolio and she knows it”

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