Form a Committee or Build a School? Form a Committee!
New Working Group to Talk About Education in Palmerston

The Territory Education Minister has announced a working group to examine education issues in Palmerston. Since the Labor government came to office in 2001 the population in Palmerston has grown by over 2000. In this time the only activity in education in Palmerston has been reviews, a promise to spend 10 million dollars that took four years to materialise, expensive community consultations, a committee to design a ‘since scrapped’ senior secondary facility and most recent of all a working group, plenty of new families, plenty of talk but no new infrastructure.

“Surely by 2006 the Minister has enough information to risk a decision.” Shadow Education Minister, Terry Mills said.

“The official record shows that since 2001 the Palmerston population has increased by nearly 2,000, rising from 22,318 to 24,123 [June 2005], twelve months later Rosebery, Gunn and Farrar continue to expand. Unlike Palmerston’s older suburbs these new suburbs do not have a school.

“A primary school must be built in the suburb of Rosebery.

“It was not so long ago that every Palmerston suburb had a primary school; this kept schools closer to their communities and ensured schools were of modest size. This was done in the best interests of education not government departments. This was CLP government policy.

“Labor reversed this policy, rather than building new schools they adopted a ‘big is better’ approach. Today we have parents travelling across town competing to enrol children at seriously overcrowded schools. Two of these schools share 15 demountables between them. Woodroffe and Bakewell Primary School adjoin Rosebery.

“I wish the working group well. I only hope that this latest development is more about improving education for Palmerston families and less about managing a political problem.

“The parents, teachers and students of Palmerston have been patient for five years waiting for direction and leadership from government. They have supported petitions, participated in discussion groups and given the Minister plenty of room to move.

“However if this ‘working group’ is more about talk than action then I predict a serious political problem for Labor come the next Territory election.”