STRIKING AT THE GOVERNMENT’S CREDIBILITY

Tomorrow’s planned strike by bus drivers to protest against violence on Darwin buses highlights the Labor Government’s failure to control rising crime and anti-social behaviour in the Territory.

“Our bus drivers shouldn’t live in fear of assault and it’s damning that the Labor Government has failed to provide a safe environment for drivers and passengers,” says Fay Miller, Shadow Transport Minister.

On November 19th last year, the Minister for Transport, Delia Lawrie, announced the employment of 4 Safety Transport Officers claiming this would improve safety and security on Darwin’s public bus network.

They are full-time employees of the Public Transport System and have the statutory powers to remove troublesome passengers from buses, or prohibit them from boarding.

Now the Minister claims there are ‘liability issues’ with Safety Transport Officers exercising the very powers she claimed to be providing.

“12 months on from claiming improved safety, we have bus drivers still being punched, spat on and subject to threats and insults from an unruly minority of passengers, “ says Mrs Miller.

“What the Labor Government needs to ensure is the capacity for a swift, effective response to criminal behaviour on our buses.

“Passengers guilty of criminal and anti-social behaviour should also be banned from using public transport for a period of time after an offence has been committed.

“Last year the Opposition called for the introduction of a rouges register of banned passengers who have behaved in a manner that is unacceptable.

“The deeper problem is that the Labor Government has lost control of law and order in the Territory and is in denial about it.

“When confronted with evidence of sharply increasing assault rates the Labor Government blames increased reporting of domestic violence.

“The problems on our buses illustrate how shallow that argument is.”

Further comment : Fay Miller 0407 720 511