MORE VIOLENT CRIME = MORE PRISONERS = LESS PRISON GUARDS

A sharp increase in the number of prisoners in Territory jails this year is further evidence of the Martin Government’s failure to control rising crime,” says the Territory Opposition.

Just released Government figures show a daily average of 898 prisoners for the June quarter 2007, significantly more than the 834 daily average prisoner numbers for 2006-2007 and well above the Territory’s prisons operational capacity of 850.

“Both Darwin and Alice Springs’ prisons are a breaking point, mirroring the rise of violent crime in both cities,” says Jodeen Carney, Leader of the Opposition.

“The latest Quarterly Crime and Justice Statistics showed assault rates going up by 88% in Darwin, 124% in Palmerston and 60% in Alice Springs.

“The Martin Government has been soft on violent crimes and is now reaping the consequences of that policy failure.

“With the increases in reported assault rates it’s not surprising that the Territory’s prison population is going through the roof.

“Nor is this the time to be planning to reduce the number of prison officers in the system as the Martin Government is doing.

“Overcrowded prisons are dangerous places for guards, for prisoners and, in the long run, the community.

“To consider cutting the number of prison officers at a time the prison system is overflowing with inmates and in need of additional capacity, smacks of particularly poor planning.

“The Territory Opposition has been vocal in its support for an expansion of the capacity of both the Darwin and Alice Springs prisons.

“During the Greatorex by-election we committed to expanding the current capacity of Alice Springs, to be followed by an expansion of the Darwin prison and investigation locating a prison at Katherine.

“Given the Martin Government is clueless about controlling violence it should be planning for adequate prison space to hold those convicted.”

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