RATES FREEZE DESIGNED TO DECEIVE

The promised rates freeze for the proposed Top End Shire is a transparent attempt by the Martin Government to limit the political damage from its ill-conceived council amalgamations, says the Territory Opposition.

“Today’s announcement is an inadequate and cynical response that fails to address the genuine concerns of ratepayers throughout the Territory,” says Terry Mills, Acting Opposition Leader.

“I trust people will see this exercise for precisely what it is – a political fix to a policy failure.

“Mindful of the potential for a savage electoral backlash in Ted Warren’s seat of Goyder and Rob Knight’s seat of Daly, the Chief Minister has opted for a three card trick.

“The decision to put in place a three year freeze confirms that the Martin Government is expecting rates to rise substantially as a consequence of forcing council’s to amalgamate.

“If the Martin Government was confident that rates weren’t going to rise, there would be no need for a rates freeze.

“In three years time, the rate payers of the Top End Shire will face a triple whammy as the actual cost of forced amalgamations is levied on them.

“As the Chief Minister’s own media release states: ‘since 2003 their rates have increased by 53%’.

“A 150% increase in three years time would inflict intense economic pain on homeowners in the Top End Shire.

“It also adds weight to the growing suspicion that Clare Martin isn’t planning on being Chief Minister in three years time.

“I suspect the Chief Minister is happy to delay the pain because it will be her successor that has to deal with the political fallout of this cynical sidestep.

“When political leaders move to delay profound economic and political pain until after the next election, you know they are planning their departure.

“That’s what makes this particularly cynical, because by delaying the pain – economic and political – of forced council amalgamations, the Chief Minister is guaranteeing greater damage.”

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