The year in review

Three hundred and sixty seven days ago, no one could say with any certainty what was in store for Territory politics in 2015. The year before was wild enough – with nasty political backstabbing, shady deals, leaked emails, political sex scandals and secret cash trading hands. Surely, 2015 was to be more stable, for the sake of the Territorians who voted in a Government to govern in the best interests of the Territory. Instead, 2015 became an even more extreme version of 2014, with scandals seemingly arising monthly. It all kicked off just two weeks in, when then police commissioner John McRoberts resigned amid allegations he interfered in a criminal investigation with now-convicted travel agent and Crime Stoppers chair Xana Kamitisi. Then there was a late night coup, pledged judicial inquiries never carried out, more travel scandals, a Labor Party president who went to fight terrorists in Syria, an ice addict driving the police minister’s car around at night, another late night coup attempt, “legitimate” threats by the Attorney-General to slap a female MLA, a hole for a hospital that wasn’t a hole, and finally it ended back where it began: questions over the police commissioner and how far down the hole Kamitisi’s scams went.

January 15
Police commissioner John McRoberts quits following allegations he interfered in the criminal investigation into Xana Kamitisi with whom he had a “relationship”. Kamitisi was arrested at her Winnellie travel agency, Latitude Travel, in November 2014 while Mr McRoberts was out of town.

Acting Chief Minister Peter Chandler announced that Mr McRoberts had lost the confidence of the Government and the public for his role in allegedly attempting to manipulate the investigation. It is also later revealed that senior police commander Richard Bryson also had a “friendship” with Kamitisi and was suspended. He was later reinstated.

January 26
NT Labor president Matthew Gardiner packs up in the middle of the night, leaving his wife and three children behind, to fight ISIS in Syria. He later returns to Darwin and shuts himself off from public life. The Australian Federal Police are possibly still deciding whether or not to charge him for taking part in the conflict illegally.

February 3
Chief Minister Adam Giles is unceremoniously dumped as leader of the CLP after a late-night meeting saw his colleagues decide 9-5 to roll him. In a strange lam press conference, Willem Westra van Holthe announces he is the “chief minister apparent” and John Efferkink is the new deputy chief minister.

But that didn’t last. The next morning Mr Giles refused to stand down, made wild accusations about the police colluding with his colleagues to bring him down, pledged a full judicial inquiry into the McRoberts matter and then went on the warpath, sacking Terry Mills from his role as Indonesia envoy and booting Rhonb Lambley and Matt Corliss out of cabinet for their roles in the failed coup.

March 1
Adam Giles scraps the judicial inquiry into the scandal he threw himself in the middle of the month before.

“There’s nothing being hidden here, it’s more about protection,” Mr Giles said, adding he had had advice not to hold an inquiry because of numerous ongoing investigations. All of those have now been wrapped up and have been kept secret – while the public still does not know what actually happened.

April 20
Facing a police investigation, ejection from Parliament and her credibility in question, Labor Leader Delia Lawrence resigns as Labor leader to spend more time with her lawyers. The surprise move comes just days after losing the support of five of seven government colleagues and possibly forcing a month-long leadership race.

Mr Lawrence said she could no longer carry out her job effectively and essentially handed leadership of the NT ALP to challenger Michael Gunner.

April 26
The Sunday Territorian reveals that CLP minister Bess Price charged taxpayers $50,000 for a 10-day trip to New York City which included seven nights at the famed Waldorf Astoria with her chief of staff Paul Mossman and his son. The trip, booked by Kamitisi, would later be the impetus for several charges of corruption against Kamitisi and Mossman.

May 7
A “hoopla” in NT Government legislation around ports is to blame for the Tiwi Islands port’s go-ahead without an environmental impact assessment, says the Territory’s Environment Minister.

The Port Melville facility was constructed with $5.6 million in EIA and has been promoted as potentially making oil shipments in the “environmentally-significant” area that is home to a number of threatened species and wildlife.

Gary Higgins said they couldn’t order an EIA under existing legislation before the private port went ahead.

May 15
Palmer United Party called it quits in state and territory politics to instead focus on shifting leader Clive Palmer’s “resources and populability” to the federal stage exclusively. No tears are shed in the NT.

PUP had lost its three NT members the previous November when Alison Anderson and Larisa Lee followed Francis Xavier Kurrupuwu in exiting the party.

Ms Anderson called the party a “total embarrassment” and a “national disgrace”.

May 21
An NT Electoral Commission audit shows political parties in the NT repeatedly violated electoral laws, including failing to properly disclose donations. Despite the penalty of massive fines, nobody is pursued by commissioner Iain Lothian.

May 30
CLP president Jason Newman resigns, effective immediately, after only six months in the job. Mr Newman, a business owner based in Tennant Creek, said in his resignation letter the “tyranny of distance” led to the decision to step down.

May 31
The Sunday Territorian reveals the NT Government spent $5.6 million on the Port Melville facility, which was constructed with $5.6 million in EIA and has been promoted as potentially making oil shipments in the “environmentally-significant” area that is home to a number of threatened species and wildlife.