Gerry Wood, the Independent Member for Nelson, says the Government should consider five prison farms throughout the Territory. These farms could be developed in the Darwin, Katherine, Tennant Creek, Alice Springs and Gove areas.

Gerry says that the farms would run on a commercial basis with prisoners being paid a wage so that other suppliers could not claim they are being disadvantaged.

Because of the different climatic areas covered in the Territory, a broad range of both tropical and temperate climate crops could be grown and supplied to remote communities through their stores, something that surely would be supported by the Commonwealth’s Intervention Task Force. As well the prisons and Government operated hospitals could also be supplied with fruit and vegetables.

Gerry says that if a small abattoir could be re-established, some beef cattle could be raised on these farms and meat could also be supplied out bush.

Gerry says that low security prisoners working on these farms would learn new skills and be gainfully employed whilst serving time. The other benefit would be to allow prisoners to be closer to their families.

Gerry says that by building these farms, the requirement to build a huge new prison at the cost of $300m would no longer be required. A smaller prison would suffice.

He says that as a first start the Darwin Correctional Centre at Berrimah should take over a portion of the Berrimah Farm and develop it into a farm.

Gerry says with 80% of our prison population indigenous and prisoner populations continually climbing, it’s time for a different approach to reduce the recidivism rates and the number of prisoners in prison.

Gerry says the Government needs a broad long term vision but unfortunately like planning, transport, energy and housing it shows they only have tunnel vision.

_Cessi foro gallinarum sed surgo_