NEW PRISON COSTS RUBBERY

Gerry Wood, the Independent Member for Nelson, says he believes the Government is deliberately hiding the real cost of moving the prison to Weddell.

Gerry says that at a recent meeting with the Government it was obvious that the Government had put forward a case to shift the prison not based on the real costs or any detailed analysis of the existing site but rather on making the figures fit the goal of building the prison on a Greenfield site and using the existing prison land for housing.

Gerry says that

- there appears that there has been no proper public cost benefit analysis done of bulldozing perfectly good buildings at the existing prison eg the industrial workshops, and then building new buildings at another site
- there has been no detailed analysis of what will happen to Don Dale Juvenile Detention Centre (just recently upgraded) and the low security prison (only 3 years old)
- there has been no discussion as to whether the existing main prison building could be refurbished and turned into a remand centre or an educational facility
- there has been no open and transparent debate as to whether a new prison could be built on Berrimah Farm land and still use facilities at the existing prison
- there has been no discussion as to why the Government has been looking at a public/private partnership to build the prison and if that is the reason why the government wants a Greenfield Site
- there has been no real debate on the extra costs plus the extra carbon foot print that will be caused by shifting the prison to a site three times the distance away from the courts as well as other services
- there has been no debate about whether the Department of Justice supports the movement of the prison or is it only coming from a section of the Department or Treasury
- there has been no real debate about the appointment of the CEO of the Waterfront Management Board as a consultant to oversee the prison project and is there any possible conflict of interest and there has been no debate as to why the Government can’t use its own Department to do that job
- there has been no real public debate over whether we should be looking at a smaller prison in Darwin and small regional prisons across the Territory

Gerry says the whole process, the selection of the site and the methodology used to select the site, the basis of the costs given for alternative prison sites, any relevant matters that were not taken into account, the consultancy, the role of the Treasury, the role of the Department of Justice, the public/private partnership, all should be looked at by the auditor general who should report back to Parliament.

He says that until that report is delivered and debated in Parliament the building of a new facility at Weddell should be put on hold – after all $300m is a lot of money and it should not be wasted just because some people are in a hurry and poor planning has now caught up with them.
Cessi foro gallinarum sed surgo