GALLERIES IN THE FRAME FOR CUTS
Ross Bohlin MLA
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Shadow Arts Minister, Ross Bohlin, used the Estimates Committee hearings to highlight the Government’s cuts to the arts and museums budget – despite increased visitor numbers over the past four years.

Mr Bohlin said the Territory Government’s funding for galleries and museums has shrunk since the 2006-07 budget, when it was $11.638million.

The 2010-11 budget allocation is $11.267million.

This figure is also a significant cut on the 2009-10 budget, when the allocation was more than $11.99million and more than $12million was spent.

“While we acknowledge the importance of reigning in the Territory Government’s huge debt, I don’t believe it’s fair to single out our galleries and museums to bear the brunt for Labor’s financial failures,” Mr Bohlin said.

“In 2006-07, attendances at the Territory’s museums and art galleries were 230,000. This financial year it was 320,000.

“Arts and galleries hold up a mirror to a region’s cultural face. Territory galleries are full of some of the best Indigenous art in the country and at the very least funding should be maintained.

“I asked Arts Minister Karl Hampton during Estimates about staffing levels within our galleries, particularly in the curatorial area. Security is also an issue. He said he’d get back to me with an answer.

“It’s a safe bet though that staffing hasn’t kept pace with the 40% increase in attendances over recent years and that’s a concern.

“It’s the Minister’s lawful responsibility to protect our valuable arts’ collections and to ensure they are properly secured and looked after. I don’t think with the current funding that this is being achieved.”

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