New Laws to Toughen Property Damage Introduced

The Minister for Justice and Attorney-General, Delia Lawrie, today introduced new laws to broaden and strengthen property and arson offences and respond to terrorism.

Under the Criminal Code Amendment (Criminal Damage) Bill introduced to NT Parliament today, the offence of arson will be broadened and a new offence covering the crime of sabotage is proposed.

“Under the proposed reforms offences involving arson and criminal damage will be modernised and will be more consistent with community expectations,” Ms Lawrie said.

“The offence of arson has been broadened and now includes damage caused to vehicles by fire or explosives.

“Under the proposed amendments arson will now apply to specific forms of property including setting fire to another person’s house or workplace, motor vehicles and attached trailers, aircraft and motorised vessels.

“Given the prevalence of non-motorised vessels such as yachts in the Territory with some people using these vessels as their home, the Government has also decided to extend the definition of the offence of arson. The maximum penalty for arson is life imprisonment.

“The Bill also modernises and simplifies criminal damage offences and proposes a single maximum penalty of 14 years imprisonment, rather than the current varying penalty of between two and 14 years imprisonment depending on the type or value of the property damaged.”

Ms Lawrie said the Bill also proposes a new offence of sabotage which aims to fill the gap identified in Australian domestic law in relation to act of terrorism.

“Currently in most jurisdictions, property damage only relates to relatively minor offences and therefore the penalties don’t reflect the seriousness and gravity of terrorist and potential terrorist acts,” she said.

“The proposed new offences of sabotage and threatened sabotage are directed at terrorists and others who attempt or threaten to destroy public facilities, infrastructure, government offices or services.

“The new offence will ensure those who attack the critical infrastructure in the Territory will face severe consequences with the maximum penalty is life imprisonment.”

Contact: Campbel Giles 0407 972 900