**COUNTRY LIBERALS**

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**WHO WATCHES THE WATCHERS**

Terry Mills MLA

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The case of Police accessing the phone records of a Territory journalist is a matter that re-opens the debate on transparency and openness in the execution of government powers and the work of public servants said Opposition Leader Terry Mills.

“There are a number of administrative processes available for ordinary citizens to access when they are aggrieved by decisions and processes involving government departments and the use of law including the Ombudsman, Children’s Commission, Information Commissioner and Anti Discrimination Commissioner,” Mr Mills said.

The Country Liberals have called for the introduction of an Anti-Corruption body that would deal with reports of official wrongdoing, and it is timely in this environment for that issue to be put back on the table.

“While there has been no suggestion of corruption in the dealings between the newspaper, the reporter and their confidential source, having the police investigate itself over the issue raises the questions of transparency or a witch-hunt.

“As I stated in my motion in parliament on the 11th August this year:

**Corruption is conduct which can adversely affect the integrity, honesty, or impartial exercise of a government agency - or to be seen to do so.**

“If an independent body was available then there would have been a pathway for the parties, including Graeme Sawyer, Justin O’Brien and the NT News to be assured that processes would be investigated and that there was no basis to any claims that they had been unduly applied or interfered.

“The Country Liberals plan was to move immediately to establish an investigative unit using police resources, and to re-organise or consolidate the powers of the various peak positions in the near term to create an independent body.

“I will again outline to the Government during the next sittings it is time that an Anti-Corruption watchdog was established.”

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