MEDIA RELEASE

MATARANAKA COVER-UP

John Elferink MLA

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Shadow Justice Minister, John Elferink has exposed a shocking case of government incompetence and cover-up, following CTC Committee hearings on the Mataranka animal cruelty case.

Mr Elferink revealed a report that recommended the Department of Local Government make important changes to its Animal Welfare Act had been ignored for up to two years.

"It was only the cruel death of cattle at Mataranka, that eventually forced the changes that were recommended two years earlier," Mr Elferink says.

The report made three major recommendations; to extend the statute of limitations from 12 to 18 months, deal with the confusion of processes within the department and improve staff training and their skill sets.

"Had these recommendations been taken seriously, when they were made in 2007, we would have been better armed to act on the tragic events surrounding the starvation deaths of hundreds of cows at the Charles Darwin University owned station.

"Deaths which no one has ever been held responsible.

"The Henderson Government refused to prosecute anyone over the animal cruelty, because it claimed it had missed the 12 month deadline for a prosecution to take place.

"But here we have the Government’s own report saying the statute of limitations should be increased to 18 months, which if adopted would have made a prosecution possible.

"Instead, the department sat on the report for two years, and ignored it completely when the events of Mataranka began to unfold.

"This is government incompetence and cover-up at its worst; where proper process and good governance are pushed aside in favour of self interest.

"We now know that the Henderson Government refused to prosecute because it would ultimately embarrass them."

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