28th April 2005

What Labor Don’t Want the People of the Territory to Know About Education Funding

Dr Richard Lim, the Shadow Minister for Employment, Education and Training said today that the Labor government’s announcement of a $109m increase in the Employment, Education and Training budget is an attempt confuse and to hide the fact that the department has been blowing its budget allocation each year since the change of government with the first blow out of $26m in 2001-02.

“The pre-Budget announcement by the Labor Government of increased spending in Employment, Education and Training is further evidence of poor management by this government since it came into power in 2001,” Dr Lim said.

“The current Teachers’ EBA is not yet settled. In other words, this government does not have any idea what the EBA will cost.

“And it is confusing to learn on the one hand that there is money in the Budget, but on the other, Labor is telling teachers that it does not have the money to make them the best paid in the country, a pre-election promise they made in 2001.

“Anyone can see that the increases in Employment, Education and Training budgets each year have been due to poor management. They have not stayed within Budget for any year.

“A quick look at the budget papers since this government came into power will clearly show that at each Budget, there is clear evidence of a blow out. The figures are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Budget</th>
<th>Actual Spent</th>
<th>Blow-Out</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2001-02</td>
<td>$446m</td>
<td>$472m</td>
<td>$26m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-03</td>
<td>$504m</td>
<td>$507m</td>
<td>$3m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-04</td>
<td>$520m</td>
<td>$530m</td>
<td>$10m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-05</td>
<td>$540m</td>
<td>$554m (MYR)</td>
<td>$14m (in 6 months)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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(The $109m increase claimed by Stirling is the difference between what was actually spent in year 2001-02 and the $581 announced yesterday)

“The tragedy of this is that while the budget allocation for Education has gone up, the number of primary and pre-school students in our schools has decreased in actual numbers, with the latest figures from the government’s own Budget papers indicating almost 1,000 less students between 2002-03 and 2003-04 (Budget Paper Number 3 2004-05).
“What we are seeing is a great increase in spending for fewer students. If Labor has not built one school and claim they can’t afford to pay teachers more, where on earth is all this money going?

“That is why the Country Liberal Party is calling for a full Estimates Committee process so that these budget figures can be scrutinised.

“Territorians want to know what good educational outcomes for our children this government has delivered for the money that has been spent.

“Where is the money coming from to fund this increase and how has previous allocations been spent and why has there been repeated budget blow-outs?

“With serious questions regarding their Budget management, it is becoming increasingly vital that questions are able to be asked,” Dr Lim said.

Ends

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