Denis Burke  
Leader of the Opposition

Day 7 and Chief Minister still refuses to answer questions- show some leadership and face Territorians

31 March 2005

It’s been seven days and still the Territory’s Chief Minister refuses to face Territorians and answer question over claims of maladministration and misuse of the taxpayer’s purse by her Government, CLP Leader Denis Burke said today.

“We have a Territory Government Minister who isn’t fit to be a Minister and with each day the Chief Minister adds to the odour hanging over her Government by refusing to front up to Territorians and give some honest answers,” Mr Burke said.

“The Northern Territory Ombudsman’s Report tabled in the Northern Territory Parliament Thursday 24 March 2005 has raised a number of serious issues into the unlawful gifting of a $35 000 vehicle and its subsequent on selling.

“The Ombudsman has made specific references to unlawful breaches of the Local Government Act.

“I am strongly of the opinion on information provided to me that the gifting of the $35,000 vehicle referred to by the Ombudsman was an illegal deal stitched up in a pub, directed by the Minister responsible for Assisting the Chief Minister on Northern Territory Aboriginal affairs, and that the car was illegally gifted and registered directly to a private citizen.

“The Chief Minister has to explain whether illegally dipping into the taxpayer’s purse is common practice for her Ministers.”

Mr Burke has written to Police Commissioner White asking for a police investigation into matters arising out of the Ombudsman’s report.

“On the Northern Territory Ombudsman’s findings and my own investigations I am firmly of the belief that the illegal transactions that have transpired are not as a result of sloppiness on behalf of the department, but as a result of the criminal misuse of taxpayer’s funds,” Mr Burke wrote

“In the interests of the wider community I believe only your department can ascertain the true facts and strongly request you undertake a full police investigation forthwith.

“This issue is too important to leave in abeyance until after the Northern Territory election which is imminent.”

SOME QUESTION FOR CLARE
1. Do you support your minister Jack Ah Kit after allegations that he improperly interfered with a special purpose grant which gifted a Toyota 4 X 4 to a community that didn’t want it?

2. If you do support him why don’t you say so publicly?

3. If you don’t support him why is he still a minister?

4. Why are you in hiding on this issue?

5. What was the link between this gift and the Kembi Land Claim settlement?

6. Why are public servants now being asked to front the cameras on political questions of Ministerial conduct?

7. Do you agree that the comments by the Executive Director of Local Government that this sort of intervention by the minister is not at all unusual when it comes to the expenditure of public funds? Do you think that is proper?

8. Is this common practice by all of your Ministers?

9. Given you appointed Jack Ah Kit to help negotiate Kenbi settlement what is your knowledge of the circumstances surrounding these gifts to Traditional Owners on the Cox Peninsula?

10. Does it concern you that under your minister a department of your government has been found by the Ombudsman to have acted contrary to law?

11. If it does concern you why have you said nothing about it?

12. Does it not concern you that claims of nepotism from the IHANT board have been directed at one of your ministers?

13. If is does concern you why are you silent on the issue?

14. Given that your Minister John Ah Kit has stated that Indigenous housing is “the” number one indigenous issue why have you appointed a director in charge of this area who by the department’s own comments has been given a “development opportunity”. In otherwise he is in training.

There are many more questions that the Chief Minister and her Minister must answer. Surely an honest and accountable Chief Minister would answer them?

Ends