11th January 2007

M E D I A

Gulpilil Decision Should Not Be Misconstrued

The silence of the Territory Government over the Gulpilil acquittal is surprising according to Shadow Minister for Central Australia Dr Richard Lim.

"I would have hoped that the Territory Government immediately take steps to send a clear signal to all Territorians that, notwithstanding the decision in the Gulpilil matter, there is no right to carry weapons by Territorians." Dr Richard Lim said today.

"The findings by the Territory Magistrate hearing the matter made it clear that she was satisfied with the reasons that Mr Gulpilil gave to the court that he was in possession of a machete for legitimate reasons.

"However, it concerns me that this may send an inappropriate message to other people, believing that it is lawful to be armed in the Territory.

"It is not lawful to be armed in the Northern Territory.

"The Gulpilil matter was a very specific finding on the facts before the court. It should not be interpreted by anyone that it is easy to have lawful reasons to be armed in public.

"I would have expected the Government to have been sending out a clear signal to all Territorians that being armed, especially in a public place, is against the law and that legislation for the control of such weapons does exist.

"Sadly there are many stabbings in our communities, including our city centres, particularly amongst Aboriginal people and it would be easy for many people to misinterpret yesterday's decision as somehow legitimising the possession of edged weapons and quoting cultural reasons for doing so.

"As the government is not willing or not interested in reinforcing this fact on Territorians I hope that the media will pick up this message in the interests of public safety."

Contact: Dr Richard Lim 0418 897 688