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MARTIN GOVERNMENT AND NLC MISS THE POINT

The Martin Government and the Northern Land Council have both misunderstood the intent and effect of legislative amendments, proposed by the Opposition, to the Land Rights Act.

“Contrary to the Treasurer’s claims, the Opposition’s amendments are not designed to, and would not, authorise persons to take fish from the intertidal zone of waters abutting traditional land,” says Terry Mills, Deputy Leader of the Opposition.

“We fully understand that legal option doesn’t exist and a closer read of my media release would have revealed as much.

“What the proposed amendments would do is provide the NLC with the option of deciding whether or not to issue permits for recreational fishers in the intertidal zone of waters abutting traditional land.

“Currently the NLC are legally bound to require permits of people entering Aboriginal land, which now includes the intertidal zone.

“Should the NLC exercise the legal option created by the proposed amendments and not insist on permits for recreational fishers in the intertidal zone, then – as is the case in all other Territory waters - there will be no need for fishing licences either.

“The status quo before Blue Mud Bay would prevail until the High Court makes a final determination.

“The Opposition isn’t proposing to override the legal right of the NLC to issue permits for recreational fishers.

“What we are doing is giving the NLC the option of not being legally obliged to issue permits – we would give them the choice.

“This is a very important distinction and demonstrates that neither the Labor Government, nor the NLC, have fully thought through this issue.

“The Opposition’s proposal is a golden opportunity for the demonstration of considerable goodwill. I don’t believe it should be missed.”

Further comment: Terry Mills 0418 833 594