



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY  
of the NORTHERN TERRITORY

OPPOSITION and CROSSBENCH MEMBERS

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## MEDIA STATEMENT

Monday, 5<sup>th</sup> June 2017

**MR GARY HIGGINS MLA**

Leader of the Opposition

**MR GERRY WOOD MLA**

Member for Nelson

**MRS LIA FINOCCHIARO MLA**

Deputy Leader of the Opposition

**MRS ROBYN LAMBLEY MLA**

Member for Araluen

**THE HON. KEZIA PURICK MLA**

Member for Goyder

**MR TERRY MILLS MLA**

Member for Blain

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“The Budget Bill is the most important piece of legislation to pass through Parliament each year. It authorises Government to spend taxpayers’ money and what it is to be spent on.

“Scrutinising the Budget Bill through Estimates Committee hearings is a key function of non-Government members. Introduced in the Territory in 2002, members have had 60 hours to question Ministers and senior public servants about how taxpayers’ money is spent.

“After last August’s election, the Gunner Labor Government began a process to bring Parliament closer to the people. A Government dominated committee recommended the 60 hours be retained to scrutinise the Budget in June and annual reports in November, with Opposition and cross-bench members setting the schedule.

“Government overturned this recommendation, insisting 30-hours each be spent scrutinising the Budget and annual reports. Scrutinising annual reports is unrelated to scrutinising the Budget Bill and is entirely different and irrelevant to the Estimates process.

“Then, in an act of high-handed arrogance, Government scrapped established convention and imposed its own schedule, further limiting our capacity to scrutinise spending on behalf of Territorians.

“These steps are in stark contrast to Labor’s promise it would restore trust to Government.

“How can cutting Budget scrutiny by half and inflicting the Government’s own schedule on those responsible for holding them to account be fair, open or transparent?

“Labor’s Budget delivers the biggest deficit ever in the Territory’s history, but the shortest time for Ministers to be scrutinised. What does this Government have to hide?

“In order to make a very clear statement we will not support a sham process, we announce today we are stepping aside from the Estimates hearings until Government listens to – and acts upon – the very reasonable concerns we have raised

“In acknowledgement of the hard-work done by Territory public servants, the Opposition will provide the Clerk with written copies of the questions we have prepared for Estimates.”

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