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**Topic:** MINISTERIAL REPORTS  
**Subject:** MINISTERIAL REPORT - Building Certification Compliance  
**Date:** 28/04/2009  
**Member:** Ms LAWRIE  
**Other:** Ms PURICK; Mr WOOD  
**Speakers:**  
**Status:** Planning and Lands

**Ms LAWRIE (Planning and Lands):** Madam Speaker, I report on the progress government has made to improve building certification compliance in the Territory. In March, I released the results of a preliminary desktop audit that was undertaken on building certification for Tennant Creek. It showed there is a need to improve access to and use of building certification services in regional areas. This is an issue that stretches all the way back to 1993 when certification was privatised. The vast majority of certifiers in the Territory are hard working and professional, but are simply not able to service these areas at a comparable cost to major centres.

In March, I also announced a package of initiatives to improve building certification compliance. As I foreshadowed, an independent expert team from Queensland has conducted a comprehensive review and provided advice to me to improve the certification system and service delivery. I table the report this morning and I thank the team for their hard work in a short time frame.

I discussed it in detail with review team members and indicated that I will be taking the recommendations to the construction industry and certifiers with the intent of amending our processes to make the system less expensive and more user friendly. This report will form the basis of a discussion paper that will go out to industry for comment on the reforms it proposes.

To encourage owners to achieve certification and to access government support, I have formally commenced a moratorium period on prosecutions for existing building owners. This moratorium will end on 30 June 2011. While I originally announced that the moratorium would only apply in Tier 2 regional areas, following receipt of the review team's findings, I have decided to extend it over urban areas as well. My goal is to improve compliance rates across the Territory, and I take on board the review's findings, that compliance is a problem in both regional and urban areas.

Second, I want to move our building regulatory regime towards delivering a service and developing a cooperative approach. The threat of prosecution could hinder greater involvement from all stakeholders in this change of approach. The moratorium will mean that owners of existing buildings that have not commenced or completed certification will not be prosecuted. The moratorium will not apply to new construction undertaken during this time, or for buildings that are assessed as unsafe.

It is important to emphasise that this is not a safety issue, it is about helping owners finalise the paper work necessary to confirm occupation. Any building deemed unsafe would need to be rectified.

The department will be writing to owners who have not completed the necessary paperwork to encourage them to finalise certification of building works prior to the deadline. For Tier 2 residential owners, this can be as simple and inexpensive as getting the builder to provide a declaration that it has been built in accordance with the building permit.

In regional areas, it is clear that many incomplete certifications are due to the extra cost owners face getting certifiers to travel to inspect the final building. Owners in these areas should have affordable access to these services to assist them to meet building certification requirements. Commencing from June, a \$2 per kilometre subsidy, in addition to reasonable accommodation rates, will be payable to private certifiers to travel to these areas.

An awareness campaign will commence shortly to inform the public where to access certification services.

The Department of Planning and Infrastructure has also advised that some government owned and leased buildings have outstanding certification requirements. This is not acceptable. I have therefore established a task force to prioritise all outstanding government building certification. The task force will report to me in one month with an audit of all government buildings. It will report back to me in three months with a Strategic Priorities Works Program. I expect that within 12 months any currently uncertified government building will be compliant. The task force will report monthly to me on progress. This will provide a substantial boost for private Territory certifiers and help sustain Territory jobs in the construction sector.

To improve the long term sustainability of the certification system, and attract and retain suitably qualified professionals, I have also allocated \$100 000 a year to implement a cadet program in the Territory. The Territory government recognises improvements in the system are necessary to improve certification compliance. The measures I announced in March are well on the way to achieving this goal. These latest measures will provide a comprehensive, Territory wide approach to building certification.