



MEDIA RELEASE

PORT OF DARWIN SELECT COMMITTEE

2 April 2015

Darwin Port Visit and Public Hearings

The Port of Darwin Select Committee yesterday heard from a range of organisations about the risks and benefits of the proposed lease model for the Port of Darwin.

“The hearings started with the Maritime Union of Australia, which raised a number of objections to the proposal, and concluded with Northern Territory Airports, which outlined the benefits of the Commonwealth’s privatisation of the Darwin Airport in 1998,” Mr Nathan Barrett MLA, Chair of the Committee said. “In between, the Committee heard from a range of businesses that had an interest in the Port.

“The need for appropriate regulation was a consistent theme throughout the hearings. Even witnesses who were interested in bidding for a lease of the Port acknowledged there were risks around access and price with the private operation of the Port due to it providing monopoly services which are vital to the Northern Territory’s economy. While views differed on how light the regulatory framework should be, there was agreement that legislation was required to ensure a fair and competitive market.”

“Another common theme was the need for careful consultation on and consideration of the details. A number of businesses saw the proposed privatisation as offering potential benefits and opportunities if well executed, but also having the potential for harm if it upset the competitive balance in a wide variety of areas, such as port access, stevedoring, leasing moorings or providing maintenance services.

“Some witnesses stated that the Committee’s hearing was the first opportunity they had had to voice their views on the impact of the proposal. It will be important to adequately consider the breadth of stakeholder views to get the management of the Port right,” Mr Barrett said.

Another issue raised was the extent to which functions such as vessel traffic control and pilotage services should be delegated to a private operator.

The Committee will consider the issues raised at the hearings and in the submissions received and develop recommendations for reporting to the Assembly by 27 April 2015.