Mayor blasts TI O sale tactics

PALMERSTON Mayor Ian Abbott has accused the Government of seeking tacit stamps of approval for the sale of TIO by prematurely asking organisations for infrastructure wishlists.

The CLP has sent about 300 letters to peak bodies, including the Local Government Association of the Northern Territory, seeking ideas about how best to use money from the potential sale. By doing so, Mr Abbott said, the CLP was putting “the cart before the horse” and believed if councils nominated desired infrastructure it would send a message they supported the sale.

“There’s all sorts of organisations saying ‘we’d like a new church’, for example, if they’re a community organisation. For Palmerston council it might be a swimming pool … but by doing that is it tacit approval and saying we agree with it?” Mr Abbott said.

“TIO sale has been a disaster and I think the Government should be thinking about what is the best use of that money and whether councils want that money instead of the Government wanting to spend it for us.”

Mr Abbott said this was “a Pandora’s Box” for councils if they nominated areas of infrastructure it would send a message they supported the sale.

He also said the Government wanted to make a statement that councils would support the sale. Mr Abbott said: “They’re not coming right out and saying it.”

Mr Abbott said there was not yet enough information or consultation to support or reject privatisation.

A CLP spokesman said individual councils did not receive the letters but other organisations had already responded with ideas.

Mr Abbott questioned if the requests were in the best interests of the Government or the public. Darwin mayor Katrina Fong Lim did not return calls. The CLP has also set up a website asking for the public to submit ideas about how best to use money from selling public assets.

Such sales would attract a 15 per cent Federal Government bonus through the Asset Recycling Initiative, which closes to new sales in May 2016.

At a public forum on Thursday night, TIO chief executive Richard Harding told a crowd of about 80 people the insurer was having a hard time spreading its risk exposure across the NT and would be better suited as part of another business “with a national footprint”.

Those opposed to the sale fear premiums would skyrocket under privatisation, namely because of Darwin’s geography within a cyclone zone.

Matt Farley has released an album about Australia’s top cities, including Darwin and Palmerston.

ALICIA Keys and Frank Sinatra sang about New York, but one American thought it was time Darwin and Palmerston had their own musical ode.

Matt Farley, from Danvers, Massachusetts, has included the Top End in his back catalogue under alias The Guy Who Sings Songs About Cities And Towns.

He has recorded 16,000 songs to date as part of a life quest to sing about every topic imaginable, and said it was a focus on Australia that led him to this fine part of the landscape.

“I just went through a list of the top cities in Australia and I went down the list until I filled up a CD.”

“Thankfully, Darwin and Palmerston made the cut.”

The resulting album was These Australia Places Deserve These Nice Songs.

Darwin, Northern Territory, Right On the Timor Sea, Nice Place rates Mitchell Street as the place to be, with special mentions to the beach and Royal Darwin Hospital.

Palmerston, Northern Territory, Is a Cool Place because of the water tower and ladies,” he said.

“I would visit … I think the local officials should sponsor a concert at the library where I play all my songs about Palmerston and nearby places.”

His major information source, Wikipedia, had failed to inform him about the Palmerston Water Park attraction.

Farley said there could one day be a re-recording to include landmarks.

He started writing “silly songs about unusual topics” in 2008 after his band Mies Haven failed to sell records.

Rangers destroy hundreds of feral cats to protect biodiversity

ALICE Springs rangers have destroyed more than 700 feral cats during the past two years.

The cats had been collected from traps left at residents’ properties and around town, said Town Council senior ranger Wayne Davison.

“We know we have collected a feral cat because they hiss, whereas a domestic cat will meow,” he said.

Wild cats are a major contributor to declining feral numerical numbers in Central Australia.

Mr Davison said this was part of a reason responsible cat ownership was important.

He said that meant keeping cats in at night, and having them registered and desexed.

The terrestrial ecosystems director for the Territory Government’s land resource management department, Graeme Gillespie, said “we have unique reasons to worry about domesticated cats” compared with the rest of Australia.

“The challenge is maintaining biodiversity which is not found in other parts of the country,” Dr Gillespie said.

He has co-ordinated research projects that provided technical advice to department minister Willem Westra van Holthe.

His team has collected data on feral cats over the past three years, including what threatened species they have eaten, where they are living, and how to reduce their threat to the environment.

They are continuing to explore the different technologies available to eliminate the threat.

Federal parliamentary secretary for the environment Senator Simon Birmingham released Kakadu’s threatened species strategy on Tuesday.