Chief Minister Adam Giles will join fellow state and territory leaders for an emergency meeting this weekend to discuss federal funding and GST issues.

"I will be meeting my fellow First Ministers in Sydney for urgent talks on Sunday about the Commonwealth’s plans for the funding of health and education in the states and territories beyond 2017-18," Mr Giles said.

"The Territory received an encouraging infrastructure funding package in Tuesday’s Federal Budget but like my fellow leaders, I am deeply concerned about cuts in other areas and about the increased cost of fuel for Territorians as a result of decisions by Canberra.

"Whilst increasing the GST has been floated by the Commonwealth as a solution to its funding shortfall, I will be arguing that wedging the states and territories into agreeing to a GST hike is not the answer.

"Raising the GST beyond the current 10 per cent requires the agreement of all states and territories and I do not support the current GST rate being increased."

Before heading to Sydney, Mr Giles will also travel to Katherine tomorrow to attend the Northern Land Council Full Council Meeting.

Resolution of fishing access issues related to the Blue Mud Bay High Court decision will be at the top of the agenda.

"In the Territory Budget earlier this week, the Government announced it was providing $2.7 million towards permit-free fishing access to inter-tidal waters overlying Aboriginal land.

"The NLC has agreed to allow permit-free access to affected waters until June 30 this year, apart from a small section of tidal waters in the upper Finniss River.

"We want this situation to continue in the immediate term but are optimistic about finding a permanent solution that meets the public’s obligations to Traditional Owners whilst maximising access to these waters for fishers.

"I will also be briefing the Full Council on the Government’s new remote home ownership drive which was announced as part of this week’s budget.

"The Country Liberals Government is determined to give Aboriginal people in our remote communities the same opportunities as Territorians living in urban areas and that includes the chance for public housing tenants to buy their own home."
Up to half the Territory’s remote housing stock could be made available for sale in communities with a 40 or 99 year township lease to those tenants who wish to purchase their home. This currently includes communities on Groote Eylandt, Bickerton Island and the Tiwi Islands.

$4.5 million has been set aside over the next three years to begin this process. At the completion of a sale, owner occupiers will be supported with a special incentive grant of $20,000 to help them upgrade and maintain their home.

“I’m keen to explain this scheme and its social and economic benefits to NLC members so that they might join us in promoting it in their home communities,” Mr Giles said.

“We want public housing to be a pathway to home ownership, not an end in itself and believe this philosophy is crucial to developing Northern Australia.”

**Media Contact:** Danielle Parry 0413 081 801