6 May 2008

***STRICLTY EMBARGOED UNTIL 11AM TUESDAY 6 MAY 2008***

BUDGET 2008 DELIVERING MORE FOR FAMILIES IN CENTRAL AUSTRALIA

Budget 2008 will deliver for families living in Central Australia by investing more in the future of the region.

“This is a budget that invests in the future of the Territory with record spending in health, education, police and infrastructure,” Treasurer Delia Lawrie said.

“The Territory has one of the strongest economies in the nation and has the highest forecast growth next year.

“Delivering a strong economy hasn’t happened by accident, it takes a Government with sound financial management and plans for the future.

“Making sure Territory families benefit from the strong economy is a priority of the Henderson Government.

“Budget 2008 is firmly focused on delivering for families and investing in the future of the Territory.”

MORE FOR CENTRAL AUSTRALIA

“The Henderson Government’s investment in Central Australia in Budget 2008 will deliver more services and facilities,” Minister for Central Australia Rob Knight said.

“Record spending in health, education, infrastructure and police will mean better services and facilities today and in the future.”

MAKING MORE CENTRAL AUSTRALIAN HOME OWNERS

“Budget 2008 will make home ownership a reality for more Central Australian families with changes to the HomeNorth scheme and stamp duty cuts,” said Treasurer Delia Lawrie.

“All stamp duty rates for home purchases have been reduced, saving money for all people that buy a new home.
“The HomeNorth price cap for Alice Springs has been lifted to $265,000 from $240,000 giving people a greater selection of homes.

“Income limits have been increased to make HomeNorth accessible to more Territorians.

“The first home buyer stamp duty concession has been increased from $350,000 to $385,000, creating another incentive for people to invest in their future by buying a home.”

SAFER STREETS

“In Budget 2008 Police, Fire and Emergency Services funding across the Territory is $247 million, an increase of 81% since 2001,” Mr Knight said.

“Central Australia will receive $40.72 million in Budget 2008 to boost community safety.

“The $9.3 million two year Safer Streets plan will deliver 60 extra police to target crime and anti social behaviour in urban areas across the Territory.

“This will mean more patrols and resources for Alice Springs targeting key issues of youth crime and alcohol related violence.”

INVESTING IN THE FUTURE WITH A RECORD INFRASTRUCTURE BUDGET

“The Henderson Government is investing in the future of the Territory with a record cash infrastructure budget of $870 million, that is a $4.3 billion since 2001,” Ms Lawrie said.

“This means better roads, more buildings and facilities for people living in Central Australia.

“Budget 2008 delivers record roads funding of $271 million with $71 million for repairs and maintenance.”

Some infrastructure highlights in Budget 2008 for Central Australia include:

- $26 million for Alice Springs electricity infrastructure.
- $12.5 million for upgrades and new works to the Alice Springs Hospital.
- $10.7 million for the Desert Peoples Centre.
- $9.3 million for general road repairs and maintenance across the region.
- $2 million for upgrades to Ross Park Primary School.

BOOSTING HEALTH

Budget 2008 delivers a record $915 million for health and families - an increase of 89% since 2001.

Alice Springs Hospital receives $113 million in Budget 2008 to help deliver better health services to the region.
An extra $2 million will boost the Patient Assistance Travel Scheme to ensure people have the support of a loved one when they travel for medical treatment.

MORE TAX CUTS FOR BUSINESS

Businesses in Central Australia will benefit from tax cuts and reducing red tape.

The Northern Territory remains the lowest taxing jurisdiction for small and medium sized business in Australia. Business with up to 100 staff pay the lowest recurrent taxes in Australia.

The Territory has the highest tax-free payroll threshold at $1.25 million, a lower rate of payroll tax and no land tax or fire and emergency services levies.

MORE TO PROMOTE CENTRAL AUSTRALIA TO TOURISTS

Budget 2008 delivers more for tourism in Budget 2008 with:

- $1.5 million to develop the Red Centre Way Interpretive Centre in the West MacDonnell National Park.
- $1 million for the Red Centre Way global marketing campaign.
- $620,000 for tourism marketing, industry improvement and visitor information services in Central Australia.
- $180,000 for the Alice Desert, Alice Springs and Beanie Festivals.

“Budget 2008 is delivering for families in Central Australia by investing in the future of the region,” Mr Knight said.

Media contact: Nicole Manison on 8901 4138 or 0448 693 279

***Please note this press release covers portfolios under the jurisdiction of other Ministers. Please direct enquiries to the appropriate Ministerial office***