WHERE’S THE MISSING MONEY, HENDO?

The Country Liberals Shadow Minister for Regional Development Adam Giles has called on the Henderson government to explain how it underspent almost $50 million on homeless Territorians.

The 2009 Commonwealth Grants Commission (CGC) report on assessed revenues and expenditure highlights the continued lack of spending on the key issue of homelessness in the NT over five successive financial years.

“The report clearly details the amount of money that needs to be spent in the Territory and how much additional revenue was provided untied through GST revenue and how much was spent on homelessness according to the Territory Government’s own figures,” Mr Giles said.

“In 2007-2008 financial year the CGC assessed that $66.8 million be spent on homelessness. The CGC found that to meet this amount the Commonwealth had to contribute an additional $49.6m, meaning the NT government had $17.2m of its own funds to contribute to homelessness in the Territory.

“But the CGC report reveals the NT Government spent a total of just $17.7 million on homeless Territorians – an underspend of more than $49 million.

“That means that the Territory took the extra $49 million from Commonwealth – which was given to help our most vulnerable Territorians – and they spent it on something else.

“My question to Paul Henderson is what did he spend the money on?”

The primary reason the Commonwealth Government provides additional funding to the Territory is because it recognises the additional expenses required to deliver services in the NT, amid the highest levels of disadvantage in the nation.

The 2008 Homelessness White Paper titled The Road Home identified that on census night 2006 the levels of ‘rough sleepers’ in the NT was 1588 people, and many people consider the census figures as widely undercounted.

It went on to say that approximately 75 people per every 10,000 were sleeping rough on that census night. This compares to 12 per 10,000 in WA, 3 in the Act and 6 in NSW.

More recently, the recent Larrakia Nation report put the number in Darwin alone at between 2000 and 5000 people.

The CGC report also reveals the Henderson Government spent just $81 per capita on homelessness while the ACT spent $133 per person. NSW spent $118 per person in that financial year. That’s despite the fact that the NT has a rate of homelessness more than 12 times greater than NSW, and 25 times greater than the ACT.

“During the time of this underspend, the Henderson Government was selling off public housing, not releasing land and not building any new housing.

“They’re left with escalating house prices and zero rental vacancies, two things that are certain to increase the levels of homelessness across the Territory.”

To arrange further comment: Adam Giles 0421 588 118