SWAN MUST STAND BY THE TERRITORY’S INDIGENOUS POPULATION

March 4th, 2013

Federal Treasurer Wayne Swan must commit to maintaining the Northern Territory’s share of the Commonwealth’s funding – which could be cut by up to $100 million a year under proposed new arrangements.

This latest threat to the Territory’s funding comes off the back of our hard-fought win against the larger states’ bid to introduce a model of per capita distribution, which would have cost the Territory up to $2.2 billion every year.

Territory Treasurer, Robyn Lambley, says the Federal Labor Government should rule out cuts to our funding which could affect the delivery of health and child protection services, education programs and the provision of utilities, housing and infrastructure to Remote Territory communities.

“Changes to funding to the States and Territories is on the agenda as a result of the 2011 Census data which showed unprecedented increases in the national Indigenous population – primarily as a result of increased self identification in other jurisdictions,” Mrs Lambley said.

“The Territory’s share of the national Indigenous population decreased from 12.4 per cent in 2006 to 10.3 per cent in 2011.

“This contrasts with New South Wales which saw its share of the nation’s interstate population increase from 29.5 in 2006 to 31.12 and Victoria increase from 6.5 per cent to 7.1 per cent.

“The recorded increase in the national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population coupled with the supposed decrease in the Territory’s share of the national Indigenous population means the Commonwealth could potentially allocate less money our way.

“I have written to the Federal Treasurer on this matter and discussed it with him in person last month and his response was disappointing.

“His reluctance to commit to maintaining our funding suggests he doesn’t fully understand the extent of Indigenous disadvantage in the Northern Territory.

“In the context of the Northern Territory Budget, $100 million is an enormous sum of money.

“It would be the same proportionately as slashing $3.1 billion from the New South Wales budget or $2.4 billion from Victoria.”

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