TREASURER GOES IN FIGHTING FOR NT

April 3, 2013

Treasurer David Tollner has been in Canberra today fighting for a fair share of the Commonwealth Government’s GST revenue pool at the annual Standing Council on Federal Financial Relations Meeting.

Federal Treasurer Wayne Swan adopted the recommendation by the Commonwealth Grants Commission (CGC) to slash $121 million from the Northern Territory’s GST funding.

“We’re disappointed by the decision of the Federal Labor Government that seems to disregard the principles of horizontal fiscal equalisation introduced in the 1930s – that is making sure that no matter where you live, everyone should be provided with like services,” Mr Tollner said.

“Everyone has a right to be treated equally across Australia, taking into account where they live and the struggles that they face.

“It’s fair to say that Indigenous people in Borroloola face many more hardships and isolation than those people who are identifying as Indigenous in the suburbs of Sydney or Melbourne.”

The Australian Bureau of Statistics recommended to the CGC to continue to use Indigenous population estimates based on the 2006 Census data due to the increase in the number of Australians self-identifying as Indigenous for the first time in the 2011 Census.

“Despite this advice and letters written to Wayne Swan and Julia Gillard by the Chief Minister Adam Giles and former Treasurer Robyn Lambley, they have chosen to ignore our concerns,” Mr Tollner said.

“While it would have been preferable to have the flexibility associated with the GST revenue distribution, there were two concessions announced at today’s meeting.

“I left with the clear impression that any money lost in this process will be made up for in funding for the Stronger Futures program in the NT.

“Mr Swan also committed to include ‘Indigeneity’ as part of the terms of reference for the 2015 review of the CGC’s methodology in determining GST funding levels.”

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