30 January 2005

**Skilled Vacancies A Big Worry**

The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (DEWR) Skilled Vacancy Report for January 2005 indicates that the Northern Territory faces a huge shortage of skilled workers according to Leader of the Opposition Terry Mills.

Mr Mills said, "The Report shows a 4.5% increase between December and January and a 61.4% increase for the year in the Skilled Vacancy Index for the Northern Territory."

"The huge increase is a result of Alcan Gove beginning to advertise for staff to work on their refinery expansion."

"The Alcan Gove expansion is a great project for the Territory but unfortunately, due three years of inaction by the Martin government, Territorians will miss out on many of the employment and training benefits."

"The Territory's current unemployment rate is currently the highest in Australia at 6.5% and if we use Syd Stirling's argument that CDEP figures should be used to get a real unemployment figure, then the unemployment rate would be over 15%."

"We obviously have people without employment in the Territory that the government should be helping to increase their skills and employment opportunities. The Northern Territory has very high unemployment level in indigenous and remote communities and these groups should be assisted to find new skills and jobs."

"The Martin government's own Business Round Table has identified the shortage of skill staff as a major impediment to business growth but has failed to act."

"The Martin government has been aware of these large projects coming online and has sat on its hands."

ENDS