The Territory Government will invest over $5.5 million into a major upgrade of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Thamarrurr Catholic College at Wadeye as part of Budget 2005, Chief Minister Clare Martin announced today.

Ms Martin said the Wadeye community had made a significant effort to improve student attendance at the school at the start of the year, which saw 582 students enrolled compared to 467 at the same time last year.

“This enrolment growth, while very welcome, has placed considerable extra demands on the school in terms of teaching resources and facilities, as well as teaching staff’s ability to cater for the differing needs of the many students at the school,” Ms Martin said.

“In light of the community’s commitment to getting its young people to school, the Territory Government has decided to step in and upgrade the resources and buildings at the school.

“We are serious about education and this investment shows we are serious about backing communities who are committed to their young people’s education.”

Ms Martin said the funds would be used for:
- additional teachers and support staff;
- the provision of extra specialist secondary facilities at the school, including a science laboratory and art room as well as modern secondary-style classrooms to accommodate 75 students;
- a Vocational Education and Training (VET) program;
- six additional houses for teachers which will mean staff will not have to share accommodation;
- ongoing funding to meet essential services, including power, water and cleaning, and repairs and maintenance of the new buildings.

“The Territory Government wants to ensure Territory students are able to access a quality education, no matter where they live,” Ms Martin said.

“Increasing school enrolments in a remote community like Wadeye is a good problem to have and the Territory Government is pleased to be part of the solution.

“The community has delivered and we have backed their efforts.

“We would urge all communities to follow Thamarrurr community’s lead in getting their young people into classrooms so we can work in partnership to keep the Territory moving ahead.”

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