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**Territory Bankruptcies up 22% - second consecutive rise**

There is further evidence today that Territory businesses are still doing it tough with latest figures released yesterday by the Insolvency and Trustees Service Australia revealing that the Northern Territory recorded Australia’s highest increase in bankruptcies in the period from October to December 2004 – up 22%.

CLP Leader Terry Mills said the increase should be ringing alarm bells for the Martin Government given that business conditions in Australia are on the whole very positive with bankruptcies falling by 2% nationally.

“The 22% increase in bankruptcies again shows that in the Territory businesses are still finding it hard to make a go of it,” Mr Mills said.

“It is becoming increasingly obvious that the Territory’s economy is not doing as well as it should be.

“This is the second consecutive quarter that bankruptcies have increased in the Northern Territory with a 5% increase in the July to September 2004 period.

“There is every reason for concern given that the two increases in bankruptcies have come in the six month period that covers the Territory’s busiest time, and come on the back of increases in unemployment, declines in retail spending and the building sector.”

Mr Mills accused the Martin Government of failing to take advantage of the record levels of federal Government funding to stimulate business conditions in the Territory.

“Our economy should be in far better shape than what it is and it’s a failure of the Martin Government that it is not,” Mr Mills said.

“Despite record levels of GST funding to use the Martin Government has delivered two years of no economic growth, the highest unemployment rate in Australia at 7.3% and recent figures show three consecutive monthly falls in building approvals and retail spending.

“It reveals a sad tale of a Government unable to create new business for the Territory – a Government that is now so desperate and bereft of ideas it has had to resort to a campaign asking Territorians to spend more money in the Territory.”