Figures contained in the Commonwealth Grants Commission 2003 Update released today, when considered in conjunction with recent ABS population data, reveal that the Territory may only be entitled to an extra $13.6 million in Commonwealth grants next financial year, Treasurer Syd Stirling said today.

Mr Stirling said, compared to forward projections contained in the Treasurer’s Mid Year Report, the outcome was disappointing for the Territory.

"The additional grants funding will not even go close to covering the high costs of delivering essential services in the Northern Territory, such as health and education," Mr Stirling said.

Mr Stirling said under the Commonwealth Grants Commission revision, it was estimated that the Territory would be entitled to a $31.4 million greater share of financial assistance and health care grants.

"However, it must be taken into consideration that revised population estimates released by the ABS last week, means that the Territory’s grants funding for 2002/03 was revised down," Mr Stirling said.

"Following this adjustment, it is estimated that the Territory is left with only $13.6 million in additional funding for 2003/04.

"It is also important to note that this figure is an estimate only and may be reduced further after the Treasurers’ Conference in March, the Commonwealth Budget in May or further revision of ABS population figures which will happen in June.

"I will be taking up the Territory’s concerns about the revised population estimates and their significant effect on the Territory’s grants at the Treasurers’ meeting in March."