The Bottom Line: Good Government

A CLP Government will provide Territorians with efficient, cost effective, open and accountable Government. We will seek continuing improvement in Public Sector service standards, Government financial performance and Public Governance arrangements.

Initiatives will be implemented within existing allocations on a cost neutral basis

We will undertake a complete and independent audit of the Territory’s current financial position and report results to Territorians within 3 months of election to Government.

Such an audit is required to gain a full understanding of current financial resources and commitments prior to moving forward to a new development phase for the Territory.

We will pursue a culture of Openness within the Public Sector

Openness leads to self regulation. A culture will be promoted that requires and encourages full and open reporting of the business of Government, accepting that things can and do go wrong but it is better to be open about it immediately so that similar problems can be avoided in the future.

We will remove the substantial duplication of policy development and advisory functions undertaken by the heavily centralised and expanded Department of the Chief Minister and return full functions to responsible agencies

Under the Martin Labor Government major expansion of the Chief Minister’s Department has occurred with little benefit to effective public management or development of the Territory. Responsibility for individual functions will return directly to Minister’s responsible and their Chief Executive Officers. The Department of the Chief Minister will revert to its traditional support, co-ordination and inter-Government liaison role.

We will maintain an on-going program of Senior Executive performance review

The Chief Minister will meet with each Chief Executive Officer and the Portfolio Minister on a 6 monthly basis to discuss progress, initiatives, directions and performance issues.

The onus will be placed on Chief Executives to demonstrate that they are performing to required and agreed standards.
The Bottom Line: Good Government

We will require Chief Executive Officers to enter into written performance agreements with their Ministers

This will include measurable and objective assessment criteria to monitor the performance of Chief Executive Officers on a continuing basis.

We will allow greater discretionary management control by Chief Executive Officers

In line with increased accountability, Chief Executive Officers will be given greater responsibility and flexibility to “manage their business” within the overall budget approval framework.

We will establish a Senior Executive Council of core Chief Executives Officers to act as permanent advisory panel to Cabinet.

Cabinet to be run in a more open manner with the SEC present to provide comment and advice as required. This will provide a more direct conduit between Cabinet and the Public Service.

We will adopt a number of new measures in respect of Public Sector employment practices

To provide greater opportunity for Territorians, internal promotion will be pursued as the first priority in filling all Public Service vacancies except where external recruitment is specifically approved to meet special professional qualifications or where skills transfer is required to maintain the required depth of skill and job currency levels.

We will not unfairly penalise general public service staff at any level who have been appointed under Martin Labor Government patronage.

We will adopt a fiscal management strategy which will allow the Territory to maintain a sound financial position consistent with its development and operational needs

- The Budget must, at a minimum, produce a surplus over the term of Government
- The Territory will have the most competitive taxation regime in Australia.
- There is a commitment to intergenerational equity.
- There is a commitment to budget honesty and transparency.

Our fiscal management strategy is subject to further consideration of the Darwin Waterfront development and assessment of the full implications of Labor commitments which may adversely affect achievement of fiscal targets.
A CLP Government will ensure taxes and charges are not higher than those paid by other Australians so that Territorians are not penalised for living in the Territory. Where specific tax rates strongly influence employment, we will make them the lowest in Australia.

We will conduct an immediate examination of all current taxes and charges, including comparison with other States, to ensure they remain appropriate and are set at levels commensurate with Territory needs.

Where specific taxes and charges are no longer relevant or are too high, they will be eliminated or reduced.

We will provide a full report to Territorians within 6 months on the outcome of the examination.

A CLP Government will hold taxes at no higher than current levels for the next 2 budget cycles. There will be no new taxes introduced in our post-election budget, as was the case under the Martin Labor Government.

We will introduce cyclic reassessment of major public expenditure programs

This will be a rolling program of assessment of major programs at least every three years, to create a culture within agencies of ensuring they are doing the best they can with the resources available to them.

This will not be a budget cutting exercise but a sensible audit program to ensure that program resources are being effectively utilised and that outcomes sought are commensurate with the amount of resource committed.

We will adopt a revised Accountability Test for all Government Activity. This will be a simple four-way test:

· Do Territorians believe the required outcomes are necessary to meet a valid need? Does it need to be done?

· Do Territorians believe that costs incurred in delivering the outcomes are reasonable? Is the cost acceptable?

· Do Territorians believe the outcomes are being delivered at the required quality? Is the result satisfactory?

· Do Territorians believe the correct processes have been followed in producing the outcomes? Will all actions taken pass public scrutiny?
The Bottom Line: Good Government

We will publish a formal business case analysis of major initiatives which involves program expenditures in excess of $5m

Subject to commercial confidentiality constraints where these are unavoidable, an objective and detailed independently certified business analysis will be prepared and published to ensure that Territorians are fully informed of major commitments undertaken by the Territory and can more effectively hold the Government accountable for its actions.

We will guarantee Financial Transparency for Management of Territory Finances

An independent audit of the annual budget will be instigated to confirm the estimates are credible.

We will provide Territorians with a quarterly State of the Territory report covering key management and expenditures on major projects

This report will be based on published budget initiatives and matters of importance as they emerge.

We will undertake more detailed external research to support long term planning for the Territory.

We will commission Charles Darwin University to prepare a report every 5 years on issues facing the Territory in 5, 10 and 20 years to help position the Territory for the future.

We will adopt world best practice reporting standards

An ongoing program to monitor reporting standards will be undertaken, to include identification of comparative measurement standards which can be adopted to ensure public finance reporting is meaningful, accurate and understandable.

We will strengthen the roles of both the Auditor General and Ombudsman

These public watchdogs will be resourced and empowered appropriately to allow the operation of a monitoring regime consistent with world best practice.

We will enhance the operations of all statutory budget management committees, including the Public Accounts and Estimates Review Committees.

Best practice within Australia and overseas will be adopted to ensure the Territory remains at the forefront of this aspect of public governance.
The Bottom Line: Good Government

We will review current Whistleblower arrangements and will legislate to bring the Territory to the forefront in this area.

This is considered a key safety mechanism in achieving good Government and all steps will be taken to facilitate fearless reporting of improper conduct at all levels.

We will extend the requirement for disclosure of beneficial interests and conflicts of interest for public servants with significant expenditure approval authority.

This will extend the level of public disclosure to those that have delegated authority to authorise significant expenditure on behalf of Government. Non-disclosure will be grounds for immediate employment termination.

We will strictly enforce Public Management Ethics and Probity

The role of the Ombudsman will be expanded to include that of a Public Ethics Commissioner who will report to the Parliament.

We will strengthen ethics legislation governing the Public Sector and Parliament, to include strong governance arrangements for the aggressive legal pursuit of public officials who use public funds for self-promotion or personal gain.

Costs associated with all of these initiatives will be covered from within normal operational outlays.