ALICE GROCERY PRICES LOWEST, KATHERINE PRICES DROP

Darwin grocery prices remained largely the same in December 2004 as they were in June, while Alice Springs continues to have the lowest grocery prices in the Territory, according to NT Treasury’s Grocery Price Survey for December 2004.

Treasurer Syd Stirling said the six-monthly survey looked at the cost of an average basket of groceries at major Territory supermarkets and, for comparative purposes, at supermarkets in Cairns and Mount Isa.

The average cost of a grocery basket in Darwin for December was $168.17, down one cent from June. This was $2.37 or 1.4% more expensive than Cairns, but a better result than June when a Darwin basket was $3.55 more than a Cairns basket.

In Darwin, fruit and vegetables; meat and seafood; pharmaceuticals and personal care products all dropped in price in December, while dairy products; bread and cereal products; non-alcoholic drinks and snacks; other food; pet foods; and household supplies rose slightly in price.

In the Darwin area, the cheapest place to shop in December was Woolworths Coolalinga ($165.04), while the City Woolworths on the corner of Knuckey and Smith streets was the most expensive ($172.22).

In Alice Springs, the average cost of groceries was up by 25 cents from June to $162.47, but still the cheapest in the Territory. Coles had the cheapest grocery basket in Alice Springs – and the Territory – at $160.19, while Bi-Lo was the most expensive place to shop in Alice, with a basket there costing $164.58.

The survey also recorded:
• Katherine overtaking Darwin to have the second lowest average grocery basket price in the Territory in December, down $5.13 or 3% to $165.28.
• Nhulunbuy prices dropping $1.66 or 0.8% to $193.51.
• Yulara continuing to have the most expensive groceries in the Territory, despite a $1.39 or 0.6% drop to $212.31 in December.

“Remoteness, higher freight costs, and lack of competition continue to be the biggest factors contributing to higher grocery prices,” Mr Stirling said.

“The good news is that Territory grocery prices are not rising at the same rate as elsewhere. Since June 2000, the cost of a Darwin basket has increased at an annual average rate of 2%, compared to 3% in Cairns. The average annual increase in Alice Springs has been 1.7%, compared to 2.5% in Mount Isa.

“This suggests improvements in efficiency and lower freight costs over time, as well as a gradual increase in competition. The railway is also likely to contribute to a more competitive environment over time and help keep the Territory moving ahead.”


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