Treasurer Syd Stirling today confirmed that the Territory economy was showing strong signs of growth, with State Final Demand for 2003-04 sitting at almost 6%, above national growth of 5.4%.

“State Final Demand is the most accurate reflection of the onshore economy and it is showing strong growth across both consumption and investment,” Mr Stirling said.

“This is backed up by a raft of economic data pointing to an economy on the move:

- Retail trade sits at 6.7% year on year September 2003 to September 2004;
- There was a 31% increase in building approvals in the year to September 2004;
- We have the highest ANZ jobs advertisement growth at 44% for the year to October 2004;
- Housing finance rose 22% in the year to September 2004;
- New motor vehicle sales have seen 11% growth year on year to October 2004; and
- The NT is just coming out of a bumper tourism season that went for an extended period.

“This data all points to a strong and growing Territory economy,” Mr Stirling said.

“Unfortunately, the Opposition Leader spends his time talking the economy down and spreading doom and gloom. Most recently he has taken to waving around Gross State Product figures to back up his negativity.

“This is extremely misleading. Either he is being mischievous or doesn’t understand that GSP figures are influenced mainly by offshore events such oil production in the Timor Sea .

“For example, in 2003-04, there was a marked decline in offshore oil production largely due to activity at Laminaria Corallina tapering off, at the same time as work on Bayu-Undan Stage One was delayed. These factors have had a negative impact on GSP figures.

“If you take offshore activity out of the equation and focus on onshore activity – that is, those things directly affecting the Territory economy – 2003-04 was marked by strong growth.

“Private household consumption increased by 6.2%, other buildings and structures investment was up by 16.6%, and broad business investment rose by 11.9%.

“Onshore economic growth is continuing strongly throughout 2004-05 and we are likely to see more offshore activity which will impact more positively on GSP results in this financial year.”