Federal Budget leaves unanswered questions for the Territory

Northern Territory Treasurer Syd Stirling says the Federal Budget has provided a good start to clawing back the $48 million lost as a result of Commonwealth Grants Commission recommendations.

“But we are still down $20 million in 2004-05 and the Territory's special needs haven't been addressed,” Mr Stirling said.

“And while the Territory will receive $36 million in increased GST payments in 2003-04, what is in the Federal Budget is nothing more than our fair share of GST revenue.

“It doesn't represent a special hand-out from the Commonwealth – it's simply our due.

“In addition, we have received some funding for our Juvenile Diversionary Program and the Aboriginal Interpreter Service, but it is reduced, one-off funding.

“It's simply not enough and what happens to these programs next year is anyone's guess.

“Funding for Indigenous housing has also failed to keep pace with construction cost increases and therefore is a cut in real terms.

“It appears that the Federal Budget provides for an increase of around $8 million for Territory roads, but this is a drop in the ocean given that over the past five years we have lost tens of millions of dollars under the Federal Government's Roads to Recovery program.

“This is a Budget that leaves questions unanswered for the Territory and fails to address our real needs.”