Chief Minister and Treasurer, Clare Martin, today said the Territory Government will be fighting to secure increased funding, at the annual Treasurers' Ministerial Council in Canberra on Friday.

"The Grants Commission has recommended that the Territory receive an extra $74.6 million in untied and health grants for 2002-03," she said.

"However, this amount is simply a recommendation at the moment. The Territory Government will be working to ensure that figure is approved by the Commonwealth Treasurer later this week."

The recommendation to increase grants distribution for the Territory is based on financial data for 2000-01 (replacing the 1995-96 data) and recognition of the special needs that the Territory faces in delivering services.

"The Territory faces enormous financial pressures to provide the services expected in other States and Territories, and any increase in grants funding will simply allow those needs to be better met.

"The recommended amount of additional assistance also pales into insignificance when we compare it with the total level of debt inherited from the last 27 years of the CLP – some $2.2 billion, or more than 30 times the expected increase in Commonwealth Grants next year."

Ms Martin said the final amount of additional assistance could still change, depending on population and movements in price that will only become known through the course of the next financial year.

"The Grants funding remains in place for five years and will help relieve some of the impost of providing effective services over vast distances.

"Regardless of the outcome of the Treasurers Conference it won't change the Territory Government's fiscal strategy of returning the budget to surplus as soon as possible."