Business Minister Paul Henderson has welcomed news in the *Sensis Business Index* released today showing Territory businesses have recorded the third consecutive growth in business confidence and the strongest profit ratings in the country.

The *Sensis Business Index* surveyed small and medium enterprises on business conditions for the August 2004 quarter, and expectations for the November 2004 quarter.

“The Northern Territory is moving ahead, and this is reflected in the business conditions reported in this quarter’s Sensis survey,” Mr Henderson said.

“ The Government is championing small business, backing them to grow.

“Record spending on capital works and tourism has seen turnover for many small businesses pick up.

“The practical assistance being given through financial grants to Territory exporters and the financial incentives being given to employers to take on trainees are welcomed by business people.

“Small and medium sized business is seeing the benefits of the high rate of construction activity, and the Alcan expansion and Darwin Waterfront projects will see these benefits keep flowing through the economy.

“The Government has kept business costs down, including cutting payroll tax, and the last Budget made the Territory the lowest taxing jurisdiction for small business in Australia.

“The Government knows the shortage of skilled workers is an important issue for Territory businesses, and we will continue to champion small businesses in this area through programs such as the $160M Jobs Plan over three years and business and skilled migration.

“These results are good news and very encouraging but there remains a lot to be done.”