Mountain Bike trails in Alice

The Country Liberal Government has allocated $150,000 in the recent 2013 Budget to help formalise and upgrade trails at the Alice Springs Telegraph Station for beginners, intermediate and advanced riders.

Mountain biking is a recreational pursuit that families can enjoy together so with careful planning these trails can have long-lasting economic, social and health benefits for the entire community. The Country Liberal Government is working closely with the International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA), the local mountain bike community and Central Australian Rough Riders on the development and management of the trail network.

These trails will vary in degrees of difficulty and length, catering to a broad range of interest, experience and skill level. The IMBA plan will help guide the development of the new trails at the Telegraph Station and ensure they are not only sustainable well into the future, but also some of the best mountain bike trails in Australia.

The development of the trail network will occur over the coming months and will consider factors such as environmental impacts and sacred sites. The project will also involve consultation with the community, traditional owners, local business and tourist operators.

The Country Liberal Government has also allocated $300,000 for sealing and upgrading of the Riverside Walk along the Todd River to ensure cyclists of all types can easily access the new tracks at the Telegraph Station from town.

The Territory Government recognises that mountain biking is growing in popularity in the Centre and has significant benefits to the community. With the Country Liberals Government focused on growing tourism in Central Australia, this new mountain bike trail network will become a valuable asset to the town, attracting more visitors to the region and providing a boost for local businesses.

Try out some of the Mountain Bike tracks at the Telegraph Station.

---

Labor's planned cutbacks to road funding

The Federal Labor Government is playing politics with the lives of Territorians by failing to fund new works/ upgrades and look after its roads.

NT Roads funding has been cut by nearly 50% from $474 million to $244 million.

The little money Federal Labor has allocated is not available till the final years of the program.

This means the following works won’t be able to start until 2016/17 which is two Federal Elections away:

- $5m for commencing sealing of the Santa Teresa Road; and
- $5m to continue sealing of the Tanami Road

In a massive blow to the NT’s road infrastructure, there is no federal money for the following works:

- $70m for safety and fatigue management including truck parking bays, intersection improvements, safety treatments, strengthening the Katherine River Bridge, upgrading the Stuart Highway from Darwin to the MVR in Alice Springs

- $125m for strengthening and widening of the National Highways (Stuart/Barkly/Victoria Highways)

These cutbacks will lead to deterioration in roads which are already rated as poor by the AusRAP Australian Automobiles Association report.

---

Help send our message to the world: Do the NT

The Country Liberal Government unveiled a new brand strategy to better sell the Northern Territory and boost holiday visitor numbers in July.

As the Minister for Tourism, I was delighted to announce the new brand direction to the Territory’s tourism industry. This new strategy is designed to capture the real spirit and essence of the Northern Territory.

Embodyed in that is our new key message: Do the NT.

Everyone knows the NT is one of the most spectacular places on the planet with unique spiritual, cultural and natural attractions.

Research tells us that visitors also regard the NT as a ‘passive’ destination or ‘all look, but don’t touch’. What wasn’t getting through to people were all the amazing things you can actually do here.

Our new brand position will open the door to more opportunities as it shows that the NT is a place you do things – not just a place you see things. And what you do in the Territory is unlike anywhere else in the world.

The new brand will be backed by a multi-million dollar marketing campaign across a range of mediums – TV, radio, print and digital targeting the domestic and key international markets. It will also be heavily connected to retail trade partners to drive sales.

The Territory is undergoing great change – economically, socially and culturally – endorsing the fact that our small corner of the globe is an exciting place to live, work, visit and invest.

The Country Liberal Government is investing an extra $88 million into tourism which shows the absolute priority we place on tourism in order to help build a bigger Territory economy and create more jobs.

The Northern Territory Government’s Tourism Vision 2020 Strategy aims to deliver $2.2 billion in annual visitor spending to the Northern Territory’s economy by 2020.

For too long our tourism numbers have declined and the Country Liberals Government is rectifying that with a range of strategies including this new brand position.

It was great to announce our new brand strategy directly to our hard-working tourism operators and businesses, as working closely with the industry is vital to achieving our goals.

We will continue to engage with our tourism industry to maximise the new brand position and attract more visitors to the Territory.

---

New school bus for special needs students

This important new school bus for special needs students will make a huge difference to those most in need in our community.

The Country Liberal Government understood the urgent need for a new special needs school bus in Alice Springs, this extra service will give peace of mind to parents.

Children with physical and for intellectual disabilities often have trouble getting to school and the new bus provides a safe means of travel for our most vulnerable students.

The Country Liberal Government provides special needs buses to approximately 283 students. The buses service the major centres in the Territory including Darwin, Alice Springs, Katherine and Nhulunbuy every day at an annual cost of $3.366 million.

The Country Liberal Government will spend $156,000 on the new special needs bus this financial year.
More police resources to keep our community safe

Fourteen new members of the Northern Territory Police Force have graduated from Auxiliary Squad 47 and Aboriginal Community Police Officer (ACPO) Squad 19. The auxiliaries have received training in a range of areas including legislation and procedures, weapons and firearms offences, dealing with dishonesty and property offences, radio dispatch, and mental health and suicide prevention.

The graduates will improve cell centre capabilities, dispatch patrol cars and keep the community safe. Auxiliaries play an important role in cell centres, providing vital support to police on the beat and keeping our streets safe.

The six ACPO graduates have received training in areas of road safety, domestic violence, offences against the person, operational safety, tactical training and ethics and conduct.

The first phase of the Territory Government’s first Youth Boot Camp trial has ended with the return of 10 youths from South Australia’s Flinders Ranges. The group had been identified as being at risk of offending in the future. Over the past eight days, the group completed a challenging 100 kilometre trek through the harsh South Australian outback.

Those involved were challenged as individuals and as part of a team in a range of skills including bushcraft, navigation and abseiling. It hasn’t been an easy experience for these youths, with the program designed to confront them with difficult mental and physical situations and to make them take a good, hard look at themselves and their futures.

The next phase of the initial trial involves working with families to transfer the lessons learned by their children to be continued in their daily lives. A second Boot Camp trial will be undertaken by the Alice Springs-based Tantangereyere Council later this month.

New Youth Justice Cells for Alice Springs Court House

Alice Springs is set to receive an upgrade for youth justice with $356 000 committed to build new holding cells for juvenile offenders at the Court House.

The new cells will ensure that youth and adult offenders are separated from one another, and will bring the cells up to similar standards seen across the country. The cells will be used to detain youth that are waiting to appear before the court, providing them with a safe environment which complies with the principles outlined in the Youth Justice Act.

Learning to cook for a future

An innovative food processing course at the Alice Springs Juvenile Detention Centre has its first commercial success with a young offender graduating to a full time job.

The Certificate I course in Food Processing, conducted in partnership with Charles Darwin University, provided detainees with the opportunity to gain skills in pastry, baking and food processing.

The success has already been measured with the full-time employment of a recently released young offender as a baker in a regional town in Victoria.

The Club will be involved in community programs right throughout the Territory, including remote communities, promoting healthy lifestyles, the importance of numeracy and literacy and going to school.

I travelled to Sydney last month and am pleased to say the Country Liberal Government has reached an historic agreement with the Parramatta Eels that will see National Rugby League premiership matches played in the Northern Territory until 2018.

I was joined by Parramatta's club officials, Coach Ricky Stuart and Captain Tim Mannah to launch the new four-year partnership, which begins in 2014. This is a great for the sport of rugby league and the Territory and it is the first time the Northern Territory has partnered with an NRL club to deliver a long-term future of premiership NRL games in the NT.

The agreement will see the Eels play a regular season home game in Darwin each year until 2018 as well as a pre-season trial match in Alice Springs in each year of the agreement. Territorians will be able to see the big games and the stars of the NRL in action both in Darwin and Alice Springs, and have a team to call their own.

This agreement goes much further than just NRL games and will also deliver significant benefits to our community over the next four seasons, all year long.

FBT decision hurts Territorians will be hurt by the recent Federal Labor Government change to the car usage fringe benefits tax, especially those working in NT charities.

Many are unaware that salary sacrificing is commonly offered by charities, aged care providers, community sector employers and the public service. These are not wealthy high-income earners, they are generally on modest salaries.

The changes will have a direct impact on car sales in the Territory and vehicle salary sacrifice packaging firms that rely on these arrangements for their core business.