The Northern Territory Government will continue to protect Territory jobs and Territory families through a range of measures in Budget 2009.

Chief Minister and Employment Minister Paul Henderson today said assisting families is a key priority of Budget 2009 which will direct new resources to help Territorians in need and help Territorians build their future.

“The Territory Government will concentrate on core Government business – keeping people in jobs, maintaining confidence in our economy, and keeping the Territory at the forefront of growth,” Mr Henderson said.

“Budget 2009 delivers stronger frontline services and more frontline staff through a record $1 billion health budget, $808 million investment in education and $279 million for police.

“Budget 2009 is focused on protecting Territory jobs and building the Territory to support Territory families.”

We will continue to invest strongly in health, education, jobs, housing and police,” Mr Henderson said.

PROTECTING TERRITORY JOBS

Budget 2009 delivers an unprecedented record investment of $1.3 billion in infrastructure to build the Territory and protect Territory jobs by creating around 2500 jobs across the construction sector.

The Northern Territory Government will invest $5.13 million in skilling the workforce as part of Budget 2009 under the four-year $21.3 million Jobs Plan 3.

The Territory remains the lowest taxing jurisdiction for small and medium businesses in Australia to assist Territory business to grow and provide more jobs for Territorians.

Labor Government policies have resulted in accumulated tax savings to business of $202 million since 2001.
Budget 2009 also provides $1.25 million to deliver $1000 workwear/workwear bonuses for apprentices and trainees in identified skill shortage occupations to support their training and $1 million to support 10,000 new apprentices and trainees.

**AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND LAND RELEASE**

The Territory is growing with more people calling the Territory home.

That’s why Budget 2009 is focused on Housing the Territory through more land to grow, new affordable places to buy and rent, and new public housing.

Mr Henderson today said Budget 2009 delivers $390.3 million for housing – a $187.4 million or 92 per boost on the previous year.

“The Territory’s population growth is leading the nation, which is why Budget 2009 is focused on more land release, new affordable places to buy and rent and new public housing,” Mr Henderson said.

“These housing projects will create 355 jobs across the construction sector.

“Population growth is a key driver of our economy - the release of more land and measures making it easier for Territorians to own their first home will help build the Territory and protect Territory jobs.”

Budget 2009 delivers affordable housing initiatives including a new home purchase assistance scheme, ‘Homestart NT’, to assist more Territory families to buy their own home.

The scheme is directly targeted to the affordable housing market so that low and medium income earners can access around 40% of the housing market in their regions using no more than 30% of their income.

Homestart NT lifts the price cap in:

- Darwin and Palmerston from $350,000 to $420,000, a $70,000 increase;
- Alice Springs from $265,000 to $300,000, a $35,000 increase;
- Katherine from $225,000 to $267,000, a $42,000 increase; and
- Tennant Creek from $105,000 to $120,000, a $15,000 increase.

The Government will establish an Affordable Housing Rental Company to help meet the need for quality, affordable rental properties for low and medium income Territorians.

As part of an expansive land release program Budget 2009 will deliver $20 million for headworks at Palmerston East to support the establishment of three new suburbs in the Territory’s fastest growing city.

Further housing initiatives in 2009 include:

- The first Home Owner Grant which provides $7000 to Territorians purchasing or building their first home;
The first Home Owner Concession which saves Territorians purchasing their first home up to $15,515 on stamp duty; and
$28 million under the Homestart NT scheme to assist Territorians on low to middle incomes to secure a loan to purchase property.

INVESTING IN PUBLIC HOUSING

“Work on the new Parap Gateway development will get underway in Budget 2009,” Mr Henderson said.

“Starting with Wurrina flats and townhouses, public housing on Parap Road will be demolished and redeveloped, tackling antisocial behaviour in the area.

“The Parap Gateway will be a mixture of public and private housing, including seniors and first home buyers, and up to 200 units for the Affordable Housing Rental Company.”

Budget 2009 provides $23.4 million for more public housing, including:

- $10 million for a new 44-unit seniors village at Bellamack;
- $9.4 million build and upgrade existing public housing dwellings; and
- $4 million to upgrade older unit complexes in Darwin and Alice Springs to help tackle anti-social behaviour.

The Territory and Commonwealth Governments are working together under the $42 billion Nation Building and Jobs Plan to improve public housing, including:

- $4.1 million to upgrade 175 public housing properties across the Territory, including installing solar hot water units and roof repairs and replacements;
- $7.1 million to build 22 new homes in Darwin, Alice Springs and Tennant Creek, including houses, units and duplexes; and
- A further $14.3 million to construct new houses in 2009-10. These projects are yet to be agreed with the Commonwealth.

SUPPORTING BETTER HEALTH

Budget 2009 delivers a record $1 billion health budget, doubling investment in health services since 2001, including a record $421 million for Territory hospitals and delivering 17 more doctors and 95 more nurses.

Budget 2009 delivers an extra $1.5 million to reduce the general dental service waiting list and improve services in remote areas.

A further $750,000 ongoing from 2010-11 will maintain increased dental services.
SUPPORTING PENSIONERS AND CARERS

Budget 2009 boosts the Territory’s generous pensioner concession scheme with new initiatives to commence 1 July 2009:

• Free driver licence renewal for pensioners and carers; and
• Increased motor vehicle subsidy from $104 to $150 per annum.

SAFER STREETS AND POLICE BEAT

The Territory Government will invest a record $279 million in police, fire and emergency services as part of Budget 2009 to make our streets safer.

Budget 2009 provides 54 more police than a year ago and brings the total number of additional police positions since 2001 to 339.

The $9.3 million Safer Streets initiative continues in Budget 2009 with an additional $5.1 million to deliver an additional 25 police officers dedicated to patrolling suburban streets, bringing the total number of new police officers under the Safer Streets initiative to 60 since 2008.

Safer Streets also provides for 10 additional Police Auxiliaries to support frontline police in the communications centre.

Budget 2009 also provides $2.5 million for Police Beats in shopping precincts across the Territory as part of the Police Beat initiative.

BETTER TRANSPORT

Budget 2009 delivers better transport options for Territory families with:

• $1.8 million for free public bus travel for seniors, carers and students;
• $1 million for Darwin rural Park and Ride bus facilities; and
• $600,000 to fund new bus services for Bayview, Cullen Bay and the Waterfront Precinct.

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