TREASURER

BUDGET 2014: SECURING OUR CHILDREN’S FUTURE

13 May 2014

Budget 2014 will secure our children’s future by focussing on the family challenges of today.

Treasurer Dave Tollner said the current generation had a duty to make sure the next generation enjoyed the same prosperity and opportunities.

“Our good fortune cannot be taken for granted and it cannot be squandered,” Mr Tollner said.

“Our current opportunity has many parts. We have large gas reserves to provide energy, the world’s demand for food has reached a critical stage and the rest of Australia is starting to realise that Northern Australia is the future of this great nation.

“But more needs to be done and this Government is taking action – action that will secure our children’s future by focussing on the family challenges of today.”

The Territory economy is expected to expand by five per cent in 2013-14 and six per cent in 2014-15, well above the forecast growth for Australia.

“Growth will be underpinned by high levels of construction activity related to gas projects, which will flow through to other sectors of the economy, including retail trade, transport, manufacturing, accommodation and food services,” Mr Tollner said.

“The outlook for the Territory is positive. Private investment is expected to remain at historical highs supported by a number of major projects, including the new Palmerston Regional Hospital, oil and gas developments in Central Australia and the Western Desert Resources iron ore projects near Roper Bar.”

Budget 2014 reduces the debt left to Territory families by the previous Labor Government by $1.3 billion, saving $55 million in interest payments.

“This Budget highlights the Country Liberals are serious about fiscal management and lowering the burden of debt on Territory families and our future generations,” Mr Tollner said.

The 2014-15 fiscal balance is a deficit of $723 million, is higher than projected due to the expected delay in the completion of the Darwin Correctional Precinct. The delay results in a transfer of $521 million from 2013-14 to 2014-15. However, over the forward estimates the deficit reduces substantially to $39 million in 2017-18.

The improved fiscal position has been delivered through:

- efficiency and service delivery improvements and a focus on getting value for money;
- increased Territory revenue due to significant growth in the economy; and
- using these benefits to reduce debt rather than increase expenditure.
Mr Tollner said the Budget acknowledged that the cost of living and affordable housing are critical issues facing all Territorians.

“This Budget goes further than ever before in taking pressure of the housing market and contains increased assistance to help Territory families with everyday costs.

“For a family with three children, two school age and one under two, this equates to $2,145 in annual support from the Giles Government.

“No other government in Australia is providing this level of support,” Mr Tollner said.

The Budget contains $5.9 million for enhanced child care subsidies, $7.9 million for more generous Sports Vouchers and $6.6 million for Back to School payments.

Housing affordability is tackled through the most ambitious land release program ever undertaken by a Northern Territory Government.

The Budget invests $84.4 million to roll out residential land to support the construction of 6500 new dwellings, ensuring home ownership is within reach of the current and next generation of Territory families.

“A new suburb, Palmerston North, will be created under this package on 200 hectares near the site of the new Palmerston Regional Hospital. Berrimah Farm will also be revitalised into a major urban development. More residential land will be released right across the Territory under this package.”

The Budget delivers $871 million in education spending and $1.35 billion in health-related expenditure. More than $700 million is allocated for improving community safety across the Territory and $1.14 billion directed to infrastructure to continue building the Territory’s strong future.

Mr Tollner said the Budget maintains the Government’s commitment to drive down debt and highlights the sound fiscal management principles the Giles Government has in place.

“It is a Budget that continues to harness the benefits from the economic growth we are experiencing and develops our regions.

“It is a Budget that gives financial relief to families and will reduce the cost of housing for Territory families through accelerated land release.

“It is a Budget that has a strong focus on law and order, improving educational and health outcomes and promotes the Territory’s lifestyle.

“The Territory’s future is bright and we are creating future prosperity for all Territorians – this generation and most importantly, the next.”

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