The Northern Territory continues to record the strongest growth in terms of housing finance of any jurisdiction, according to ABS data for September.

Comparing September 2003 to September 2002, the number of housing finance commitments for owner occupation increased by 43% in the Territory. Nationally, growth was 14.3%.

In dollar terms, housing finance commitments doubled in value, going from $33.5 million in September 2002 to $60.9 million in September 2003.

Owner-occupied housing finance is dominated by the purchase of established dwellings, with construction of dwellings and the purchase of new dwellings also making up a component of the figures.

The year to year comparisons also show steady growth, with a 6.7% increase in housing finance commitments in the year to September 2003 compared to the previous year. The dollar value of the commitments rose by 33.1%.

Treasurer Syd Stirling said steady growth in housing finance commitments in the Territory was a positive sign for the Territory economy.

"The Territory currently has the healthiest housing market in Australia which is a good indicator for economic growth in the short term," he said.

"Boosts in housing finance commitments have also been helped along by Government’s decision to increase the first home owners stamp duty concession threshold and provide a new rebate of up to $1500 to Territorians buying a principal place of residence.

"While the Reserve Bank’s decision to increase interest rates may have some effect on our housing market, the Territory can still claim to have the most affordable housing in Australia."