

**SYD STIRLING
TREASURER**

3 May 2005

BUDGET BOOST FOR PALMERSTON, LITCHFIELD REGION

Budget 2005 backs the Palmerston and Litchfield areas, with tax cuts for local businesses and families, more local jobs, more funding for skills development and strong infrastructure spending, Treasurer Syd Stirling announced today.

“As well as record tax cuts, Budget 2005 delivers strong Territory-wide infrastructure injection, including spending on roads, schools and hospitals, of \$476 million. This will benefit local Palmerston, rural area and Litchfield businesses and boost local jobs,” Mr Stirling said.

“Local residents will also benefit from the Martin Government’s continuing strong investment in skills development, with a record 10,000 Territorians to be supported in training over the next four years.

“Budget 2005 also includes funding boosts for health services, as well as local roads and schools. There will also be more funding for our commitment to put more police on the beat and a stronger investment in community crime fighting initiatives.

“Budget 2005 is backing Palmerston, rural area and Litchfield residents and helping to drive economic growth in the region.”

LESS TAX FOR PALMERSTON AND LITCHFIELD BUSINESSES, FAMILIES

Palmerston and Litchfield households and businesses will benefit from nearly \$40 million in tax cuts outlined in Budget 2005, making the Territory the lowest taxing jurisdiction for locally-based Territory businesses with up to 100 staff from 1 July 2006.

The cuts make the Martin Government the most tax reforming Government in the Territory history.

Budget 2005 highlights include:

- The payroll tax-free threshold will rise to \$1 million on 1 July 2005 and then to \$1.25 million on 1 July 2006. From 1 July 2004 to 1 July 2006, the payroll tax changes will mean 215 Territory businesses will no longer pay payroll tax. Territory businesses continuing to pay the tax will save on average \$31,900 a year.
- From 3 May 2005, the stamp duty threshold for first home buyers will be increased to \$200,000, almost doubling the first home owner stamp duty concession to a maximum \$6800. Around 1400 Territorians will benefit from the threshold increase. It means Territorians will save around \$2.7 million a year.
- Electronic Debit Transaction Duty and Debits Tax will be abolished from 1 July 2005, saving a local business with around 20 employees \$1430 a year.

Government has committed to a further \$40 million in tax cuts over the next five years, including cuts to stamp duty and other business taxes. Less tax for business means more jobs for Territorians.

INFRASTRUCTURE SPENDING IN PALMERSTON, LITCHFIELD REGION

Further spending on tourism infrastructure, roads and strategic development projects in Budget 2005 will back the local tourism and construction industries, as well as the wider Palmerston and Litchfield communities.

Highlights include:

- continuing the \$15 million project to seal the Litchfield Loop Road
- \$7.5 million over three years to improve visitor facilities at Litchfield Park
- \$3.5 million for upgrades to Darwin Correctional Centre
- \$5.3 million for the Palmerston Recreational Centre
- \$1.5 million for the Darwin Business Park
- continuing progress on the Palmerston Secondary College
- \$300,000 to complete the first stage of a rural school bus exchange
- \$1.6 million for upgrades on the Stuart Highway between Noonamah and Cox Peninsula Road intersection
- \$1.2 million upgrade at Berrimah Road
- \$110,000 to complete interpretive and visitor experiences at the Territory Wildlife Park

MORE FUNDS FOR JOBS AND TRAINING

Palmerston and Litchfield residents will benefit from the Martin Government's commitment to support the training of a record 10,000 Territorians over the next four years.

New apprentices and trainees are now able to access up to \$500 for a WorkWear WorkGear cash bonus.

Palmerston and Litchfield employers will be able to access incentives worth \$3000 for putting on a trainee and \$7000 for putting on an apprentice in a hard-to-fill trade.

Budget 2005 delivers a range of other job and training initiatives for the Palmerston and Litchfield region including:

- \$890,000 for tertiary courses through Charles Darwin University and Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education
- \$80,000 in Flexible Response Funding for training in remote communities

BUILDING SAFER COMMUNITIES

To build safer communities in the Palmerston and Litchfield region, Budget 2005 includes:

- \$9.45 million for police, fire and emergency services in Palmerston, Litchfield region
- \$240,000 for repairs, maintenance and minor works to the Palmerston and Litchfield region police, fire and emergency services facilities
- \$23.2 million for Darwin Correctional Centre
- \$3.4 million for juvenile detention services at Don Dale
- \$730,000 for Palmerston community corrections
- \$310,000 for volunteer bush fire brigades in the region

MORE HEALTH FUNDING

The Palmerston and Litchfield regions will benefit from record Health spending of \$687 million in Budget 2005.

Highlights include:

- \$220,000 for acute care services in the region
- \$2.6 million for non-acute health and community services in the region
- \$700,000 for renal dialysis services

BUILDING BETTER SCHOOLS IN THE REGION

Budget 2005 includes a record budget for Employment, Education and Training. Palmerston and Litchfield schools will benefit from the investment with:

- \$41.2 million for primary and early childhood education in 11 Palmerston and Litchfield schools
- \$16.5 million for secondary education at Palmerston High School, Taminmin High School and the Don Dale Centre
- \$16.5 million for assistance to non-government schools
- continuing progress on Palmerston Senior Secondary College

There will also be more funding for works projects, including:

- additional security screens and other facilities at Palmerston High School
- upgrades at Taminmin High School including shade over cricket nets and basketball courts
- additional temporary classroom space at Bees Creek
- security upgrades at Gray Primary School

Every Government school in Palmerston and Litchfield will also receive a share of an extra \$500,000 in funding to be provided for new school equipment.

OTHER INITIATIVES IN BUDGET 2005

The Palmerston and Litchfield region will also benefit from a range of other initiatives included in Budget 2005, including:

- an extra \$42 million over four years for secondary education
- 19 counsellors for Territory high schools above staffing formula
- an extra \$500,000 for teacher housing furniture
- \$4.4 million for VET in Schools
- Increasing spending on minor new works by 40% or an extra \$8 million meaning more work for local small business and more local jobs
- indexing grants to health and community services non-government organisations to help them meet the real cost of services. This means an increase in grant payments of \$1.13 million in Budget 2005, increasing by a further \$500,000 each year ongoing

Contact: Mary Fall 0401 119 770