

Today the Northern Territory Deputy Chief Minister and Treasurer, Delia Lawrie, released the 2011-12 Budget. It is an expansionary budget with the Government planning to spend \$5.3 billion in the next financial year.

The Government anticipates a \$387 million deficit in the coming financial year. This follows a \$295 million deficit in 2010-11; \$130 million lower than expected. The Treasurer told the Legislative Assembly in her Budget statement yesterday that the shortfall would be \$195 million in 2014-15, and that the NT Government hopes to bring the budget back to surplus the following year.

The key spending initiatives in the 2011-12 Budget include: \$1.5 billion for capital works, including the \$756-million capital works program, \$375 million to improve electricity, sewerage and water infrastructure and \$307 million for improving roads; \$328 million for police, fire and emergency services; \$1.115 billion for health; \$930 million for education; and \$182 million for the newly-created Department of Children and Families, including \$25 million for child protection.

Power and Water Infrastructure

The NT Government has committed to spending \$1.8 billion over five years to deliver electricity generation and distribution and better water and sewerage infrastructure and services. In the coming financial year, this includes:

- \$375 million investment into improving electricity, sewerage and water infrastructure across the Territory
 - \$24 million direct investment into closing Larrakeyah ocean outfall and divert sewerage to Ludmilla Wastewater Treatment Plant (\$66 million over three years)
 - \$17.8 million for a cleaner, gas-fired gas power station to be built in the Territory Growth Town of Wadeye

Police, Fire and Emergence Services

The NT Government has committed to spending \$328 million on police, fire and emergency services as part of Budget 2011-12, including:

- \$2.5 million boost to the forensic science branch for a technology upgrade and funding to recruit an extra 6 forensic science branch members
- Initiatives to tackle alcohol related crime and antisocial behaviour, including:
 - \$7.37 million for Police Beats;
 - \$2.32 million for the intervention and case services management in Darwin, Palmerston, Katherine and Alice Springs and a night patrol service in Darwin;
 - \$1.75 million for CCTV monitoring in Darwin, Casuarina, Palmerston and Alice Springs;
 - \$1.2 million for public housing safety officers to patrol public housing complexes;
 - \$0.97 million to maintain the First Response Patrol;
 - \$0.8 million for nurses to be stationed in Darwin, Alice Springs and Katherine watch-houses to provide an increased level of health screening for people in custody;
 - \$0.5 million for continued responsible drinking education campaigns; and
 - \$0.37 million for the Palmerston Information and Referrals Office to continue antisocial behaviour intervention and care management services.

Health

The NT Health Budget will be boosted to a record \$1.115 billion in 2011-12 - a \$25 million rise on last year and an increase of 146% since the current Government came to power. Significant spending initiatives include:

- \$48 million for Mental Health Services across the Territory
 - This includes an additional \$7.8 million over the next three years for suicide prevention strategies and enhanced child and adolescent services.
- \$82.4 million for frail aged people and people with a disability.
- An additional \$5.2 million to fund alcohol reforms, including enhancing existing alcohol treatment and rehabilitation options, and establishing new services to meet the demands of people with significant alcohol problems.
- \$2.5 million to continue implementation of co-ordinated approach to patient care from hospital to community for Indigenous patients.
- \$3 million increase for St John Ambulance Australia (NT) for emergency road ambulance and medical transportation services.
- \$14.6 million to further reduce waiting times in NT hospitals for emergency departments and for elective surgery through the Commonwealth's National Partnership Agreement.

Changes to the Tax Regime

Payroll tax

From July 1, the payroll tax rate for businesses will be reduced from 5.9 to 5.5 per cent, and businesses which pay less than \$1.5 million per annum in wages will be exempt from the tax altogether.

Stamp Duty

Stamp duty for residential and commercial properties worth more than \$3 million will increase from 4.95 per cent to 5.45 per cent, raising about \$2.3 million.

Public Service Spending

In a bid to save \$81.5 million over two years the NT Government is applying a three per cent efficiency dividend to all government agencies.