



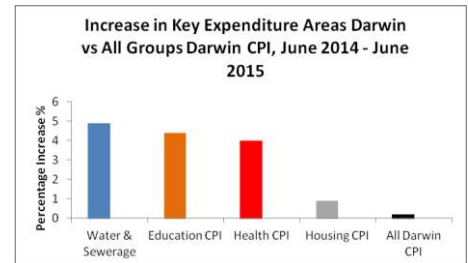
MEDIA RELEASE
15 September 2015

**Darwin CPI lowest in years and Darwin Petrol Prices lowest of all cities:
But some costs are up**

A new report by the Northern Territory Council of Social Service shows Darwin's CPI is the lowest it has been in 17 years and its petrol prices are the lowest of all capital cities. Petrol prices in Katherine and Alice Springs are well also down. This represents some good news for Territorians.

The Darwin CPI figure for the past year (of 0.2%) represents the lowest yearly rate of increase since March 1998, the 9th NT *Cost of Living Report*, released today, reveals. In addition food, clothing, electricity and overall transport prices in Darwin have all gone down in further positive developments.

However, at the same time, despite the very low overall CPI for Darwin, price increases for education (4.4%), housing (0.9%) and health (4.0%) as well as water & sewerage charges (4.9%) have all risen at a much faster rate than the national rate for those items, and much faster than the Darwin CPI (0.2%) for the same period.



“A key driver of the increase in health prices over the past year, has been the price of Medical, Dental and Hospital services (5.7% increase) which have gone up much faster (25 times) than the overall Darwin CPI (0.2%).

“Price increases in these critical expenditure areas continue to place great strain on lower income households, and cannot be ignored”, stated Mr. Jonathan Pilbrow, Policy Advisor, NTCOSS.

The report reinforces the current cost of living pressures facing some Territorians and points to the need for greater efforts on behalf of both the Territory and Federal Governments to ensure the Territory continues to be a great place to live, for all Territorians.

“While food prices went down in Darwin, we know that this does not reflect the reality for all Territory households – with people in remote areas still paying 50% more for the same goods when compared with a family shopping at a Darwin supermarket. This underlines the need for a food summit or inquiry to address this discrepancy, similar to the Fuel Summit led by the NT Government in October 2013”, stated Mr Pilbrow.

“The situation is particularly dire for those trying to budget on the Newstart Allowance of just \$36 a day. With the inadequacy of the historical system of indexing Newstart and other base level benefit payments to CPI only, increases in allowances simply cannot keep up with the cost of living”, stated Mr. Pilbrow. **“Currently the Newstart Payment is more than \$166 per week lower than the Pension for a single person.** It’s crucial the Federal Government raises this payment, especially since it hasn’t increased in real terms since 1994”.

“The cost of living in the NT has been high in many areas for a long time, We must ensure there are measures that ease the cost of living burden for those who need it,” concluded Mr. Pilbrow.

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