

**Senator the Hon
Nick Sherry**
Assistant Treasurer



Jim Turnour MP
Member for Leichhardt

PRESS RELEASE

SPECIALIST TAX OFFICE SUPPORT TEAM FLIES IN TO ASSIST CAIRNS LOCAL BUSINESSES

The Assistant Treasurer, Senator Nick Sherry, and Federal Member for Leichhardt, Jim Turnour, are urging Cairns small business owners to take advantage of the upcoming stage of the Rudd Government's *Keep Cairns Working* program.

A specialist taskforce from the Australian Tax Office will be Cairns from 1-5 February to provide onsite, one-on-one support to small business owners who may be having difficulties with finances and tax matters.

"This is a major operation by the Tax Office and extensive lead-up work has already begun," the Assistant Treasurer said.

"Jim Turnour and members of the Advance Cairns group made the seriousness of the situation clear to me when they came to Canberra late last year and when I visited Cairns."

"The Tax Office has responded quickly and is already making calls to small businesses with debt and outstanding lodgements and offering practical assistance."

"Since last week, 56 officers have been calling more than 1,100 small businesses in the Cairns area."

"All calls have been offering practical assistance over the phone as well as the option of onsite support."

"It's up to them to choose how they receive that support – but I would encourage small business owners to seriously consider setting up appointments with the specialist team."

Mr Turnour said the Rudd Government had identified Tropical North Queensland as a priority area for action on jobs, with the electorates of Leichhardt and Kennedy receiving \$460 million for more than 2,100 economic stimulus projects.

"The Prime Minister visited Cairns just last month to announce a package specifically for the region – *Keep Cairns Working*," Mr Turnour said.

"Part of that package was a promise to send a specialised Tax Office taskforce to work one-on-one with local businesses to tailor individual payment arrangements for businesses that need help."

"This promise is being fulfilled promptly because the Rudd Government knows the survival of small business in Cairns is vital if we are to make a dent in the unemployment situation in our area."

“Our region’s reliance on the key industries of tourism and construction has meant we have felt the effects of the global recession more than most.”

The Keep Cairns Working package also includes:

- Offering foreign airlines greater access to major gateways for flights that first stopover in Cairns;
- Allowing overseas airlines to provide flights from Cairns to nearby countries;
- Providing \$446,000 for a new tourism marketing campaign to promote Cairns as a food tourism destination;
- Fast-tracking the \$60 million social housing component of the stimulus strategy;
- Joining Commonwealth and State Government activity on regional development to ensure a targeted approach; and
- Supporting 500 new training places through the Productivity Places Program in conjunction with the Queensland Government.

Mr Turnour said small business owners should already be seeing signs of the tax taskforce’s imminent arrival.

“The Tax Office has put up posters in public offices and all six major shopping centres, has taken out advertising in the local media and has notified tax agents in Cairns,” he said.

“The Tax Office had committed substantial resources to this mission and they’ve told me they’ll send more officers to the region if demand for onsite support is high.”

To make a booking call 13 28 69 between 8.00am and 5.00pm and ask for Sue McCarthy in Cairns.

Book online at www.ato.gov.au/assistancevisit

CAIRNS

19 January 2010

Media Contacts: Joe Scavo 0413 800 757 (Assistant Treasurer’s Office)
Belinda Featherstone 07 4051 2220/0427 737 203 (Mr Turnour’s Office)