Family and Community Services Minister Marion Scrymgour has paid tribute to the wonderful contribution made by the Northern Territory’s foster carers – especially over the Christmas holidays.

“Foster carers are our unsung heroes – true saviours whose generosity provide children and young people in need with love and support 365 days a year,” Ms Scrymgour said.

“But their role is especially important over the Christmas period which is traditionally a time for families to be together. The love and care given to children in need is indeed selfless and done without fanfare … giving children a special Christmas they may not have otherwise.”

Ms Scrymgour said the Alice Springs branch of Family and Community Services will this year host a thankyou Christmas party for the region’s foster carers.

“This is to thank Alice Springs’ 75 foster carers for all their generosity and hard work over the year,” she said.

“I am pleased that several businesses have come together to donate prizes for the event – including accommodation packages and leisure activities.”

Ms Scrymgour announced earlier this year that Alice Springs will host the 2005 National Foster Carers Conference thanks to a $50,000 NT Government grant.

“This Conference will not only provide a unique opportunity for bonds and networks to be created, but will also showcase the Territory and demonstrate to the rest of Australia the unique challenges we face.

She added that the NT Government’s unprecedented $53.8 million injection into reforming child protection and care services for children and families consists of many initiatives to assist foster carers.

The NT Government increased the foster care payment rate by eight per cent (a weekly average of $10) earlier this year.