Central Australian nursing students will now be able to undertake their entire course in Alice Springs, Minister for Health and Community Services Jane Aagaard announced today.

Mrs Aagaard said the initiative was the subject of a Memorandum of Understanding signed today in Alice Springs by the Northern Territory University, Centre for Remote Health and the Department of Health and Community Services.

“This MOU will go some way to increasing local employment options and helping to address the ongoing need for additional nurses in Central Australia,” Mrs Aagaard said.

“To support this initiative, the Northern Territory Government is building and equipping a clinical training laboratory at Alice Springs Hospital, at a cost of more than $80,000.”

The Bachelor of Science (Nursing) course in Alice Springs will be offered as an external course from the Northern Territory University.

Students will also attend locally based academic sessions and tutorials, as well as receiving support from clinical nurse educators during their placements at Alice Springs Hospital and community nursing services in Central Australia.

“It is anticipated that up to 20 students will commence their studies when the course starts in March this year,” Mrs Aagaard said.

“This is a three-year, tertiary level course, with students required to undertake supported clinical placements and successfully complete Nurses Board requirements to become a Registered Nurse.

"While graduates will be eligible to work throughout the Territory or elsewhere in Australia, it is hoped that many will opt for rewarding careers in Central Australia.”

The decision to conduct the course in Alice Springs brings additional recognition to experienced nurses in the Department of Health and Community Services. Those involved in conducting tutorial and clinical teaching sessions in Alice Springs will be awarded adjunct lecturer status by the Northern Territory University.