The NT Government will continue to work closely with the community sector to explore new initiatives to address youth homelessness, Minister for Housing John Ah Kit said today.

Figures released today in a partially NT Government-funded report presents an estimate of 159-170 homeless youth in the Palmerston and Rural area to Litchfield.

The report - Palmerston Homeless Youth - was prepared and researched by Anglicare Top End’s Sibylle Kaczorek, and launched by Mr Ah Kit’s Department of Community Development, Sport and Cultural Affairs.

"These figures immensely concern me, and indeed the issue of youth homelessness is one of major concern to the NT Government," Mr Ah Kit said.

"It is imperative to make comment that the level of indigenous homelessness is more distinct, and some of this has a lot to do with cultural differences and Aboriginal people staying with their relatives on a regular basis.

"The suggestions in this latest report relate to early intervention and a broad-based collaboration to assist in preventing youth homelessness, and offer opportunity for my Department to continue working closely with the community sector to explore new initiatives."

Mr Ah Kit said the NT Government’s Territory Housing worked very closely with and provided regular funding to NT Shelter, the peak community agency for housing that has a keen interest in youth welfare. During 2002-03 the NT Government increased funding to allow for the establishment of a joint NT Shelter/NT Council of Social Services position.

"The Government is currently mapping out a new direction for housing policy over the next seven years," Mr Ah Kit said. "Home Territory – Secure, Affordable Housing to 2010, acknowledges youth as a special target group and will draw on research findings of a six-month project conducted last year.

"Territory Housing is also trialing two youth initiatives at the moment – the Youth Transitional Housing Project, through Anglicare, and a Youth Headleasing Project with community agencies.

See ATTACHMENT for further information.