The Minister for Tourism, Dr Chris Burns, today hosted a workshop designed to seek input from indigenous tourism operators in Alice Springs on how the indigenous tourism industry might be further developed in the Territory.

The workshop is part of the consultation process for a revised NT Indigenous Tourism Strategy, due for release around May 2003.

Dr Burns said this was the first of a series of such workshops, with others to be held with indigenous tourism operators in Darwin and Katherine early next month. The NT Tourist Commission will also conduct individual consultations with stakeholders across the Territory.

"Cultural tourism has been identified as a key building block for the Territory’s tourism industry, but it is a part of the industry which has particular challenges which must be addressed if it is to become part of the Territory’s mainstream tourism industry" Mr Burns said.

"There are already some very successful Indigenous Tourism ventures but there are many opportunities for further development.

" More than one third of interstate and international holiday visitors say the opportunity to experience indigenous culture is what motivated them to travel to the Territory", Dr Burns said.

The new Indigenous Tourism Strategy will build on earlier work and will draw on the experiences of indigenous operators. The Strategy will provide a framework to help indigenous people determine what levels of participation in the tourism industry are appropriate for them."

NT Tourist Commission Managing Director, Maree Tetlow, said she was looking forward to working closely with the Land Councils and the private tourism industry in this process and identifying ways partnerships could be developed to implement the new strategy.

"It is vital we work together as a team," Ms Tetlow said.

"It is essential that indigenous people are given the information which will allow them to determine their level of involvement in the tourism industry.

"Tourism is one of a number of alternate land uses indigenous people may choose, but it has to be put into the appropriate cultural and social contexts. We don’t want unrealistic expectations to lead to disappointment or negative impacts on communities, we also want ventures that can meet the demands of the tourism industry", Ms Tetlow said.

Written submissions from the community are encouraged as part of the
consultation process and should be forwarded to the NT Tourist Commission by 31 January 2003.