Sports Minister Matthew Bonson today chaired a successful Arafura Games Heads of Delegation meeting in Brunei – and is confident that the 2009 Games will be bigger and better than ever.

Delegates from 15 countries flew into Brunei earlier this week for the meeting which provided the NT Government with the opportunity to engage representatives in the lead up to the 2009 Arafura Games.

The meeting saw the establishment of three international Standing Committees – a first for the Arafura Games.

“The Arafura Games are a significant event on the Territory’s sporting and cultural calendar – and it is important we continue to expand and strengthen the Games over the years,” Mr Bonson said.

“The planning process and engagement with member countries must begin early so the 2009 Games continue to meet the international sport requirements of the region - and we continue to receive the support of these countries who send some of their best athletes to Darwin.”

Mr Bonson said he was pleased to announce the agreement between country representatives to establish the first ever Arafura Games Standing Committees.

The three proposed Committees are the Sports Standing Committee, Paralympic Standing Committee and International Sports Conference Standing Committee.

“This is a fantastic and positive move forward which will provide scope to member countries to become more intricately involved in the planning and delivery of the Games,” Mr Bonson said.

“It enables participating countries not just to be consulted but involved in the important decision making processes, enabling scope for input and refining details around levels of sport – all contributing to a more viable and stronger Games.

“In particular I am heartened to see the Australian Paralympic Committee’s enthusiasm to this committee.
“The Arafura Games are the only games around the world that integrates paralympic sport – this is one of the great features of the Arafura Games and shows the world how we can integrate and mainstream this sport. This new standing committee will now further this vision.”

Mr Bonson reaffirmed the Henderson Labor Government’s commitment and support of the Arafura Games.

Contact Maria Billias 0401119746