Students from remote Territory communities will be able to start using the new Michael Long Learning and Leadership Centre from early next year.

Minister for Sport, Recreation and Racing Matt Conlan this week inspected construction of the new facility, which is expected to be completed by January 2015.

“It was fantastic to be given a tour of the new Michael Long Learning and Leadership Centre, it is clear construction is progressing quickly which is exciting news,” Mr Conlan said.

“The Country Liberals Government has invested a significant contribution of $2.5 million to help build the Centre at TIO Stadium at Marrara.

“This investment is about improving the lives of Territory children living in our remote communities. It is about providing these children with access to quality education, training and employment opportunities which will set them on a pathway to a positive life. It will help break the welfare cycle and get these children into real jobs.

“Our $2.5 million investment will also ensure we can nurture our great AFL talent and gear them up for the big stage of the AFL right here in the Territory,”

The state of the art centre will include; a gymnasium, swimming pool and recovery facilities, lecture theatres and classrooms, and accommodation for 70.

AFL Northern Territory CEO, Tony Frawley, said the academy will see different remote schools living and using the facility for 40 weeks out of the year.

“During the first year we hope to have around 700 boys and girls from our 10 remote projects from across into Darwin and learning at the Michael Long Centre. Over the next few years we hope to build on that number year on year. To use the facility, children have to go to school so the Centre will provide an important tool to improve school attendance in remote areas,” Mr Frawley said.

Mr Conlan said the construction of the $15 million project would also benefit the local economy.

“I’m pleased to hear builders, Sitzler, has a strong local workforce on the project, including several Indigenous apprentices. All up the project is providing jobs for around 40 workers a day on site, which will build up to 100 at the busier stages of construction,” he said.

The Centre is the brainchild of Essendon legend Michael Long and is jointly funded by the Territory and Commonwealth Government, the Aboriginal Benefit Account and the AFL.

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Photo Attached: Minister Conlan, AFL NT CEO Tony Frawley with Sitzler representatives on site during construction of the Michael Long Centre.