The NT Government has welcomed a two-week visit to the Territory by 140 US students as part of an Australian study tour.

"The US tourism market is slowly recovering from the tragic events of September 11, and this is a great opportunity to showcase the Territory as a safe, hospitable destination to these young ambassadors from the United States," Tourism Minister Paul Henderson said.

The NT Government hosted a welcoming function for the students at Parliament House last night. The next leg of their tour will incorporate a three-day tour to Kakadu, as well as visits to Alice Springs and Uluru.

The tour has been organised through the University of NSW's Study Abroad Office.

"Study tours provide international students with a unique and wonderful way of incorporating learning with a bit of adventure, and I am pleased the Territory has the opportunity to host these students," Mr Henderson said.

Mr Henderson said international arrivals to Australia that are classified as students had grown from 2 per cent to 5 per cent over the last 10 years.

"International students' expenditure accounts for one quarter of international visitor expenditure – and it is growing – so the NT Government is certainly committed to facilitating visits such as these."

Mr Henderson said, from a tourism perspective, North America and Canada are key source markets.

"In the last financial year alone, 71 000 North Americans visited the NT spending an average of 4.2 days in the Territory and spending $158 a day."

The NT Government will provide $35 000 for a study into the feasibility of an abattoir in Central Australia, Minister for Primary Industries Paul Henderson announced today.

The money will be provided to the NT Cattlemen's Association to carry out an evaluation into pastoral industry production in Central Australia.

"The money will allow the investigation of options for adding value to pastoral industry production in Central Australia and the broader NT through meat processing and marketing," Mr Henderson said.

The evaluation will be carried out in partnership with the NT Cattlemen's Association (NTCA) through their NT Cattlemen's Trading Pty Ltd (NTCT).

Mr Henderson said the Central Australian pastoral industry is worth $30 million annually, while the camel industry brought in $2.5 million to the Territory each year.
But he added that the only two abattoirs in the NT were not suitable for processing camels.

"There appears to be a lucrative market in both Europe and North America for specialty meats such as camel and buffalo, but surprisingly there is no abattoir in the NT with suitable accreditation for these markets.

"These funds are designed to explore options that could subsequently become the basis of attracting commercial interest in a niche abattoir opportunity for Central Australia for beef and other products."

The proposed consultancy to evaluate meat processing and marketing options would investigate options for securing supply to specific niche markets.

Mr Henderson said: "The outcome of the consultancy will be to advise whether a modern abattoir is viable, and where it would be most appropriately situated."