A new category has been added to the 2002 Northern Territory Sports Awards to recognise the tireless work of volunteers.

Sport and Recreation Minister John Ah Kit said the new category will reward the unpaid and often thankless work of volunteers who play such a vital role Territory sport.

"Sport is more than just being a star player, coach or administrator," Mr Ah Kit said.

"Without volunteers so many sports would struggle and so many sportspeople would not have the opportunity to shine."

Mr Ah Kit said nominations for the 2002 NT Sports Awards close on February 15.

This year’s categories are:

- Volunteer of the Year;
- Administrator of the Year;
- Official of the Year;
- Coach of the Year;
- Master Sportsperson of the Year (35 years or older);
- Team of the Year;
- NT Junior Sportsperson of the Year; and
- NT Sportsperson of the Year

The winners will be announced at a gala function at the Carlton Hotel, Darwin, on 5 April.

Expected to be in contention for this year’s awards are Judith Green (co-winner in 2001), Mark Hickman (cemented place as Kookaburras’ goalkeeper this year) and the NT open ten pin bowling team which took out the Australian title.

Mr Ah Kit said the continuing quality of sportspeople from the Northern Territory is reflected each year in the Sports Awards.

"We are a sporting society in the Territory and I urge Territorians to nominate for these prestigious awards.

"This government allocates more than $5 million to sport annually so that Territorians can enjoy the finest sporting opportunities in the nation.

"The government is proud to support these awards which recognise the excellence of athletes produced by the Northern Territory."