New teaching and health professionals in Central Australia are participating in a joint orientation program this week Minister for Central Australia and Acting Minister for Employment, Education and Training Peter Toyne said today.

Dr Toyne said 43 new teachers, six remote area nurses and one allied health professional were participating in this year’s orientation program – only the second to be run jointly.

"The Collins’ Learning Lessons review recommended stronger links between schools and community health centres," Dr Toyne said.

"The aim of a joint orientation is to focus on how the two agencies can work together to improve educational and health outcomes.

"It also highlights the links between health and education, especially in remote settings."

"Recruits are given practical examples of how schools and health centres can work together to deal with health barriers to learning, such as chronic infections, as well as developing joint support services for students."

The combined orientation program involves one day of presentations from departmental management, as well as experienced nurses and teachers, on issues that impact on both health and education.

Up to 130 new teachers will take up positions in Territory schools this year - 44 will be based in Central Australia, including Centralian College.

The Department of Employment, Education and Training has significantly boosted its Teacher Orientation process from a one-off workshop at the start of employment, to a program that runs over the first six months of appointment.

The program is also tailored to different regions across the Territory. Regional workshops in Gove and Katherine, as well as the major centres of Darwin and Alice Springs, will be run for new staff this year.

The increased emphasis on localisation of orientation and induction processes was a recommendation of the Collins’ Learning Lessons report.

Initiatives of the extended Orientation program include:

- The establishment of an e-learning environment which brings together access to key information for new staff via the LATIS network in schools;
- A monthly newsletter reinforcing key information for new teachers; and
- Increased emphasis on improving school-based induction and community-based cultural awareness processes.