The Minister for Central Australia, Dr Peter Toyne, says the Government is pleased to again support the Central Australian Bike Challenge which promises a feast of exciting mountain bike racing beginning tomorrow.

Dr Toyne said he was pleased to see last year's winner, South Australian Chris Jongewaard, back for this event, as well as a field of national and international competitors.

The 88 competitors face six daily events through some of Central Australia's toughest and most spectacular terrain as they vie for money, trophies and prizes worth nearly $10 000.

Dr Toyne will join competitors at the NT Major Events Prologue, which includes a program of cycling events for children, at the Botanical Garden on Sturt Terrace near Goyder Street, tomorrow afternoon.

The Prologue, an elimination event which gives the winner a one-minute bonus and first run with the leader's jersey, kicks off the six-day main event which begins on Sunday and runs until next Friday.

Dr Toyne said the Government was contributing $20 000 to the cost of staging the event through the Major Events Company and the Department of Community Development, Sport and Cultural Affairs.

“The Government supported last year's successful inaugural event and I am pleased to see there's been a substantial increase in interest for this year's event with 88 competitors entered.

“The Bike Challenge has the potential to become another of the major sporting events for which Central Australia is becoming famous, as well as adding another event to the annual tourist calendar,” he said.

Dr Toyne congratulated Jack Oldfield and his team on the exciting program of support activities organised around the bike challenge. He wished all of the participants, and the entrants in the Challenge itself, a successful, rewarding and exciting few days.