Employment, Education and Training Minister Syd Stirling, Road Safety Chairman Peter Poole and Hector the Road Safety Cat were on hand to welcome the Territory's 42,000 students back to school today for the 2002 school year.

Mr Stirling said 32,000 students across the Top End and 10,000 students throughout Central Australia are expected to make their way to school today.

He urged motorists driving in the Territory to slow down and pay special attention when driving near schools.

"For some kids it will be their first time at school and they have few road survival skills, so motorists and parents have to take extra care," Mr Stirling said.

Up to 100 Transition students are expected to start school for the first time today at Bakewell Primary School in Palmerston.

Mr Stirling was on hand to welcome the new students and their parents, while Hector the Cat reminded students of road safety and gave bike riding tips.

Meanwhile, the Territory’s newest school, Girraween Pre and Primary School is expected to kick off the 2002 school year with an inaugural class of more that 180 students.

Mr Stirling, School Principal Daniel Zobel and students cut the ribbon to open the more than $9 million school for students this morning.

School staff, the interim School Council and Principal Daniel Zobel have worked hard over the Christmas holidays to stock classrooms with furniture and resources ready for the 2002 school year.