Family and Community Services Minister Marion Scrymgour today opened a conference in Darwin for support carers of people with disabilities.

The 2004 Making a Difference conference promotes professional development and recognises the valuable contribution to the community of support carers and workers.

“Disability workers and carers make a substantial contribution to our community, enabling people with disabilities to participate in the community in a meaningful way,” Ms Scrymgour said.

“The theme of this year’s conference is 'Working Together to Build Bridges', and the aim is to get people involved and enthused in the future development of disability services in the Territory.”

Ms Scrymgour said the NT Government – through its Building Healthier Communities framework - is committed to ensuring health and community services meet the needs of all Territorians.

“I am determined to give a voice to the community in the development and delivery of community services, and for this reason the NT Government has recently established a Disability Advisory Council,' she said.

“The main role of the Council is to provide me with advice on services for people with disabilities – to help Government make decisions and formulate policy.”

The Making a Difference Conference, which will run over two days, will feature keynote speakers from the disability sector.

The sessions – held at Charles Darwin University – will cover a range of topics including health issues, sexuality and disability, positive behaviour support, mental health, recreation, and the ‘good life’ for people with a disability. The Conference will also focus on “making a difference” in remote areas.

“The NT Government will continue to expand and improve service delivery outcomes for people with disabilities and their families and carers in remote areas,” Ms Scrymgour said.

“But to do this we need to work across Government, with non-government organisations and with the community to tackle the challenges we face.

“Conferences like these are an important mechanism for fostering effective relationships and sharing knowledge … this is an important way for finding creative solutions for the future development of disability services throughout the Territory.”