School aged children with disabilities will be among the first to benefit from Katherine’s revamped Aged and Disability Service.

Member for Sanderson Len Kiely – representing Family and Community Services Minister Marion Scrymgour – today launched the new service, which has been under review since January.

Mr Kiely said Katherine region’s school-aged children, aged population, and people with a disability, will benefit from the improved services.

“This is great news as it means that some of the most socially disadvantaged people will now have better access to services … it is a new and progressive service which will make a difference to the lives of those with disabilities and people who are frail aged,” Mr Kiely said.

The Katherine Region Aged and Disability Service will work together with children, parents and the school community to support youngsters with a range of special needs. The service had previously been provided by the Darwin-based School Therapy Services Team.

The review also promises to help improve services to Katherine’s frail aged – particularly with information, equipment, physiotherapists and taxis.

“We want to help aged people stay at home longer and live independently,” Mr Kiely said.

The review, conducted with wide internal and external consultation, recommended the creation of two teams – one to focus on urban clients, and the other on bush clients.

“Staff are now better equipped to go bush more often. The remote team will visit communities more frequently, and provide better support to communities, families and carers.”

The Katherine Region Aged and Disability Service’s budget for 2004/2005 is almost $1 million. This is in addition to the $1,946,427 allocated to non-government organisations in the Katherine region to provide services to people with a disability and older people.

The Katherine Region Aged and Disability Service will continue to work closely with government and non-government organisations in the Katherine region to provide the best possible services to frail aged people and people with a disability.

Mr Kiely said the improved service was in keeping with the Territory Government’s value of strengthening families and communities, which was fundamental to the broader vision of *Building Healthier Communities*. 