Preventing burns injuries and the safe handling of fireworks will be the major focus of Burns Awareness Week, being launched today by Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services Syd Stirling.

Burns Awareness Week is a joint initiative of the Royal Darwin Hospital's Burns Service, the NT Fire and Rescue Service, Kidsafe NT and major sponsor TIO.

Mr Stirling said burns injuries were often the result of inattention or carelessness.

"From 1997 until 2001, a total of 371 people have been treated for burn injuries at RDH. According to the hospital's Burns Service, 256 of those injuries could have been avoided, with 113 of those preventable injuries suffered by children under the age of 12," he said.

"Burns Awareness Week aims to provide both the general public and health professionals with an educated insight into how to prevent and treat burns and scalds."

Mr Stirling said the importance of using fireworks safely would also be highlighted during the week.

"Many Territorians enjoy celebrating Territory Day by letting off a few fireworks. However, if fireworks aren’t handled sensibly, celebrations can often turn to tragedy," Mr Stirling said.

People using fireworks are urged to adhere to the following simple safety steps:

- Supervise children closely
- Never use fireworks in a crowded area
- Light fireworks in a cleared area at least 10 meters from flammable material
- Dampen down gardens before you light fireworks
- Use a shovel to pick up dud fireworks and drop them into a water bucket
- Do not put fireworks in your pocket

Mr Stirling also used today’s event to launch Where There’s Smoke…., a new community education video funded by Emergency Management Australia (EMA) and produced jointly by the NT Fire and Rescue Service and RDH Burns Service.

"The video promotes fire safety in the home through such things as the installation of smoke alarms, which provide an early warning of fire in the home, as well as the importance of teaching children fire safety," he said.

"It also highlights the value of community volunteer fire brigades and
provides advice on appropriate land management measures that can be taken to prevent bushfires from damaging property."

As part of the week's busy program, information stands will be on display in the Mall and major shopping centres, libraries and hospitals and will feature specially produced posters, brochures and fact sheets, all reinforcing the burns awareness message.