The first of the Territory’s 3500 public houses have started to be security screened as part of a programmed $10 million extended Security Screening Policy, Housing Minister John Ah Kit said today.

The instalment of the first security screens in the NT’s public houses started last week, with priority being given to high risk tenants including sole parents, and aged or disabled. All high risk groups of tenants will have their dwelling screened within the next three years.

"Security screening all public housing dwellings is an important step towards combating the effects of crime on public housing tenants who deserve to live in secure homes for their own peace of mind.

"The program will ensure a much safer environment for all public housing tenants and emphasise this Government’s determination to deliver a safer community for all Territorians."

Security screens were installed in more than 3000 flats and units last year at a cost of $2.2 million.

"We are now seeing housing dwellings receive security screens, with the total cost of the extended program projected at $10.65 million," Mr Ah Kit said.

"About 400 houses in the high risk group will be security screened in the first phase, with all stage one work expected to be complete by April.

"Stage two of the programmed roll out will include the security screening of houses in the suburbs of Moulden and Karama, with work on these areas estimated to be complete by December 2003."

Mr Ah Kit said the NT Government’s new Security Screening Policy was endorsed last April, and provided for all dwellings with disabled modifications and safe rooms to be fully screened during the 2002/03 financial year.

He said that public housing dwellings built in the last three years already incorporated a range of security measures, including bars to windows and security doors.