CLP Shadow Minister for Central Australia, Dr Richard Lim, said he is delighted the Martin Labor Government has finally seen the sense to fast track sealing the Mereenie and the West MacDonnell loop road and running with it.

"We had previously been critical of the Government's original decision to drag the sealing of the road out over 10 years given the troubled state of our tourism industry, but today's change of heart is welcome news," Dr Lim said.

"Fast tracking of the sealing of the Mereenie and Western MacDonnell loop was an election promise of the CLP for the 2001 election and I am glad to see that the Martin Labor Government has seen the sense in picking up the CLP's election promise.

"The Mereenie and the West MacDonnell loop will create a community of interest from Alice Springs to Yulara and all points in between and will be an economic generator for the region.

"It is a pity that the Martin Labor Government has chosen to announce this at the end of the term of government and stretch it over three years into the next term of government.

"The sealing of the Mereenie Loop would have been completed or close to completion by now had the government commenced the project at the very beginning of government.

"Given that the Martin Government has done very little for Alice Springs over the last three years one can't help but think that a Territory election is in the wind."

"With the fast tracking of the sealing of the Mereenie Loop road, the Martin Government must now put pressure on Virgin to introduce an Adelaide - Alice Springs - Darwin route to increase the number of airline seats into Alice Springs.

"It is no good putting tourism infrastructure in place if there are no tourists to enjoy them." Dr Lim said.

Ends