Sport and Recreation Minister John Ah Kit today urged Territorians to embrace the 2003-2006 NT Water Safety Plan, the blueprint to reduce drownings in the Northern Territory.

The plan, launched at Darwin’s Wharf Precinct, outlines the strategic direction of the government-appointed Northern Territory Water Safety Advisory Council (NTWSAC) to provide the safest possible environment for Territorians around water.

"Water safety is much larger than just stringent pool fencing laws," Minister Ah Kit said.

"It is important Territorians adopt a range of measures that will reduce the incidence of drowning."

The plan identifies four priority areas for further action:

- public and community awareness through initiatives such as NT Water Safety Week and high-profile campaigns;
- education such as consistent, minimum skill levels for children leaving primary school and ability for schools to access water safety programs;
- standards, legislation and compliance such as Australian standard signage and comparing legislation from other states; and,
- information and monitoring such as an audit system.

"Achieving reduction in the number of drownings is not the sole responsibility of governments or aquatic providers but the responsibility of all Territorians," Minister Ah Kit said.

"For example, there have been no accurate figures regarding drownings in the Northern Territory for many years. An objective of the plan is to implement a monitoring program where these figures are accurately collected and analysed.

The NTWSAC Chairperson, Mrs Vicki O’Halloran, said the plan would help mould the direction of public policy regarding water safety – from the swimming pool to the sea.

"The objectives outlined in, and underlying the Plan, support the Government’s determination and belief in a high standard of water safety within our communities. The NTWSAC are committed to our vision to reduce the rate of drowning, near drowning and water related injuries in our Northern Territory," he said.

The plan will be distributed widely through the Northern Territory so the NTWSAC can work with the community to achieve its actions.

The NTWSAC includes representatives from the community,
Territory and Local governments, Kidsafe, Royal Life Saving and Surf Life Saving. The Martin Government last year established the NTWSAC as part of a five-point plan to improve water safety in the Northern Territory.