Chief Minister and Minister for Arts and Museums, Clare Martin, will join this evening’s street party and parade to officially launch the Alice Springs Festival, DesertSong 2004.

The parade kicks off 10 days of performance, exhibits, music, dance, displays and workshops that showcase the vibrancy and creativity of the Central Australian arts community.

“The Festival has gone from strength to strength and in just four years has become a major event on the Territory’s arts calendar,” Ms Martin said.

“Thousands of Central Australian residents either take part in the events or go along to enjoy the fun and more and more visitors are coming to Alice Springs for the Festival.

“DesertSong 2004 is not just a celebration of cultural life in the Centre, it reflects the economic importance of the arts sector in terms of generating money and jobs.

“This is why the NT Government is backing the arts sector by putting in more money than ever before and I’m proud that this year we are committing $130,000 to DesertSong 2004.”

Ms Martin said that the NT Government was also the Major Sponsor for the BassInTheDust youth concert.

“BassInTheDust has been incorporated as part of the festival program and I guarantee, that with the great band line-up, Alice Springs will really enjoy this concert,’ she said.

Ms Martin will be attending a number of Festival events over the weekend.

As well as the opening street parade, she will be attending the opera, opening the Desert Mob exhibition, taking part in the Alice Vista Social Club and attending the SEGRA conference.