Chief Minister Clare Martin today welcomed 130 new teachers to the Territory for the start of the 2002 school year.

Ms Martin said most of the new recruits were currently undergoing localised orientation sessions to make their transition as smooth as possible.

"The government has significantly boosted the orientation process for teachers from a one-off workshop at the start of employment, to a program that runs over the first six months of their appointment," she said.

"Having an effective orientation program is an important part of recruitment and retention.

"I'm confident that this will result in teachers staying longer, having a more rewarding experience, and lifting education standards in the Territory.

"The orientation program is there to help new teachers feel welcome and to support them as they start the school year in a new environment.

"I'm delighted with the enthusiasm shown by our new recruits and the obvious attractiveness of the Territory's education system to teaching professionals."

Ms Martin said the new orientation program had also been tailored to suit different regions across the Territory. This year, regionalised workshops are being run in Gove, Katherine, Darwin and Alice Springs.

"The increased emphasis on localising orientation and induction processes was among recommendations of the Collins Learning Lessons Report, which this government is committed to implementing," she said.

Of the 130 new recruits for 2002, 44 have been allocated to Central Australia, 45 to Darwin, Palmerston and the rural area, 29 to Katherine and 12 to Arnhem Land.

Ms Martin also said the Department of Employment, Education and Training was in the process of recruiting an additional 20 teachers whose positions would be funded out of the November 2001 mini-budget.

"These teachers will be allocated to schools identified as having priority for special education resources, many of which are in remote communities," she said.

Initiatives of the extended Teacher Orientation program include:

- Essential information sessions and practical workshops;
- The establishment of an e-learning environment providing access to key information;
- A monthly newsletter reinforcing key information for new teachers; and
- Increased emphasis on improving school-based induction and community-based cultural awareness processes.