The Martin Labor Government has set the framework for the future land use of the Owen Springs pastoral lease in Central Australia.

Minister for Lands and Planning Kon Vatskalis, said the station was purchased in July 2000 by the previous Government, and today signalled the next phase in the process of opening up this land for the benefit of Central Australians.

"Owen Springs Station can now be used to provide jobs in Central Australia, particularly through the tourism sector," Mr Vatskalis said.

The pastoral lease will be split with the western part of the Alice Valley to be incorporated into the West Macdonnell Ranges National Park.

"This decision means more land for our conservation estate and makes a strong statement about the importance of the West MacDonnells as an icon for the tourism industry as well as a place for recreation for local residents," Mr Vatskalis said.

1600km² of land on the western side of Owen Springs will become Crown Land, reserved for multiple use under the care, control and management of the Parks and Wildlife Commission, with rangers stationed at Owen Springs Station.

A new Parks and Conservation Masterplan will be developed to incorporate various future uses.

Low impact use will be permitted with Expressions for Interest for these activities to be called for in March 2003.

Mr Vatskalis was confident that the low impact uses would provide new options for the Tourism industry, for recreation purposes, for community groups and for other low impact activities.

The Government is also considering the establishment of a significantly expanded Pastoral Research area, but has requested further detail before a final decision will be made.

Pending negotiations with the Federal Government, a buffer zone will be established adjacent to the Pine Gap Defence Facility. This will ensure space between any intensive development and their boundary.

The remaining land to the east of the Stuart Highway will be offered by public Expression of Interest for short term pastoral use. This sub-leasing will also allow for low-impact use such as ballooning.

Mr Vatskalis said the Martin Government would now begin Native Title
Minister for Central Australia Dr Peter Toyne, said it was good news all round for the people of Alice Springs.

"As well as the significant jobs outcome, families will now be able to use this area for recreational activities such as camping, bushwalking, horse riding and other low-impact activities.

"The Alice Springs economy will benefit from both the new opportunities for pastoral research and leasing prospects, as well as the boost to tourism growth," Dr Toyne said.