Acting Minister for Primary Industry, Dr Peter Toyne, today unveiled plans for part of Owen Springs Station to be used for research into supporting a sustainable pastoral industry in Central Australia.

An area of 522km² of Owen Springs has been allocated to the Department of Business, Industry and Resource Development’s Primary Industry Group for pastoral research.

“Using this portion of Owen Springs for research will provide the pastoral industry in arid areas with sound guides to long-term viability while also preserving the health and diversity of rangeland ecosystems,” Dr Toyne said.

“The aim is to have a profitable pastoral industry that operates in a healthy natural landscape.

“The proposal complements Desert Knowledge initiatives by proposing to take on a leading role in developing sound environmental practices in primary industries.”

The pastoral research project will include:

- monitoring vegetation and landscape changes;
- gaining a better understanding of the impact and role of fire on arid zone vegetation;
- grazing management systems that optimise animal productivity without increasing the risks of land degradation;
- looking at how to increase breeding herd productivity;
- evaluating alternative cattle breeds and crossbreeds to better suit current and future markets; and
- demonstrating new and innovative technologies in efficient pastoral management.

“Planning and consultation with all the stakeholders will take place before this new facility is established to ensure the maximum benefit to the Central Australian pastoral industry,” Dr Toyne said.

The bulk of Owen Springs has been assigned to a multiple use reserve that includes scope for tourism development and community use, including incorporating parts of the lease into the West MacDonnell National Park.

“Cabinet has also approved assigning land from the former Quarantine Reserve for the new start/finish line for the Finke Desert Race and work is
well underway at the site already to prepare for this year’s race,” Dr Toyne said.