Australian athletics star Melinda Gainsford-Taylor will be the guest speaker at this year’s Northern Territory Sports Awards.

Mr Ah Kit said securing Ms Gainsford-Taylor was a great boost to the Awards.

"Melinda has experienced great highs in her career by combining her natural talent for running with hard work and determination," Mr Ah Kit said.

"These Awards recognise the very best in Australian sport. Melinda’s address will no doubt inspire talented Territorians to pursue their sporting careers and their dreams."

Until her recent retirement from professional athletics, Ms Gainsford-Taylor rivalled Cathy Freeman as Australia’s “Queen of the Track”.

Among her achievements was a gold medal in the 200 metres at the 1995 World Indoor Championships and represented Australia with great distinction at three Olympic Games.

Nominations for the 2002 Sports Awards have closed and once there is a strong field of nominees in the running.

Some 76 applications were received, covering 32 sports and athletes from Darwin, Alice Springs and regional areas.

The most popular category is NT Sportsperson of the Year, where 23 applications covering 18 sports have been received.

In all, there are eight categories, including the new award, Volunteer of the Year.

The other categories are:

- Administrator of the Year
- Official of the Year
- Coach of the Year
- Masters Sportsperson of the Year
- Team of the Year
- Northern Territory Junior Sportsperson of the Year
- Northern Territory Sportsperson of the Year

The Awards will be held on April 5 at the Carlton Hotel, Darwin, with tickets on sale from March 4.

Tickets cost $62.50 (adult) and $47.50 (concession) and will be available from Darwin Entertainment Centre.