Minister for Health and Community Services, Jane Aagaard, says the launch today of a Career Pathway Strategy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Services staff is a major initiative aimed at improving the well being of indigenous communities throughout the Territory.

Mrs Aagaard said the Career Path Strategy significantly improves Indigenous employment and career opportunities in the area of Family and Children’s Services (FACS).

"The strategy is designed to encourage a much greater appreciation of the value of Indigenous workers in the workplace. The strategy will recognise existing employee skills at Certificate level, develop competency based training and translation of existing positions to match the competencies of Indigenous staff."

Mrs Aagaard said people who have demonstrated skills and been assessed, can be recognised for their competencies.

"Many of the solutions to Indigenous welfare issues lie within the capacity of Indigenous communities."

Thirty six percent of Territory children are Indigenous and are a major target population for FACS.

- In 1999/2000, 47% of all child protection investigations undertaken by FACS involved Indigenous children
- At June 2000, 53% of children on care and protection orders were Indigenous
- At June 2000, 53% of children in out of home care were Indigenous
- In some Districts in the Territory Indigenous children make up 100% of FACS clients

Mrs Aagaard said the new Career Path Strategy recognises the need to continue to pursue equity in Indigenous employment and career development.

"The strategy requires a fundamental change in organisational philosophy to account for Indigenous worldviews. The Government recently announced the employment of eight additional FACS staff. Four of these will be Indigenous people."