Thousands of competitors have registered for the 2002 Alice Springs Masters Games Sports Minister John Ah Kit announced today.

Mr Ah Kit said he was pleased to announce that the Alice Springs Masters Games have registered 3408 competitors and officials to be involved in 38 sports during 19-26 October 2002.

111 accompanying partners have also registered. They will be encouraged to be involved in the various ASMG activities however the partners won’t compete in any of the sports.

Chairman of the Alice Springs Masters Games Advisory Committee, Peter Hoey said he was pleased with the 2002 registration numbers as the competition to attract athletes to Alice Springs for the biennial event was extremely tough.

Mr Ah Kit said "More than 20,000 competitors have registered for the World Masters Games in Melbourne, which are held two weeks before the ASMG".

"We know about 15,000 Australians and 5500 international athletes are competing at the World Masters, which no doubt eroded some of our market.

"We also feel that organisers have done well to push the numbers so high given the Ansett collapse and the events of September 11.

"But those factors aside, there are still 3408 competitors and 111 accompanying partners in Alice Springs for the Masters and that is a great result.

"We have come a long way from the 1000 competitors that travelled to Alice Springs in 1986 when the first ASMG was held."

Mr Ah Kit said the organisation of the Games was on track. Competitors and the Alice Springs community will be treated to an enjoyable ASMG experience.

"The Opening and Closing Ceremonies will be a highlight of these Games with more food stalls and live entertainment.

"The patron of the ASMG, Dawn Fraser, will be back to play golf while former Hey Hey It's Saturday host Daryl Somers is a special medal presenter.

"These Games will be very enjoyable for everyone and continue the spirit of The Friendly Games."

People are encouraged to keep up-to-date with the ASMG news through the website, www.alicespringsmasters.nt.gov.au, or freecall 1800 658 951.