06 March 2003

**Footprints forward to boost indigenous employment in Alice Springs**

The Territory Government will contribute more than $100,000 towards establishing an initiative which aims to increase employment opportunities for young Indigenous people in Alice Springs, Chief Minister Clare Martin announced today.

Speaking at the Indigenous Economic Forum, Ms Martin said the initiative was a community-driven Indigenous Employment Challenge to be implemented through a central point of contact – Footprints Forward Incorporated.

"Footprints Forward Inc will support young Indigenous people in Alice Springs to access and remain in employment, particularly in the private sector," Ms Martin said.

"It is the result of strong involvement and direction from representatives of all sectors of the Alice Springs community – including businesses, Tangentyere Council, Alice Springs Council and the Chamber of Commerce.

"Employers, particularly the business sector, called for a central point of contact to access information and support to help them to employ more Indigenous people – that’s what Footprints Forward Inc will provide.

"Many employers in Alice Springs have recognised the business and social benefits to be gained from increasing Indigenous employment and have thrown their support behind this initiative."

Ms Martin said the Footprints Forward Management Board, made up of key business people and Indigenous leaders, had been meeting since November 2002.

"The Board’s key role will be to help foster active partnerships between the business community and the Indigenous community," Ms Martin said.

"Footprints Forward Inc, a part of the Alice in Ten Quality of Life Project, will be fully operational by July 1, 2003, and will provide practical support for all potential employers, Indigenous employees and their families.

"A shop front will be established in the central business area and an Indigenous Manager will be recruited and trained to run it independently from August 2003."

Key strategies will include:

- linking with students at school;
- encouraging paid work experience;
- ensuring a two-way flow of cultural information; and
- providing mentoring support and pre-employment training for employees and employers.

"The NT Government’s initial contribution of $100,000 will help to establish Footprints Forward Inc over the next six months," Ms Martin said.

"We will also continue to work with the Footprints Forward Management Board and the Commonwealth Department of Employment and Workplace Relations to develop an ongoing funding partnership for this exciting initiative."
"Creating jobs for Territorians remains the highest priority for this Government and this initiative is a step in the right direction."

The Chief Minister also said that the Indigenous Economic Forum was an extremely important event that arose out of the Economic Summit.

"Indigenous people are at the wrong end of the socio-economic spectrum, and are not getting the employment opportunities they need to escape from poverty.

"In the Territory, indigenous people make up 25 percent of the adult population but receive only 11 percent of the income.

"This Government has a serious commitment to remedying this situation, which can only be done with cooperation of indigenous peoples, hence the forum."