The Opposition Leader’s comments about early childhood education show just how out of touch he is, Employment, Education and Training Minister Syd Stirling said today.

"The Territory Government has already strengthened the focus on early childhood education to improve learning outcomes," Mr Stirling said.

"We have also committed to improving class sizes.

"What Terry Mills has failed to mention is that the 2003 literacy and numeracy results for both Years 3 and 5 are better than they were under the previous Government.

"However, it’s no secret that results for Indigenous students are still well below where they should be. This is a clear indictment of the previous CLP Government and their total neglect of Indigenous education.

"As part of Government’s efforts to improve early years education for all Territory children, we are:

- ensuring all Government schools have a Literacy and Numeracy Plan in place which includes a minimum two hour block of literacy and numeracy teaching per day;
- working with educators to develop a new Early Years education strategy for children aged zero to eight years;
- trialling a new Age of Entry policy which will give all children the opportunity to undertake two full years of non-compulsory schooling before entering Year 1 to improve their learning outcomes;
- running a Mobile Pre-school Program in remote communities to increase enrolment, attendance and participation of Indigenous children in early childhood to better prepare them for formal literacy and numeracy learning; and
- increasing the number of schools offering the highly successful Accelerated Literacy Program.

"Government will also be consulting with teacher representatives in the near future as part of efforts to move towards a program of improved class sizes and more school resources over the next few years," Mr Stirling said.

"Former CLP Governments had 27 years to do something about class sizes and school resources but failed to act.

"It will take years to turn around the legacy Mr Mills and his predecessors have left us with, but improving education outcomes for all Territory children remains a top priority for this Government."