The Territory’s peak primary industry body, the Northern Territory Cattlemen’s Association (NTCA), is today holding its 21st Annual General Meeting and celebrating with a gala dinner tonight.

Primary Industry Minister, Kon Vatskalis, will travel to Alice Springs for tonight’s event and meet with more than 160 members expected to attend.

“The NTCA represents some 97% of the Territory’s cattle producers, which in turn, manage around 620,000 square kilometres of land – around 50% of the Territory,” said Mr Vatskalis.

“The Martin Government is all about backing Territorians and recognises the importance of the pastoral industry and the critical role primary produces play in regional development.

“Cattle numbers continue to increase every year, with 1.9 million in the Territory in 2003-04. Annually, it is estimated over $300 million dollars is injected directly into our economy, producing jobs for Territorians and large multiplier effects for the rest of the community.”

Mr Vatskalis said in recent years Mother Nature has not been kind to primary producers in the Territory, with Central Australia suffering from a long dry spell.

“Government has approved the NT Drought Preparedness and Recovery Policy, which has led to the formation of the Northern Territory Drought Steering Committee,” he said.

“The new committee – chaired by Mr Roy Chisholm – met for the first time a week ago, and has provided comment to Government for consideration.

“We are mindful of the urgency of the situation and will look at all options to assist where possible.”

MEDIA NOTE: NTCA Gala Dinner will be held at Crowne Plaza, Alice Springs, from 7:30pm.