Minister for Tourism Paul Henderson today welcomed the first cruise ship into Darwin for 2007.

With over 3,500 passengers and crew on board and research showing that each passenger spends approximately $180 a day when in port, the Minister said the arrival of the *Sapphire Princess* will provide a direct boost to the local economy.

“The Martin Government is building a $4.5 million cruise ship terminal, part of the $1.1 billion Darwin Waterfront and Convention Centre development. This will help attract more cruise ships to town by providing better passenger facilities and a more visually friendly drop-off and pick-up point.

“The Martin Government views the cruise ship industry as very important to the Territory, especially the ships that arrive during our off-peak tourism period and deliver high spending tourists right to the doorstep of local businesses.

“Darwin is rapidly earning a reputation as a great cruise destination with 45 ships scheduled to visit our shores in 2007.

“In 2005/06, it was estimated that the cruise ship industry generated $13.4 million in expenditure for the Northern Territory.

“This is a 97% increase over 2004/05 and this upward trend is expected to continue as strong growth for 2006/07 is anticipated within the Australian cruise shipping industry.

“I commend Darwin City Council and Tourism Top End for working together to provide free shuttle bus services for passengers to the CBD which will be of benefit to our city traders.

"The Government is promoting Darwin as a cruise ship destination - the arrival of the *Sapphire Princess* and with 44 other ships to come is proof that this promotion is working," said Minister Henderson.

*Media Contact: Ryan Neve (08) 8901 4074 or 0401 119 609*