In an Australian first, the Martin Government has granted a parcel of land at Marrara’s multicultural precinct to a Theravada Buddhist organisation.

Lands and Planning Minister, Delia Lawrie, today joined the Australian Ambassador of Thailand, His Excellency Mr Bandhit Sotipalalit, and 14 senior monks from Thailand, Australian and New Zealand for the official hand over of land at Batten Road to the Thai Theravada Association of the Northern Territory to build the Forest Monastery and Wat Pa Darwin.

“This is a very special day for the Northern Territory’s Thai community, and one the Martin Government is proud to deliver,” said Ms Lawrie.

“We offered Lot 5793 Batten Road to the Thai Theravada Association of the Northern Territory in November 2006 to construct a temple, community hall, cultural centre, monk’s residence and male and female retreat house.

“The Association has been very busy raising its own funds for this temple construction and so far has more than $100,000 set aside to start the development.

“It’s fantastic to see a community group use its own resources to build and maintain premises.”

President of the Thai Theravada Association of the Northern Territory, Somsong Albert, said members were delighted with the land grant.

“The Thai community with the support of the Laotian community are very excited and have been looking forward to today’s ceremony,” she said.

“We plan to commence the construction of the cultural centre as soon as possible. This is the first Thai Temple in Australia to be built on land received from a Government. We would like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation for the support of the Territory Government.”

The Martin Government has already spent in excess of $1 million to develop five serviced land blocks off Batten Road, including a new road, stormwater, water supply, sewerage, street lighting and power.

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