The 25th annual Brolga Tourism Awards had a true Territory feel about them, with MC Jonathan Uptin making a grand arrival on the back of a camel.

Tourism Minister Malarndirri McCarthy was among the 315 people who attended the awards, which were held at the Crowne Plaza Alice Springs earlier this month.

Guests were treated to a poolside drink before being welcomed through to the lawn by Drum Atweme, a drumming group made up of young people from town camps in Alice Springs.

Local singer Barry Skipsey opened the evening with his song The Heart, The Soul, The Centre, before guests joined him in singing his famous song You’ll Never Never Know, If You Never Never Go.

Local community choir Asanta Sana performed from the balconies while guests enjoyed dinner, before fireworks and a performance from Phil Ceberano and Russell Robertson concluded the evening.

The winners of the tourism industry’s highest accolade were announced at a glittering ceremony in Alice Springs earlier this month.

The 25th annual Brolga Tourism Awards celebrated the success of tourism businesses in the NT.

Tourism Minister, Malarndirri McCarthy congratulated all the winners and said the high standards they had attained were a credit to the industry.

“The winners of the Brolga Awards, which are now in their 25th year, are truly worthy of this year’s theme of Celebrating Tourism Excellence,” Ms McCarthy said.

“The challenge for the winners now is to maintain and enhance these high standards and I encourage other businesses to follow their lead. A great example of tourism excellence is the MacDonnell Range Holiday Park which has won the Tourist and Caravan Parks category for the 20th time in 25 years – this is an outstanding achievement.

“Seven Northern Territory businesses won the award for their category for the second successive year. Judging was so close in some categories that four businesses were highly commended in addition to the award winners.”

The Tourism Minister’s Perpetual Trophy, which recognises a long term personal and professional commitment and dedication, was awarded to Ian and Lyn Conway, owners of King’s Creek Station, which welcomes almost 300,000 visitors a year.

Five businesses entering the Brolgas for the first time won their category; Alice Springs Airport (Qantas Award for Excellence in Sustainable Tourism), Fish Darwin Fishing Tours (Adventure Tourism), Wildman Wilderness Lodge (New Tourism Development) and Rapid Ascent (Festival and Events) for the Ingkerreke Commercial Mountain Bike Enduro.

The Brolga Awards are open to tourism operators, industry suppliers and outstanding individuals and cover 26 business categories and three individual categories.

They reflect the broad range of tourism products offered throughout the NT and the outstanding individuals who promote and support the industry.

Business category winners of the 2011 Brolga Northern Territory Tourism Awards automatically become finalists in the 2011 Qantas Australian Tourism Awards.