It was great to see more than 100 people turn out for the Northern Australia Development summit in Alice Springs.

It was a great opportunity for people to come and have their say about what they think our priorities should be, what industries we should pursue and what infrastructure we need in order to make it all happen. This process is about encapsulating everyone’s vision for the Territory’s future.

Topics included everything from telecommunications to mining and roads. The Health Minister and I were pleased to be on the Alice Springs panel, along with the Mayor Damien Ryan, Chief Executive of the Canberra’s Association Tracey Hayes, Telstra’s Michael Ospiovopf and Matthew Doman from Santos.

New Central Australia Development Office

The Territory Government will establish a new Central Australia Development Office in Alice Springs as part of its campaign to bring investment to the North.

The announcement was made at the Sustainable Economic Growth for Regional Australia (SEGRA) Conference in Alice Springs recently.

Regional development is a priority for my Government and our new Central Australian Development Office will ensure Alice Springs is actively involved in our Darwin Northern Australia Development agenda.

The Alice Springs facility will house senior officers of the Northern Territory Government, provide office accommodation for visiting industry associations and provide a hub for investors interested in Central Australia and the rest of the Territory.

It’s a model that’s been hugely successful in our Darwin Northern Australia Development Office and I’m pleased to be extending it to Alice Springs. By developing the north we can realise our full economic potential and open up vast areas of the Territory to new business opportunities and create jobs for our children.

Phone Scam in Alice Springs

Police are warning NT residents to be wary of a telephone scam claiming people owe the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) money.

Police have received several reports from residents in Alice Springs who have received a phone call from a person claiming to work for the ATO.

They are then advised by the caller they owe money to the ATO and if they do not pay the money they will be issued a warrant for their arrest.

They are also advised to attend the Post Office and put money on a ‘Load and Go’ card to pay the money owed.

If you receive a call or email out of the blue from someone claiming to represent the ATO and that you are entitled to, or owes money, Police advise you to end the phone call or delete the email.

You can check whether the person is legitimate by calling the ATO on the official contact number on 13 28 69.

You can also report scams to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission via the SCAMwatch page or by calling 1300 795 995.

For more information about scams please visit: http://www.scamwatch.gov.au/content/index.phtml?itemid=1164149

SALT MINE NOW MAJOR PROJECT

The Northern Territory Government has awarded Major Project Status to Telus Holdings’ Chandler Salt Mine near Tjitka, 120km south of Alice Springs. The government’s support for this $464 million project which will create huge employment opportunities for Central Australians.

The company expects between 280 and 350 people would be employed during construction of the mine and 180 people after it is operating.

Once up and running, Chandler has the potential to be Australia’s longest-producing mine. Most of the rock salt from the Chandler mine will be taken by train to Darwin’s East Arm Port and then exported to both industrial and edible salt markets in Asia.

The remaining salt will be reserved for niche specialty salt businesses in Alice Springs and elsewhere in the domestic market.

Telus Holdings has signed an agreement with the Territory Government committing to maximising the local benefits of the project, including training, local employment, business and Indigenous development opportunities, which is great news for Central Australia.

In June 2014, the Telus Board decided to proceed to the next stage of the project after successful drilling, technical and commercial studies and strong interest from potential clients.

Telus is now in the final stages of preparing its Environmental Impact Statement and Definitive Feasibility Study and will shortly be lodging a Mineral Lease Application. A final investment decision will be made once Telus completes these studies and receives regulatory approvals.

15th Masters Games come to a spectacular close

After a week of fun, friendship and healthy competition, the 15th Alice Springs Masters Games finished on a rock and roll high with Forever Diamond, Chocolate Starfish and coverband The Cast performing at the Closing Ceremony at Anzac Oval.

Alice Springs was buzzing during the Masters week with more than 3800 competitors enjoying what has become affectionately known as the Friendly Games.

The atmosphere was incredible and it was fantastic to see such camaraderie and friendship on show, which is what the Games are all about.

It was also great to see all the regulars that come back Games after Games – some who have been coming since the very beginning back in 1986.

Once again, local businesses showed their support for the Games with special events and entertainment each night. The Games’ impact on our town is huge with more than $8 million injected into the local economy throughout the week.

The Games couldn’t occur without our fantastic 590 volunteers who worked so hard behind the scenes making our Games the Friendly Games once again.

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**Better compo for firefighters**

The Government recently announced that it would introduce legislation to simplify access to workers’ compensation for the Territory’s career firefighters. The Government has signed a 20-year lease for Supreme Court facilities in a brand new building on the old Commonwealth Bank site. I am thrilled to say we should see work underway before year’s end rejuvenating this important block of land in the heart of Alice Springs and pumping cash into the local economy.

The state of the art building will be constructed by local company, 19 Parsons Street Pty Ltd which is owned by local developer Michael Sitzler. This is the first time in Central Australia that a major public facility is to be built and owned by the private sector and leased to government, showing confidence in the Alice Springs business community.

The building will be a focus of the town’s new Justice Precinct, along with the new Greatorex Police Station which will be a focus of the town’s new Justice Precinct, along with the new Greatorex Police Station which will also soon be under construction.

Both buildings are among a pipeline of multi-million dollar construction projects now underway in Central Australia. The developers of the building anticipate they will procure approximately 70 per cent of all project goods and services from Alice Springs suppliers and subcontractors which is great news for local businesses.

The Supreme Court building will be mixed-use with the Court occupying the ground and first floors with commercial office space on levels two and three. The building features a spectacular glass façade, two oval shaped court rooms and associated legal office space, prisoner holding cells, interview, jury and meeting rooms, as well as a café.

It is estimated that up to 150 people, including 8 apprentices, will be employed during the construction program.

The new Supreme Court facility is expected to open in 2016.

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**LAW AND ORDER**

Latest statistics show that property crime and assaults continue to decline in Alice Springs now that Police Temporary Beat Locations and Alcohol Protection Orders are in full swing.

In the first 7 months of the year, assaults declined 26 per cent and alcohol related assaults dropped 28 per cent. Over the past year, property offenses have also dropped 19 per cent, house break-ins 31 per cent and motor vehicle theft 24 per cent.

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**Summer is not far away – get your Learn to Swim Vouchers**

**SPORT VOUCHE**

The Northern Territory Government’s Sport Voucher Scheme has been increased to $200 a year and expanded to include recreation and cultural organisations, ensuring all young Territorians have access to sport, recreation and cultural activities.

Every enrolled, school-aged child across the Territory will now receive $200 annually available as $100 vouchers in July and January. If you have not received your sports voucher, please contact www.sportvoucher.nt.gov.au

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**5000 Poppies**

A Melbourne based duo are on a mission to create a field of more than 50,000 handcrafted poppies in Federation Square in Melbourne on Anzac Day 2015 for the Anzac Centenary Commemoration.

The poppies will be a nationwide crafting community tribute to Australian servicemen and women and their families for their service and sacrifice in all wars, conflicts and peacekeeping operations over the last 100 years. The original target of 5000, set in June 2013 was, according to fibre artist Lynn Berry and Margaret Knight, “a challenging but achievable target”. If you have not received your sports voucher, please contact www.sportvoucher.nt.gov.au

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**Seniors Lunch**

This year’s seniors lunch, hosted by my colleagues Robyn Lambley, Matt Conlan and I was a highlight of Seniors Month.

We had a huge turn out this year, with about 160 attendees. ‘Back to the 50’s’ was the theme this year and there was some great dancing going on.

Next year’s theme is yet to be decided and we are always open to suggestions, so please let us know if you have some ideas.

I also had the pleasure of presenting Mary Meldrum with a Seniors of Excellence Award.