Employment, Education and Training Minister Syd Stirling today attended the inaugural meeting of the Desert People’s Centre (DPC) Association in Alice Springs.

Mr Stirling said the Centre offered a significant opportunity for Central Australian Indigenous people to enhance their livelihood and advance self-determination through education.

He paid tribute to the foresight of the founders of the Centre – the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE) and the Centre for Appropriate Technology (CAT) – which has been the subject of negotiations over the past four years.

"I want to acknowledge and congratulate everyone involved in conceiving this new and exciting venture," Mr Stirling said.

The Desert People’s Centre will be located in the new Desert Knowledge Precinct on the Stuart Highway just south of Alice Springs and opposite Yirara College.

"The DPC Association’s inaugural meeting comes on top of the announcement earlier this week that the Commonwealth Government will fund the Desert Knowledge Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) in Alice Springs to the tune of $20.6million," Mr Stirling said.

"Establishing the DPC Association and the announcement of funding for the CRC are great Christmas presents for the Central Australian Aboriginal and wider community.

"The Desert Knowledge Precinct is set to become an area of research and educational excellence, combining Indigenous culture and knowledge with modern learning tools such as the electronic classroom and telecommunications.

"The DPC has positioned itself well to take advantage of these developments in a cooperative environment."

Mr Stirling said Indigenous control would be critical to the success of the DPC, with the new Association required to have a majority of Indigenous members at all times.

Development of the DPC will involve capital investment of about $30 million which will be sourced from the Commonwealth through ANTA and the Northern Territory Government, with the possibility of private investment in the future.