The 2003 Finke Desert Race was officially launched by Minister for Central Australia Dr Peter Toyne today in Alice Springs.

Dr Toyne said the Finke Desert Race is a centrepiece of the event calendar in Alice Springs and recognised as one of the largest off-road races in the world.

"The Finke Desert Race is a very special event, one we are lucky to host here in the Centre.

"Along with providing a fantastic sporting event the race is expected to attract up to 12,000 spectators and participants giving a huge boost to the town’s retail and tourism sectors.

"The Finke race has been a booming success for many years, much due to the hard work and enterprise of the many volunteers that pull the event together.

"In recognition of the value of the Finke race to the Centre this Government has provided the race a permanent home and new infrastructure that will be ready for next year’s event.

"Having a permanent home will cement the future of the race and improve the associated infrastructure and organisation for future events," Dr Toyne said.