Chief Minister, Clare Martin, today announced changes to the NT Arts Scholarship Program.

"Following a review of the current scheme, which has remained unaltered since its introduction in 1994, a number of changes have been recommended," she said.

"Foremost is the decision to make the Arts Scholarships an annual contribution towards full-time study costs for the duration of the recipients’ first tertiary course.

"Each year, four young Territorians, including one Indigenous Territorian, will receive $3,500 towards the costs of their specialist arts related degrees or diplomas.

"By 2006, Government will be providing annual financial support to 12 students studying arts and cultural curricula at a tertiary level.

"Previously the Scholarships were only available for interstate study.

"Now, recognising that we have excellent tertiary arts training available within the Territory, but that Darwin is not local to all Territorians, the Arts Scholarships will now be available for courses both within and outside the Territory.

"So now, for example, a young violinist from Nhulunbuy may obtain a scholarship to study music at Charles Darwin University, keeping the skills and talent within the Territory.

"Arts and culture are a big part of our economy, directly through employment, marketing and sales, and indirectly in terms of visitor experience and support for the tourism industry.

"These industries are growing and a greater number of people are gaining jobs and deriving income from the arts in the Territory.

"Government is committed to supporting emerging artists and encouraging excellence in the arts.

"The provision of ongoing financial support to our young Territorians will encourage them to share their talents and achieve growth in the Northern Territory arts industry."

Applications for the Scholarships will close at the end of January 2004.

Guidelines, conditions and application forms for the Arts Scholarship Scheme are available at www.arts.nt.gov.au