School Councils, principals, local members, child care centres and other key stakeholders are being asked to comment on the Age of Entry trial currently underway in nine Territory primary schools.

Employment, Education and Training Minister Syd Stirling said a range of open forums were being held around the Territory from tonight to provide stakeholders with information about the trial to date and to seek their feedback.

Currently in Territory schools, the Age of Entry policy is one of continuous intake for children turning five by 30 June, with a minimum of three intakes up to Semester 2.

The Age of Entry trial option provides for one intake to both pre-school and transition at the start of the school year for all children turning four and five respectively by 30 June of that year.

The new policy is being trialled at nine Pre- and Primary schools in 2004. They are: Alawa; Gray; Wagaman; Karama; Nakara; Wanguri; MacFarlane (in Katherine); Borroloola Community Education Centre; and Saddadeen (Alice Springs).

“The open forums being held from tonight are the next stage in the consultation process about this important issue. It follows on from information sessions held in June for key stakeholders, including principals and schools councils, and the distribution of a discussion paper,” Mr Stirling said.

“This new Age of Entry approach is being trialled in response to concerns, particularly from parents and principals, that the existing policy of staggered intakes is disruptive to classes.

“The proposed policy of one intake at the start of the year would minimise disruption and ensure that every child receives two full years of pre-compulsory education before entering Year one.

“The aim is to help our young people achieve the best educational outcomes possible and better prepare them for formal schooling.”

The Open Forums are being held from 3 – 6 August as follows:

Darwin – 5-6pm August 3, 13th Floor Conference Room, Mitchell Centre

Alice Springs – 7-8pm August 3, Crowne Plaza Alice Springs

Katherine – 3.30-4.30pm August 4, DCIS Training Room

Palmerston – 5-6pm August 5, Palmerston City Council Chambers

(Nhulunbuy and Tennant Creek school principals have advised that,
following on from recent consultations, open forums were not necessary in their regions)