Fisheries Minister Chris Natt today congratulated Australian Government authorities for apprehending a 34m foreign fishing vessel for alleged illegal fishing in Top End waters.

“Illegal foreign fishermen pose a serious threat to our valuable and important fisheries,” Mr Natt said.

"That is why the Northern Territory Government strongly lobbied the previous Coalition Government to do more to protect our fisheries.

“I congratulate the Commanding Officer and crew of the HMAS Maryborough for their efforts in apprehending the Indonesian-flagged fishing boat in Top End waters last week.

“This apprehension is further proof the lobbying of the Northern Territory Government to get the previous Coalition Government to do more to protect our fisheries is paying off.

“I look forward to a more productive partnership with the new Australian Government, working together for the benefit of our fish stocks and fishing industries.”

Mr Natt said inspections by the Northern Territory Department of Primary Industry, Fisheries and Mines (DPIFM) found the illegal foreign fishing vessel to be free of aquatic pests.

“While there were no aquatic pests found on this vessel we can never become complacent,” Mr Natt said.

“The Northern Territory Government and the new Rudd Australian Government are serious about the fight against illegal fishing, because it puts pressure on our valuable fish stocks and may increase the risk of spreading pests or disease.

“We will let the investigation into this apprehension run its course before considering the possibility of turning this vessel into an artificial reef, which we have done in the past.”

Officers from the Australian Fisheries Management Authority (AFMA) are investigating the 34m vessel’s catch, fishing equipment and navigational aids.