The Northern Territory Government today presented Canberra with its final argument for the introduction of safari-style hunting of saltwater crocodiles.

Parks and Wildlife Minister Dr Chris Burns said the proposal, contained in the Draft Management Plan for Crocodylus porosus in the Northern Territory, had wide support across the Territory, as well as from international scientists and conservationists.

“Last month we had 250 of the world’s crocodile experts visiting Darwin for the World Conservation Union’s Crocodile Specialist Group meeting,” Dr Burns said.

“They are fully behind this initiative. As they say, if you put a price on a species, then people will protect it.”

The NT Government presented its draft report to Canberra in November last year. Federal Environment and Heritage Minister David Kemp raised a number of issues at that time which have been addressed in the final report.

Unrestricted hunting of crocodiles in northern Australia in the 1940s and 1950s seriously affected population numbers. In 1971, the saltwater crocodile was declared a protected species, and its numbers quickly recovered to prehunting levels.

There are an estimated 75,000 saltwater crocodiles in the Northern Territory. Each year, up to 600 “problem” crocodiles are culled; 200 alone being taken from Darwin Harbour.

The NT Government’s proposal is for 25 of these “problem” crocs to be dispatched humanely in controlled safari hunts.

“About 60 per cent of the Territory’s saltwater crocodile population exists on Aboriginal lands,” Dr Burns said.

“Aboriginal landowners have already invested in infrastructure to boost the revenue they can get from the sustainable use of crocodiles.

“Economic development in remote Aboriginal communities is a high social and economic priority of the Martin Labor Government.

“Here is a rare opportunity where the remoteness of the community becomes an economic asset rather than a liability.”