The Government will introduce amendments to the Bushfires Act in Parliament this week, to deter people lighting illegal fires around the Territory.

Under the changes, the current $1,000 penalty or six months jail will be increased to a maximum penalty of $25,000 or five years jail.

The Minister for Parks and Wildlife, Kon Vatskalis, said the harsh new laws would also see:

- the introduction of infringement notices;
- cost recovery measures for those who fail to protect their property; and
- authorisation for officers to enter property for fire investigation and prevention.

"These changes will bring the Territory into line with penalties imposed around the rest of Australia," Mr Vatskalis said.

"We have consulted widely on these amendments, with the Northern Territory Cattlemen’s Association, the Bushfires Council and the Northern and Central Land Councils all indicating their support for the move.

"The Territory has a harsh environment and climate, with wildfires sweeping across the land every year. Last year, just over 37 million hectares of the Northern Territory was burnt out.

"With the fire season well and truly upon us in the Top End, and fast approaching Central Australia, now is a good time to act."

A provision to recover costs incurred while controlling a prohibited bushfire, similar to that of the NT Fire and Rescue Service, will also be introduced.

The Minister said the new laws are not intended to limit people from using fire for land management practices, such as traditional indigenous.

The amendments to the Bushfires Act will be debated during the November parliamentary sittings.