A new Government Taskforce will be established to tackle the rate of sexual assault across the Territory.

Justice Minister Dr Peter Toyne announced the new Sexual Assault Taskforce today in response to concerns from Government over some recent spiked increases in sexual crimes.

“The primary focus of the new Sexual Assaults Taskforce will be to reduce the level of sexual crimes in the Territory through the development of a targeted Sexual Assault Prevention Plan.

The Sexual Assault Prevention Plan will also incorporate current initiatives underway across Government including:

- the Domestic Violence and Aboriginal Family Violence Strategies
- the Health Department’s Drug Facilitated Sexual Assault Project
- and Health’s Caring for Our Children Reform Agenda.

Dr Toyne said the Action Plan will identify current data, police and legal responses, services for survivors of sexual assault, remote area issues and coordination across various government agencies.

The Taskforce will be headed by the Office of Crime Prevention, and include Police, the Health Department and Chief Minister’s Office of Women’s Policy.

“The key focus of the action plan will be to reduce the rate of sexual assaults through education and preventative measures.”

“This plan will build on work already underway to improve court processes for vulnerable witnesses like sexual assault victims.

"The Government is looking at implementing a number of recommendations of the 1999 NT Law Reform Committee report on appropriate reform of the laws in relation to the investigation and prosecution of sexual assault in the Northern Territory.”

Some of these recommendations include:

- Specialist training for prosecutors and all legal and judicial officers working on sexual assault cases
- Providing screening in all court facilities for vulnerable witnesses
- Public education campaigns on the nature and effect of sexual
assault, and the need to identify and report cases of sexual assault.

The focus on addressing sexual assaults comes on the back of significant reforms to previously inadequate child sex assault penalties, making the Territory’s penalty regime among the toughest in Australia.