Legislation to be introduced into Parliament tomorrow will give Northern Territory police the powers they need to fight terrorism and terrorist threats.

Chief Minister Clare Martin said the legislation, which is based on laws passed in the New South Wales Parliament last year, would allow police to deal quickly and effectively with the extraordinary circumstances of a terrorist act or threat.

Under the *Terrorism (Emergency Powers) Bill 2003*, special police powers could only be exercised if:

- The Commissioner of Police reasonably suspected an imminent threat of a terrorist act and where the use of the powers would substantially assist in preventing that act; or
- When a terrorist act has occurred and police reasonably believe the special powers would help in the arrest of those responsible, or minimise the harm to the public.

Based on credible information, the Commissioner would enact the special powers in relation to a ‘target vehicle’, ‘target person’ or ‘target area’.

Police would then have the power to search, without a warrant, a vehicle, person or premises, they suspect on reasonable grounds is the ‘target’.

Officers could also use the premise for surveillance to protect people’s health or safety, and can detain people for decontamination for up to 48 hours if a terrorist incident had occurred.

The emergency police powers would also enable police to demand the disclosure and proof of identity and remove vehicles from an area.

Ms Martin said important safeguards would be put in place to make sure the special powers were used appropriately. They are:

- Police Commissioner must notify the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services of the intention to activate the powers.
- Police Commissioner must, as soon as practicable, provide both the Minister for Police, Fire and Emergency Services and the Attorney-General with a written report on the activation of the powers and the situations in which they were used.
- Authorisation to activate the powers can only be made for a limited period of time.
- The Police Minister has the power to revoke the special police powers at any time.

The proposed legislation is the result of an agreement to have a national standard on counter terrorism legislation, and follows the horrendous events in Bali last October, and the events of September 11 2001.

"I would prefer this legislation was not necessary, but sadly the state of the world means we cannot afford to be complacent in the Territory," Ms Martin said.

"The expanded powers in relation to searches of people and premises are governed by rules contained as a schedule to the Act, which are also included in the New South Wales legislation."
"These are extraordinary powers that would only be executed in the extraordinary circumstances of a terrorist threat or act.

"In the unlikely event of a terrorist incident in the Territory, our Police Force would, under the new legislation, have the power to act quickly on relatively short notice in response to, or to prevent, terrorist activity based on credible intelligence."

The *Terrorism (NT) Request Bill* will allow the Commonwealth to legislate for the national terrorism-related offences.

This proposed legislation would not work in isolation, but is complemented by ongoing counter-terrorism measures being carried out across the Territory.

These measures include:

- **Counter Terrorism Security Co-ordination Unit** carries out extensive liaison and consultation with Government and non-government agencies about the protection of critical infrastructure, and assists with the development of security/protection plans and arrangements for non-critical government and community organisations and facilities.

- **NT Critical Infrastructure Working Group** will assist in the development of contingency plans for these premises in the event of a terrorist attack.

- **Joint Terrorist Task Force**, with members from Australian Federal Police and NT Police, based in Darwin.

- Reviews, including the legislative framework concerning the storage, sale and transportation of hazardous/explosive materials, to minimise the risk of these items being used for terrorist purposes.

- Participation in **National Counter Terrorism exercises** co-ordinated by the National Counter Terrorism Committee

"Counter terrorism legislation is new to the Territory, and Australia - it will be the subject of rigorous review and scenario testing, including anti-terrorism exercises," Ms Martin said.

"This ongoing process of refinement aims to provide the best possible tools against the threat of terrorism."