The Northern Territory’s commercial barramundi industry will come under the spotlight as part of a two-year pilot project to ensure the future sustainability of the industry.

The project will see the development and evaluation of six Environmental Management Systems (EMS) for commercial fisheries around Australia.

Fisheries Minister, Kon Vatskalis, said a critical component of the project is ensuring best practice by commercial barramundi operators.

“This 2-year project is considered vital to the future sustainability of our commercial barramundi industry and it is the first EMS to be developed for a Northern Territory wild catch fishery,” said Mr Vatskalis.

“We want to ensure fishermen continue to do the right thing by the environment and our protected species, including crocodiles and dugong.”

The Environmental Management System (EMS) for the Northern Territory barramundi fishery is being co-coordinated by Seafood Services Australia, and funded through Natural Heritage Trust, the Northern Territory Government and Fishing Industry Research and Development Corporation.

Mr Vatskalis today met with the Managing Director of Seafood Services Australia, Mr Ted Loveday, and Project Manager, Emma Thomson, to discuss the project.

“The pilot project has been underway since the end of last year, with the Northern Territory Government and Fishing Industry Research and Development Corporation jointly funding a position to assist in the work.”

Mr Vatskalis said the Environmental Management System (EMS) for the barramundi fishery will include –

- Code of Conduct for operators
- Code of Practice governing the way in which fishing gear is used
- Formal ecological evaluation of the fishery
- 5-year strategic vision for the commercial industry
- Occupational health and safety guidelines for the industry
- Guidelines in instances of fishery interaction with protected species such as dugongs and crocodiles

“These are very important outcomes for the commercial barramundi industry, all of which will be developed through direct input from fishermen themselves,” he said.

Mr Vatskalis said he welcomed the initiatives of industry members in developing an EMS.
The Environmental Management System for the commercial barramundi fishery is due by the end of 2005. A draft code of practice and conduct will be ready for consideration by industry in October 2004.