People caught lighting illegal fires around the Territory will suffer severe consequences, under new legislation passed in Parliament today.

Parks and Wildlife Minister, Kon Vatskalis, said he believed the new penalties would make irresponsible people think twice before setting fire to the Territory’s bushland.

"We make no apologies for using the full force of the law to punish those found responsible for illegal and devastating fires," he said.

"Last year, just over 37 million hectares of the Territory was burnt out, adversely affecting our pastoralists and traditional owners, and severely impacting on biodiversity conservation values.

"These changes are supported by those who bare the brunt of the massive wildfires that sweep across the Territory every year, including the Northern Territory Cattlemen’s Association, the Bushfires Council and the Northern and Central Land Councils."

Mr Vatskalis said the new laws included:

- increased penalties from $1,000 / 6-months jail to a maximum penalty of $25,000 /5-years jail for serious offences including:
  - setting fire to bush
  - burning without a permit
  - leaving a fire before it is extinguished
  - lighting a fire during a declared fire ban
  - setting fire to another person’s property
  - introduction of infringement notices;

- recovery of wildfire suppression costs where the fire is the result of an offence against the Act; and

- Authorisation for officers to enter property for fire investigation and prevention inspections.

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