Fisheries Minister, Kon Vatskalis, has reaffirmed that Government will be examining all options available to clarify the boundaries for the commercial barramundi fishing industry, and that interim working arrangements will be established.

“Following the judgement of the Appeals Court in the conviction of Simlesa and others in relation to illegal fishing in Perakary Creek, there is now uncertainty as to the location of the closure lines,” said Mr Vatskalis.

“Government has received legal advice that raises uncertainties in relation to the Court’s finding that the landward boundary of the fishery is the mean low water mark, and it has therefore commenced a review of available options to better define the area of the fishery.

“Until now, all stakeholders have understood and operated on the basis that the intertidal zone is included in the fishery area.

“I have written to the Northern Territory Seafood Council explaining the Government’s intention to review the options available for clarification and it is my understanding that the Council will liaise with the Police Marine and Fisheries Enforcement Unit to establish interim working arrangements – within the framework of the letter to Seafood Council – for enforcement of the intertidal zone, rivers and river mouths.

“At the same time, I have made it very clear that Government has no intention of opening up areas that have previously been closed to the fishery. Further, any operator found setting nets in areas always regarded as closed to the commercial barramundi industry prior to the decision of the Appeals Court, will be liable for prosecution to the fullest extent of the law.”