Northern Territory police will be given the power to seize petrol and other volatile substances with the introduction of landmark Legislation into Parliament today.

The Volatile and Substance Abuse Prevention Bill will also empower and support communities in their fight against petrol sniffing and other volatile substance abuse.

Family and Community Services Minister Marion Scrymgour will today introduce the Bill to Parliament. She will then fly out to Melbourne to brief Federal and State Ministers for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs on this unique and important legislation.

“Substance abuse in the Northern Territory is the biggest barrier to achieving outcomes in health, education and community safety,” Ms Scrymgour said.

“The clear intent of this Bill is that intervention is to take place where volatile substance abuse is occurring.

“It will give police the powers to seize petrol, and take intoxicated people into protective custody.

“It also allows for courts to issue compulsory treatment orders, and empowers communities to develop enforceable plans about the possession, supply and use of volatile substances in their local area.”

The Parliamentary Committee into Substance Abuse last month tabled its final report which provided recommendations on programs and services. The NT Government has allocated an extra $10 million over five years to ensure that its recommendations can be implemented as quickly as possible.

“I have visited many communities and organisations to discuss the curse of petrol sniffing and the unacceptable level of harm being suffered by young people who abuse volatile solvents,” Ms Scrymgour said.

“I have seen first hand the trauma and devastation caused, and I genuinely believe this legislation along with the programs and services to support it will finally help us tackle petrol sniffing in remote communities.”

Ms Scrymgour said the Bill is consistent with the recommendations of the Select Committee – but does not criminalise volatile substance abuse.

“Criminalising petrol sniffing would be a retrograde step. It will not address the scourge of petrol sniffing because put simply – jail is not the answer.

Ms Scrymgour said there were also other initiatives outside the Bill that would help reduce substance abuse, such as increasing the availability of fuel that does not have the same intoxicating effects as standard fuel.
“This fuel is available and we will be working to increase its availability while decreasing the availability of intoxicating fuels in areas where volatile substance abuse occurs.

“I will be attending a Ministerial Council for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs in Melbourne tomorrow.

“I will be giving a presentation to all Federal and State Ministers on our legislation, and our proposed rollout of these alternative fuels.”