More than 26,000 hectares of mangroves in Darwin Harbour will be protected, following changes to the NT Planning Scheme.

The Minister for Lands and Planning, Kon Vatskalis, today announced the rezoning of mangroves in Darwin Harbour between Gunn and Charles Points to Conservation Zone status, delivering on a key election commitment.

"The mangroves are the lungs of our Harbour, and we need to act now to ensure their future health," Mr Vatskalis said.

"This Government made an election commitment to protect mangroves around the Harbour, and I'm very pleased to say we're standing by our promise."

Mr Vatskalis said plans to rezone the mangroves were publicly exhibited from 31 January to 14 March this year, with a total of 15 submissions received.

Following the appointment of a panel comprising the Darwin, Litchfield and Palmerston Divisions of the Development Consent Authority, a public hearing was also held on 23 May.

"Looking at all the issues involved, I believe this is a big step in the right direction for the future health of the Harbour," Mr Vatskalis said.

"The changes will see a total area of 46,516 hectares in Darwin Harbour rezoned to Conservation Zone status, which takes in 26,200 hectares of mangroves between the Highest Astronomical Tide at 4 metres and the mean low water mark.

"The rezoned area contains 36 of the world’s 50 mangrove species, and is home to a diverse range of animals, including birds, fish, and turtles."

Mr Vatskalis said the rezoning will take place through an amendment to the NT Planning Scheme, with land use and development within the new zone strictly limited, with most commercial activity, including aquaculture, prohibited.

"Any future clearing within the Conservation Zone will now require planning consent, with any proposals to go through a strict public process."

For more information visit www.lpe.nt.gov.au/advis/LAND/mangrove/default.htm