The Martin Government will introduce new child sex offender legislation that will underpin a national sex offender register, into the Northern Territory Parliament in the first half of 2004, Police Minister Paul Henderson told the Australasia Police Ministers’ Council (APMC) in Melbourne today.

"The States and Territories agreed at the APMC in July this year to expedite the formation of a national child sex offender register, and this legislation will work in support of that national database," Mr Henderson said.

"Our children must be protected from these abhorrent crimes, and I am pleased the drafting of this legislation is moving so rapidly.

"With a national register, and with the States and Territories introducing child sex legislation, our children will be safer from would-be predators across the country."

The NT child sex legislation will be based on the legislation currently in place in New South Wales.

The Territory’s support of a national sex offender database comes on the back of reform of child sex penalties in the Territory that will in some cases, see jail terms for sexual abuse of children doubled.

The amendments for sex offences against children are expected to be passed in the November Parliament and in place early next year.

Mr Henderson has also this morning resisted moves for a nationwide ban on crossbows, but said the NT will join with the rest of Australia in banning the interstate trafficking of the weapons.

Pistol-style and concealable crossbows are already illegal in the NT, and others are legal if used for legitimate purposes such as feral pig hunting and archery.

"With the tight restrictions already in place, the NT Government does not see a need for blanket bans on crossbows.

"I do however acknowledge the concerns of my interstate colleagues, and I have today confirmed the NT will move to ban the sale of crossbows to people under 18, and their interstate sale and trafficking.

Mr Henderson said the proposed amendments to the Weapons Control Act would now be developed for consideration by Cabinet.