New emergency laws will go before Territory Parliament this week aimed at ensuring authorities can more effectively respond to disasters.

“The new Emergency Management Act gives authorities the powers they need to protect Territorians in disasters and help a community recover once an emergency has passed,” Chief Minister Adam Giles said.

“The new laws bring the Territory into line with the rest of the country and follow the lessons learnt from emergencies in other jurisdictions such as the Queensland Floods and the New Zealand Earthquake.

“The old Disasters Act focussed too heavily on response and did not give authorities the flexibility or time they needed to help communities recover.

“One of the main changes is formalising the ‘Emergency Situation Declaration’ which can be used for lower-scale events such as predicted or localised flooding, as well as low-grade tropical cyclones.

“It will give authorities the power to evacuate an area, ban people from entering an area or remove property from an area that is affected by an emergency.”

Member for Daly Gary Higgins has experienced flooding events in his electorate many times and says the new ‘Emergency Situation Declaration’ will help locals as well as the authorities when water rise along the Daly.

“There have been numerous occasions in the past where fishermen have accessed the Daly River community while the river has been flooded. The river is extremely dangerous when it’s in flood and monitoring sightseers diverts resources away from assisting the community. This legislation now formally gives Police and Emergency Services the power to prevent sightseers accessing the flood zone,” Mr Higgins said.

Other changes include:

- The duration of a State of Emergency declaration has been extended from two to three days with the option of further extensions. This is an important recognition that some emergencies such as floods may take many days to pass.
- Allowing an Emergency Declaration to stay in place while recovery operations are conducted to ensure the affected area gets priority access to government resources
- The establishment of a new Territory Recovery Coordinator who is responsible for coordinating the resources needed to recover after an event.

“The new Act should give Territorians confidence that when an emergency strikes authorities have the powers they need to help impacted communities,” Mr Giles said.