

STATEMENT OF INTENT 2020 – 2022

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1 Introduction

This Statement of Intent has been developed by the NT EPA in accordance with the legislative requirements under Part 2A of the *Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority Act 2012* (the NT EPA Act):

Section 24A Statement of intent

- (1) At least once every 2 years, the NT EPA must provide the Minister with a statement of intent for the next 2 years.
- (2) The statement must specify the following:
 - (a) the NT EPA's priorities for the period covered by the statement;
 - (b) how the NT EPA's priorities relate to the objectives of the NT EPA;
 - (c) the nature and scope of the activities it intends to carry out to meet the NT EPA's priorities during the period covered by the statement;
 - (d) the manner in which the NT EPA's priorities contribute to the Territory's objectives in relation to environmental management and economic development.
- (3) The statement may include any other matters the NT EPA considers appropriate.

1.1 Northern Territory Government objectives

In developing this Statement of Intent, the NT EPA has considered and taken into account government policies and objectives relating to environmental management and economic development including the Economic Development Framework, environmental reform program principles and related ministerial statements.

The NT EPA's priorities and strategies continue to contribute to the Territory's objectives of improving and streamlining environmental management through reforms to the environmental impact assessment and approvals process, by providing more investor certainty, clarity and transparency in process and decision-making, providing expert advice on the ecologically sustainable development of the Northern Territory and building confidence for both industry and the community.

2 Purpose and objectives of the NT EPA

The purpose of the NT EPA is to ensure the environment is protected for the benefit of current and future generations.

The NT EPA's purpose is consistent with provisions of the establishing legislation: the NT EPA Act; and enabling legislation such as the *Environmental Assessment Act 1982* (soon to be replaced by the new *Environment Protection Act 2019*) and the *Waste Management and Pollution Control Act 1998* which is where the NTEPA receives most of its powers, functions and responsibilities.

The objectives enshrined in the NT EPA Act are to:

- promote ecologically sustainable development
- protect the environment, having regard to the need to enable ecologically sustainable development
- promote effective waste management and waste minimisation strategies

- enhance community and business confidence in the environmental protection regime of the Territory.

3 Priorities and activities 2020 – 2022

The NT EPA's priorities and associated activities for the period 2020 – 2022 are outlined in this section under key areas of responsibility. The priorities and activities are intrinsically linked with, and relate to, the legislated objectives of the NT EPA and its purpose.

3.1 Environmental impact assessment

The NT EPA is responsible for implementing the environmental impact assessment process in the Northern Territory, in particular undertaking assessments of the environmental impacts of development proposals to inform approval decisions.

3.1.1 Priority 1 – Deliver regulatory responsibilities for environmental impact processes

To meet this priority the NT EPA will:

- implement Government's legislative reforms to environmental impact assessment processes, including ensuring that impacts of a changing climate are considered in the assessment process
- improve engagement with stakeholders and the community during environmental impact assessment processes, ensuring that assessment outcomes are communicated appropriately.

3.1.2 Priority 2 – Improve mine planning, rehabilitation and closure

To meet this priority the NT EPA will:

- seek to improve rehabilitation and closure outcomes in the Territory through early integration of mine closure planning and environmental impact assessment
- contribute to legislative reform processes to ensure that improved mine rehabilitation and closure requirements are addressed as part of environmental regulatory reform.

3.1.3 Priority 3 – Improve integration between land use planning and environmental protection

To meet this priority the NT EPA will:

- engage and influence early consideration of environmental outcomes in land use planning and development
- influence the siting, design and environmental management of proposed development in the Territory.

3.2 Onshore petroleum activities

The NT EPA advises the Minister for Environment and Natural Resources about the appropriateness of proposed environment management plans (EMPs) for managing petroleum activities under the *Petroleum (Environment) Regulations 2016*.

3.2.1 Priority 4 – Provide advice and recommendations on EMPs for managing petroleum activities

To meet this priority the NT EPA will:

- continue to provide independent advice and recommendations to the Minister for Environment and Natural Resources on all onshore petroleum EMPs received

under the *Petroleum (Environment) Regulations 2016* to inform and assist the Minister's (approval) decision-making

- provide strategic and expert advice on guidance material prepared to support the development and assessment of EMPs to ensure legislative requirements are met
- provide advice on appropriate baseline data for future environmental assessment of petroleum activities at production and regional scales.

3.3 Waste and pollution

The NT EPA is responsible for issuing environment protection licences and approvals, and undertaking compliance and enforcement under the *Waste Management and Pollution Control Act 1998* and the *Environment Protection (Beverage Containers and Plastic Bags) Act 2011*.

3.3.1 Priority 5 – Deliver waste and pollution regulatory responsibilities

To meet this priority the NT EPA will:

- continue to deliver its regulatory responsibilities under the *Waste Management and Pollution Control Act 1998* and the *Environment Protection (Beverage Containers and Plastic Bags) Act 2011* to ensure the effective and appropriate management of waste and pollution across the Northern Territory
- support improvements to the management of waste and pollution through provision of up to date and contemporary advice to industry, government and the community based on best available evidence

3.3.2 Priority 6 – Improve the regulatory framework for waste and pollution

To meet this priority the NT EPA will:

- contribute to government policy by providing advice to improve the regulatory framework for managing hazardous waste and end of life product management
- influence Government and national policy to address the environmental impacts associated with per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) and other emerging chemicals of concern
- provide strategic and expert advice to contribute to environmental regulatory reforms for improved waste and pollution management.

3.4 Guidance and support

The NT EPA has a role in enhancing community and business confidence in the environmental protection regime of the Territory. This role includes building understanding around regulatory processes, and clarifying responsibilities, expectations and opportunities for proponents and the community through the development of guidance material.

3.4.1 Priority 7 – Develop guidance material to support proponents and the community

To meet this priority the NT EPA will:

- develop guidance material to support the consistent and transparent environmental impact assessment of proposals under the *Environment Protection Act 2019*
- develop guidance for proponents identifying the NT EPA's expectations for mine closure and rehabilitation information during the environmental impact assessment process
- influence the development of contemporary guidance for social impact assessments

- continue to prepare guidance material to support improvements in the management of waste and pollution.

4 Strategies

The NT EPA will continue to use a range of strategies outlined below to achieve the priorities and activities highlighted in this Statement.

1. In providing sound independent and transparent advice to Government, the NT EPA will:
 - ensure its advice on environmental impact assessment and other matters is based on a contemporary understanding of the environment and measures to protect it
 - seek expert technical and scientific advice as appropriate including through peer review
 - properly consider risk and uncertainty when making judgements about environmental protection
 - ensure our advice to Government and our statutory decisions are clear, robust and published
2. In informing, engaging and communicating with stakeholders, the NT EPA will:
 - apply our community consultation guidelines and stakeholder engagement strategy
 - engage early with proponents in the assessment of their development proposals
 - invite community, government and industry stakeholders to present and discuss environmental matters and other issues with the NT EPA
 - inform and communicate with stakeholders on the business of the NT EPA and listen to their concerns and ideas
3. In being an effective, trusted and influential regulator, the NT EPA will:
 - ensure our decisions and actions are underpinned by sound science and evidence
 - ensure our regulatory responses are proportional, consistent and timely
 - be transparent and accountable for our decisions by publishing our reasons for making statutory decisions
 - build a regulatory framework and culture that reflects contemporary thinking
 - follow through on decisions by doing what we say we will do
4. In building a contemporary regulatory framework, the NT EPA will:
 - work with others to ensure early consideration environmental matters in decision-making
 - implement administrative and policy reforms to the environmental impact assessment process
 - develop environmental guidance to support the NT EPA's statutory functions

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- advise the Northern Territory Government on its environmental regulatory reform agenda
- implement legislated reforms to environmental regulation.



Dr Paul Vogel AM MAICD
Chairperson

16 March 2020