



Department of
LANDS, PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENT

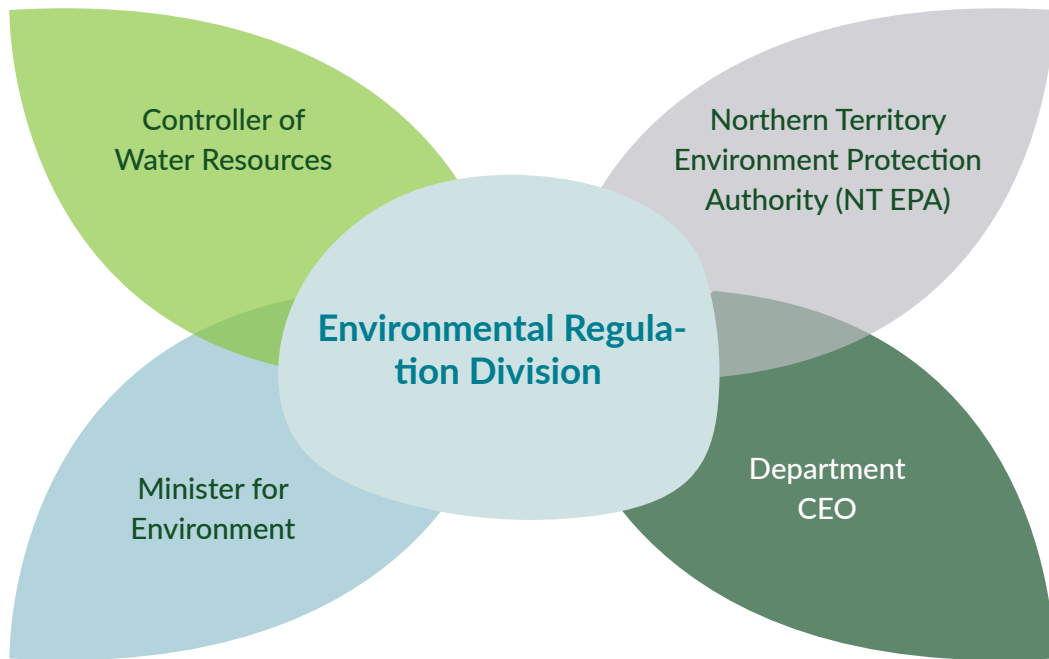
COMPLIANCE REPORT CARD 2024-25

Environmental Regulation Division

Our commitment

Who are we?

The Environmental Regulation Division within the Department of Lands, Planning and Environment (DLPE) supports four statutory decision-makers under a wide range of environmental laws to protect the Territory's environment.



Our purpose

Within this context, our purpose is to strike the right balance between enabling development and protecting the environment.



Our regulatory principles (PACTT)



Proportionate

Our actions consider the risk of harm and attitude to compliance.



Accountable

We explain, justify, and document our regulatory actions and decisions.



Consistent

Our processes are consistent and lead us to the right outcomes.



Targeted

We allocate effort and resources to the areas with the potential for most harm.



Transparent

We share information about our actions and decisions.

We apply our proportionate, accountable, consistent, targeted and transparent (PACTT)¹ regulatory principles to everything that we do, including advice, licensing, monitoring, compliance and enforcement.

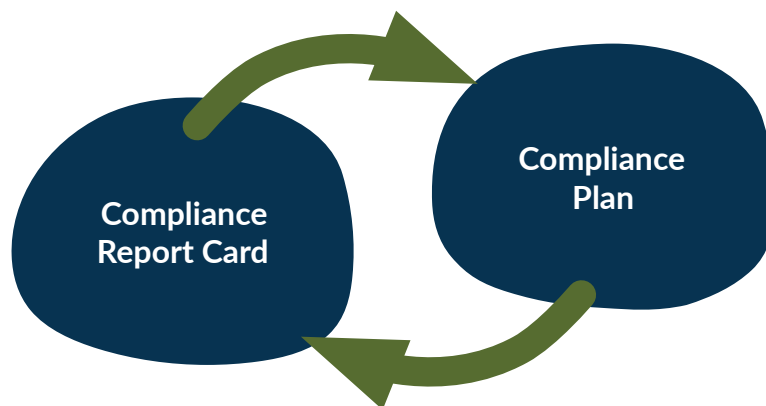
Our compliance planning and reporting

Our commitment to applying our PACTT principles, includes publishing our compliance priorities in annual compliance plans and our performance against them in compliance report cards.

In 2024, the division published its second Compliance Plan. It targeted our regulatory effort and resources to areas with the potential for most harm and transparently communicated our compliance priorities.

This report details how we delivered on the commitments in our Compliance Plan.² It describes what we did, what we found, and where we're going to continue focusing in the year ahead. You can read about our compliance focus for the upcoming year in our 2025–26 Compliance Plan.

Transparency builds trust between the broader community, regulated entities, and the regulator.



¹ Pink, G., Navigating Regulatory Language: An A to Z Guide, (2021)

² This report also forms part of the CEO report for the purposes of section 290 of the Environment Protection Act 2019.

Snapshot of Compliance

Environmental Regulation



Onshore petroleum

OUR COMMITMENT

OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIONS

Monitor compliance with groundwater monitoring requirements in approved Environment Management Plans (EMP).

Conduct at least one inspection of each petroleum company that is authorised to undertake drilling and hydraulic fracturing activity.

Undertake an inspection of all facilities licensed to store waste from drilling and hydraulic fracturing activities.

Undertake an audit of industry compliance with implementing controls to ensure approved drilling and hydraulic fracturing chemicals are stored appropriately with appropriate secondary containment to prevent loss of containment where required.

Undertake an audit of industry compliance with implementing controls to ensure drilling wastes and wastewater have appropriate liners and freeboard to prevent loss of containment.

Groundwater monitoring compliance

Groundwater is a key environmental receptor in onshore petroleum exploration and development. Groundwater monitoring data is evaluated to differentiate natural and human-induced changes underlying the well pad area.

We built an in-house software tool to assess groundwater quality compliance statistically. We used publicly available [groundwater datasets](#) from four major petroleum interest holders. This process will enable more efficient, evidence-based decisions concerning groundwater data.

Inspection and audits of operators

We conducted inspections of each petroleum company that undertook drilling or hydraulic fracturing in the financial year, and of all facilities authorised to store waste from drilling and hydraulic fracturing activities.

Our focus was to check compliance with approved chemical storage practices, and whether controls were in place to ensure drilling wastes and wastewater systems had proper liners and sufficient freeboard to prevent loss of containment.

As part of this, we did a detailed audit into one interest holder's compliance with relevant controls.

In most cases, chemicals were stored appropriately in bunded, and lined areas. Inspectors identified some instances of torn bunding, damaged storage areas, poorly stacked tanks, improperly stored intermediate bulk containers, and some dry chemicals without secondary containment. None of these cases had resulted in spills beyond the bunding.

Outcome letters were issued regarding these minor non-compliances and areas for improvement requesting both short-term repairs and, where applicable, long-term strategies to avoid similar issues in the future. The implementation of controls to address the identified issues were verified during follow up inspections.

No issues were identified with freeboard levels; however, one tank was found to have a minor leak. The leaking tank was subsequently removed and the leak area was cleaned up and remediated.

Onshore petroleum

OUR COMMITMENT OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIONS

Undertake an audit of industry compliance with approved clearing activities.

Audit of land clearing

We audited all land clearing activities undertaken by interest holders in the 2024-25 financial year, and in the Beetaloo Sub-basin since 2019.

Both audits confirmed that land clearing completed was carried out in accordance with the approved total clearing amounts.

No additional clearing outside of approved areas was identified during the audit. Previous clearing outside of approved areas can be read about in our [regulatory statement](#).

The Beetaloo Sub-basin audit found that between 2019 and 2025, approximately 1,608 hectares of land clearing was approved in the region.

As of May 2025, approximately 436 hectares of this approved clearing was completed (Figure 2). The spatial extent of land clearing will be published on [NR Maps](#) in the future.

The Beetaloo Sub-basin audit found that 67% of spatial data submissions were not provided on time.

We followed up on outstanding submissions and reminded interest holders of their reporting obligations. All data has now been received.

We note an improvement by interest holders in this area with all interest holders complying with spatial data submission timeframes in 2024-25.

A regulatory statement with detailed information on these land clearing audits will be published on the Department's website in the first quarter of 2025-26.

Petroleum Infrastructure	Approved	Actual
Seismic lines	706	269
Well pads	388	91
Access tracks	172	45
Gravel pits	130	15
Processing infrastructure	80	0
Camps	24	4
Laydown/stockpiles	15	7
Water bores	14	3
Helipads	5	2

Onshore petroleum

OUR COMMITMENT

Undertake an audit of industry compliance with rehabilitation commitments in EMPs.

OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIONS

Rehabilitation

To confirm that rehabilitation activities are achieving EMP environmental outcomes we reviewed Rehabilitation Management Plans, and [Annual Environment Performance Reports](#).

Statements made within the reports were verified against drone imagery collected during site inspections.

This imagery was an essential tool to validate whether rehabilitation was progressing. This allows us to compare rehabilitation changes over time.

The desktop assessment found that most interest holders had rehabilitation plans in place and were compliant with regulatory requirements.

In many cases, rehabilitation activities had not yet started due to ongoing operations.

Some interest holders submitted plans and reports late or failed to include all required records, such as incomplete photographic monitoring records. Additionally, the quality of monitoring and reporting varied.

Some reports provided clear evidence of active and ongoing rehabilitation, while others lacked detail on key aspects such as erosion control and weed management.

To address reporting short-falls and support compliance, we:

- provided feedback to interest holders to improve monitoring practices, reporting accuracy, and the timely submission of key documents; and
- requested additional prescribed records, clarifications, and corrective actions to close out outstanding commitments.

This review of progressive rehabilitation has provided us with baseline information to support future guidance material, inspections, audits, and compliance activities.

Another goal we achieved was to update our [EMP Public Register](#) to clearly distinguish the EMPs which have been closed, with rehabilitation commitments met and the regulated activity is no longer being carried out. This update has been implemented.

Significant projects assessed by the NT EPA

OUR COMMITMENT

Conduct compliance audits and inspections of all projects with an environmental approval within 6 months of works commencing.

OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIONS

Audits and inspections

We conducted compliance audits and inspected the projects that hold environmental approvals under the Environment Protection Act 2019 with a focus on dredging activities at: HMAS Coonawarra, Mandorah Marine Facility, Darwin Ship Lift and Santos Darwin Pipeline Duplication.

Minor non-compliances relating to the frequency and timing of operator inspections were found at one facility.

One audit identified a non-compliance relating to buffer distance measurements and turbidity sensor calibration. The non-compliances did not cause environmental harm.

Inspection outcome letters were provided to approval holders to identify non-compliances and specify requirements to bring the projects into compliance.

To rectify non-compliances the regulator provided clarification of requirements and requested increased reporting and submission of missing calibration records.



Discharges into Darwin Harbour

OUR COMMITMENT

Conduct compliance audits and inspections of all licensed sites directly discharging into Darwin Harbour.

OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIONS

Audits and inspections of licensed discharge sites

Sewage treatment facilities

We inspected and audited the licensed sewage treatment facilities at Leanyer-Sanderson, Ludmilla, Berrimah and Palmerston.

Minor non-compliances were identified at all sites.

These non-compliances included the presence of pollutants such as wipes and floating plastics, and an algal bloom in treatment ponds.

The inspections also identified some minor infrastructure maintenance matters, such as degraded weed matting and low pond walls, which can lead to uncontrolled discharges (overtopping) in high rainfall events.

The non-compliances were of an operational nature and did not result in environmental harm.

After the inspections, the regulator provided inspection outcome letters as formal notification of non-compliances and requested evidence, including photos, that non-compliances had been remedied

One outcome of the inspections was the operator updated maintenance schedules to include routine skimming and biosolids removal to decrease the risk of waste escaping to the environment.

Dredging projects and LNG

Compliance activities for dredging projects and LNG facilities are described under Significant Projects and Hydrocarbon facilities.

Discharges into Darwin Harbour

OUR COMMITMENT

Conduct compliance audits and inspections of all licenced sites directly discharging into Darwin Harbour.

OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIONS

Audits and inspections of licensed discharge sites

Aquaculture facilities

We undertook audits and inspections of licensed aquaculture facilities in the Darwin Harbour catchment, focusing on conditions related to discharges, stormwater and wastewater management.

Audits included the review of monitoring reports provided by licensees.

The audits and inspections identified some unauthorised wet season discharges, as well as minor non-compliances including missing signage.

Following the audits and inspections, we sent inspection outcome letters identifying non-compliances and requesting rectification of the issues.

Licensee responses included commitments to continual treatment system improvements, diversion of waters, where possible, and installation of appropriately constructed signage.

Mining wastewater discharges

There are two mine sites that are licensed to discharge wastewater in the Darwin Harbour catchment.

We audited these with a focus on discharges, water quality and monitoring conditions.

This included site inspections and reviewing documents such as annual monitoring reports, incident notifications and operational management plans.

The assessment found several non-compliances with reporting and record keeping conditions and identified failures to submit plans required by the licence.

We also found non-compliances with monitoring program requirements and water quality standards.

We provided detailed feedback to the licensee and requested rectification of the issues.

We also issued three warning letters regarding the failures to comply with WDL conditions.

Additionally, we increased the frequency of engagement to educate and better support compliance with a complex set of regulatory requirements.

The licensee has since undertaken a range of corrective actions to rectify the non-compliances and improve compliance.

Hydrocarbon facilities

OUR COMMITMENT

Conduct a compliance audit and inspection of all hydrocarbon facilities.

OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIONS

Audits and inspections

We inspected and audited hydrocarbon facilities, namely: Eni Australia (Blacktip), Ichthys LNG (INPEX), Santos DLNG, and Crowley Australia (Project Caymus) with a focus on air emissions.

The level of compliance varied between different facilities. One operator was fully compliant.

Non-compliances included exceedance of water quality trigger values, failures to provide an incident notification within 24 hours, incomplete environmental monitoring and failure to use a licensed waste transporter to transport listed waste.

Minor issues were addressed by the operators through performance and process improvements.

Where non-compliances were of a higher risk, or occurred repeatedly, we issued penalty infringement notices (PINs) and warning letters to the licensee.

To improve licence compliance and strengthen communication with licensees, we implemented monthly meetings, conducted issue-specific feedback sessions and provided educational materials.



Hydrocarbon facilities

OUR COMMITMENT

OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIONS

Conduct an audit of emissions reported by licensees to National Pollutant Inventory.

Audit of reported emissions

Some licensees are required to report air emissions to both the NT EPA in an Annual Emissions Monitoring Report (AEMR), and to the Commonwealth via the National Pollutant Inventory (NPI).

We reviewed and compared air pollution data submitted by three hydrocarbon processing facilities under both regimes to identify potential discrepancies in reporting. The audit found that emissions data generally aligned between the AEMR and the NPI.

We are working closely with hydrocarbon facilities to encourage greater accuracy and transparency in future reporting by resolving differences in reporting requirements between the AEMR and NPI where possible.

In addition, some facilities will review and refine their methods for calculating NPI emissions or adopt more consistent approaches for reporting emissions across both the AEMR and NPI.

Continue ambient air quality monitoring at three stations in the Darwin area.

Air quality monitoring

The NT EPA maintained three air quality monitoring stations (AQMS) in the Darwin airshed.

Air quality data were available in real time on the NT EPA website throughout the reporting period.

Periods when data are not available can occur during instrument faults, or periods of calibration, repair and maintenance.

In collaboration with the AQMS contractor, we have worked to understand the causes of data recovery rates and identify improvement actions to move towards maintaining data recovery above the target 90%.

Explore what changes can be made to provide the community with additional confidence in the regulation of air emissions and the health of the Darwin airshed

Explore changes to air quality monitoring

In response to community concerns, we explored alternative governance models for the Darwin region ambient air quality monitoring program.

The NT EPA supports the creation of an industry-funded model tailored to the Darwin airshed.

Similar shared responsibility models are used in other Australian jurisdictions.

To ensure the air quality monitoring network is fit for purpose and meets community expectations, the NT EPA supports an independent review of the current network and program prior to implementing changes.

Licensed landfills

OUR COMMITMENT

Conduct at least one inspection at every licensed landfill site.

Review tyre management practices at licensed landfills and provide guidance to landfill operators to ensure better management of tyres at the facilities.

OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIONS

Inspection and review of tyre management

We inspected all licensed landfills, namely:

- Shoal Bay
- Katherine
- Yulara
- Tennant Creek
- Alice Springs
- Jabiru
- Nhulunbuy
- Groote Eylandt
- Milingimbi

We also conducted desktop reviews of all of landfill sites' annual document submissions to assess compliance with licence conditions.

The inspections revealed general poor practice for tyre and used lead acid battery storage including exposure to the elements, excessive stockpiles, and proximity to vegetation (which poses an increased fire risk).

There were also inconsistencies in storage standards being applied by operators.

We provided inspection outcome reports to all landfill operators to communicate observations made, areas for improvement and non-compliances.

Warning letters were sent to landfill operators in response to the non-compliant findings.

Additionally, we developed new standard conditions for tyre and used lead acid battery storage for implementation across industry to reduce environmental risk.

These new conditions were communicated to industry and aim to ensure industry is operating in accordance with best practice principles.

Landfill operators welcomed greater transparency with the provision of inspection reports, feedback loops, and written communication from the regulator about how to maintain a compliant facility.



Treated wastewater discharge (sewage)

OUR COMMITMENT

Audit discharge and monitoring conditions for licensed sewage treatment facilities.

OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIONS

Audit and monitoring

We conducted pre-and mid-wet season site inspections at the five urban wastewater treatment plants (WWTP) in Darwin, Palmerston and Katherine, and we also conducted an inspection at each of the WWTPs in the communities of Beswick, Barunga, Galiwin'ku, Milingimbi, and Wurrumiyanga.

We undertook desktop audits of all licensed site monitoring data and Annual Monitoring Reports to assess compliance with sampling, reporting and exceedance notification conditions.

The inspections revealed non-compliances including:

- minor issues with signage
- debris-blocked overflow points indicating repeated overtopping
- damaged irrigation network causing ponding and runoff toward Barge Landing Road
- unreported overflow from unauthorised locations
- access blocked by flooding.

The desktop audit also revealed that Annual Monitoring Reports for remote WDLs contained several data gaps including the reporting of non-compliances.

We provided the licensee with outcome letters of their compliance assessment. We also issued the licensee with a notice to rectify and expand the Annual Monitoring Reports.

Corrective actions taken by the licensee included:

- reinstating signage and spillway, removing immediate safety and overflow hazards;
- commissioning an overflow study to inform a targeted desludging strategy; and
- implementing a concept-design for the new Galiwinku ponds to improve long-term performance.

Updated Annual Monitoring Reports were lodged with the missing information, setting a clear reporting benchmark for all remote WDLs.



Treated wastewater discharge (mining)

OUR COMMITMENT

Conduct compliance audits and inspections of licensed mine sites that are actively discharging, with a focus on water quality and reporting of monitoring results.

OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIONS

Audits and inspections

We assessed compliance with monitoring and reporting conditions across eight mining waste discharge licences (WDLs), seven of which were actively discharging during 2024-25.

The assessment included a review of the annual monitoring report, annual return, licensee incident notifications and correspondence, as well as site inspections, for each licence.

The assessment identified good compliance with operational conditions. For example, qualified samplers, well-maintained equipment and appropriate laboratory procedures were used to conduct monitoring.

The assessment identified reporting of exceedances of trigger values was done in accordance with licence conditions.

Moreover, there were very few exceedances caused by authorised discharges. For annual monitoring reports, we found missing information, unsubstantiated claims, and unclear presentation. Only one initial monitoring report fully complied with WDL conditions. Warning letters were sent in response to the non-compliant findings

We provided each licence holder with detailed feedback on their monitoring report and incident investigation reports. Licence holders submitted revised reports, and the improved reports often meant that no further regulatory action was required.

We clarified reporting expectations, resulting in greater consistency and quality in submissions. Improved reporting supports more accurate assessment of environmental risk and informed regulatory decision-making.



Waste transporters

OUR COMMITMENT

Conduct inspections at high risk transport and storage facilities

Review waste storage measures and emergency response preparedness at high-risk waste transport facilities.

OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIONS

Inspection and review

We inspected all high-risk transporters, and an additional 18 medium-risk transporters, and three low-risk transporters.

Most transporters had robust record-keeping, spill response equipment capability, and operator training to deploy emergency response equipment and activate a clean up response.

A small portion of transporters were unable to demonstrate good practice due to outdated emergency response plans, poor record-keeping and a general lack of arrangements to mobilise a clean-up response in an accident.

Warning letters were issued to non-compliant transport operators in response to the inspection findings.

We also conducted a desktop audit to assess transporter compliance with annual reporting conditions required in transport EPLs.

The desktop audit identified 62% of the transport industry was non-compliant with the annual reporting requirements of their EPLs in the 2024 calendar year.

We are now implementing a revised enforcement approach for continued annual reporting non compliances across the transport industry.

Where a transporter does not submit required annual return documentation in accordance with EPL conditions, respective EPLs will be suspended. It is an offence to operate under a suspended EPL.

We advised the transport industry of this change via industry wide education correspondence and have seen an increase in annual reporting submissions.



Waste transfer stations

OUR COMMITMENT

Conduct inspections at waste transfer stations.

Review waste storage measures and emergency response preparedness at high-risk waste facilities.

OBSERVATIONS AND ACTIONS

Inspections and review

We inspected all licensed waste transfer stations (WTS), to review waste storage and segregation measures, and emergency response preparedness.

We found non-compliances at two licensed waste transfer stations related to unlawful storage of asbestos containing material (ACM).

As a result of the identified non-compliances, we issued the operator an Authorised Officer Direction to prevent additional ACM from entering the facility and restrict access to ACM-impacted materials.

The operator has since committed significant funds to cleaning up ACM waste at the affected facility.

