



## MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Parliament House  
State Square  
Darwin NT 0800  
minister.higgins@nt.gov.au

GPO Box 3146  
Darwin NT 0801  
Telephone: 08 8999 7540  
Facsimile: 08 8928 6613

Dr William Freeland  
Chair  
Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority  
GPO Box 3675  
DARWIN NT 0801

Dear Dr Freeland

On 9 September 2013, you wrote to my predecessor outlining general concerns with the Northern Territory's environmental management framework. You requested Government's consideration of the framework.

In 2014, the Northern Territory Government requested Dr Allan Hawke AC undertake a review of the Northern Territory's environmental assessment and approval processes. Dr Hawke delivered his Review to the Government in May 2015. The Review contains three options for structural reform and 22 recommendations for specific improvements to the current environmental management system.

On 18 November 2015, the Government publicly released the Review and announced that it had adopted Option 3 as described by Dr Hawke. The Government also announced that over the coming months, it would conduct consultation with interested stakeholders on the implementation of Option 3.

Government views Option 3 as providing a logical step towards the introduction of a single environmental approval as envisaged by Dr Hawke in Option 2 of his Review.

In accordance with section 25(1) of the *Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority Act* (the Act), I request the NT EPA's advice in relation to:

1. The Hawke Review - Specifically, a formal response that can be published by the Territory Government and NT EPA that identifies the NT EPA's position in relation to the structural reform options identified by Dr Hawke, a response to each of the 22 recommendations contained in the Review, and any related issues or recommendations not addressed in the Review that should inform Government's consideration; and

2. A model for a single environmental approval as envisaged in Option 2 of the Review that is appropriate for the Northern Territory, and including options for a process to implement the model.

In providing its advice, I request the NT EPA consider:

- Government's strategic policy and initiatives including *Framing the Future*, the *Northern Territory Economic Development Strategy*, the draft *Balanced Environment Strategy* and the *Red Tape Reduction Strategy*;
- the Memorandum of Understanding between the Northern Territory and Australian Governments for a 'one stop shop' to streamline environmental impact assessment and approval processes;
- Government's commitment to the responsible management of the Territory's natural resources; and
- Government's commitment to ensuring that legislative frameworks are in place to accommodate new environmental challenges that may arise as the Territory continues its industrial development.

At the same time as making this request, the Territory Government will be consulting with key stakeholders to obtain their views on how Option 3 can be implemented, and an appropriate model for a single environmental approval consistent with Option 2.

I acknowledge that when performing its functions under the Act, the NT EPA is required to encourage community involvement and engagement. To avoid duplicate consultation processes, I would like to invite the NT EPA to participate in the Territory Government's consultation process, and to use information obtained through this process to inform the requested advice. In addition, I would be pleased if you would make this request and the Hawke Review available from the NT EPA website.

I would appreciate if you would advise me of an appropriate timeframe to provide the information requested, and the NT EPA's preferred method for continued engagement in the environmental regulatory reform process.

I look forward to receiving your advice and working towards the improvement of the environmental assessment and approvals system.

Yours sincerely



GARY HIGGINS

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