

FACT SHEET

What is an Environmental Impact Assessment?

Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is a predictive tool for identifying and characterising the risks and potential environmental impacts associated with proposed development and is ideally applied at the early planning and design stages to increase the likelihood of both ecologically sustainable development and protection of relevant environmental values.

EIA allows the community and government to form a view about the environmental acceptability of development and what, if any, impact avoidance and risk reduction conditions should be applied.

In the Northern Territory, EIA is conducted under the *Environmental Assessment Act* (the Act) and subordinate Environmental Assessment Administrative Procedures and is administered by the NT Environment Protection Authority (NT EPA). The Act applies a broad definition to the term 'environment' including the physical, biological, social, economic and cultural aspects of our surroundings.

The role of the NT EPA in undertaking EIA is to provide Government with advice on the environmental acceptability or otherwise of significant development proposals, and on how environmental outcomes can be improved. Development proposals include mining and energy and other industrial proposals, infrastructure such as ports, roads, railways and pipelines, power and water services, major native vegetation clearing proposals, and significant residential expansion proposals.

A significant number of development proposals are referred to the NT EPA annually. The NT EPA considers these proposals using a number of decision making criteria and determines whether or not formal EIA is required and, if so, at what level.

The NT EPA's formal EIA process is undertaken in a systematic and transparent manner with opportunities for public review and input. The developer (proponent) is required to prepare and submit documentation describing the proposal, the risks and potential environmental impacts, and how the risks would be controlled and impacts managed. Concerns raised by Government and the public during the assessment would also need to be addressed by the proponent.

The NT EPA then considers the proponent's documentation, input from the public and advice from relevant experts and Government agencies to determine whether the proposal can be managed in accordance with acceptable standards and criteria. The NT EPA also considers whether conditions should be applied to the development proposal to ensure that particular criteria and environmental objectives can be met and environmental outcomes enhanced.

The advice from the NT EPA on a specific development proposal, including recommendations about conditions as part of development consent, is set out in the form of an Assessment Report. The Assessment Report is provided to the Minister for Lands, Planning and the Environment who then forwards it to the responsible authority at the completion of the assessment process for consideration in an approval. The responsible authority may be a Minister or a Government Department.

The Assessment Report is made publicly available.

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