



Australian Government

Department of the Environment and Energy

Dean Knudson
Deputy Secretary

Ref: EC16-000940

Mr Gary Nairn
Interim Chair – NT EPA
GPO Box 3675
Darwin NT 0801

Dear Mr Nairn

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority's (NT EPA) draft advice regarding Dr Allan Hawke's review of the Northern Territory's environmental assessment and approval processes. I recognise Dr Hawke's review conclusions and recommendations are still under consideration by the Northern Territory Government.

The Australian Government remains committed to reducing unnecessary regulatory burden for business whilst maintaining high environmental standards. In the environment portfolio, this has been delivered through the One-Stop-Shop reforms which included a new assessment bilateral agreement between the Australian and Northern Territory governments.

Any changes to the current environmental assessment arrangements in the Northern Territory are likely to impact the Commonwealth accreditation of the existing *Northern Territory assessment bilateral agreement*. Given this, the Department's preference is for the Northern Territory government to proceed with the option that maximises regulatory efficiency and effectiveness.

In the Department's view, a single environmental approval process within the Northern Territory (Option Two of Dr Hawke's review) would provide for the most efficient and effective alignment with Commonwealth requirements and support the administration of the current, or any future, Northern Territory assessment bilateral agreement.

Having a single Northern Territory agency responsible for assessment of actions under an assessment bilateral agreement ensures that all actions are assessed in a consistent manner and significantly increases efficiency for proponents, the Commonwealth and Northern Territory governments, as only one assessment process is required to be endorsed and managed on an ongoing basis.

For any additional comment please contact Mr Bruce Edwards, Assistant Secretary, Assessments and Air Branch, either by email: bruce.edwards@environment.gov.au or phone: 02 6274 1400.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment on these important reforms.

Yours sincerely

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Dean Knudson

31 October 2016