

Mr Paul Purdon  
A/Executive Director Environment  
Department of Environment and Natural Resources  
GPO Box 3675  
DARWIN NT 0801

**Chairman**  
Level 2 Energy House  
18-20 Cavenagh Street  
DARWIN NT 0800

**Postal Address**  
GPO Box 1680  
DARWIN NT 0801

**T** 08 8924 7540  
**E** [ntpc@nt.gov.au](mailto:ntpc@nt.gov.au)

**REF:** NTPC16/61

Dear Mr Purdon

**Environmental regulatory reform – NT EPA draft advice to Minister for  
Environment and Natural Resources**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft advice from the Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority (NT EPA) to the Minister for Environment and Natural Resources in relation to reforms recommended for the Northern Territory's environmental legislation.

The NT EPA proposes an alternate model to Dr Hawke's preferred model of strengthening the 'sectoral one-stop-shop' model of environmental assessment which he recommends in his 'Review of the NT Environmental Assessment and Approval Process'. The NT EPA instead recommends a 'single environmental approval' framework, noting that Dr Hawke did acknowledge that should be the preferable outcome in the long term.

The Planning Commission recognises the need to undertake reforms to the Territory's environmental assessment framework to ensure environmental legislation in the Territory is able to both effectively protect our environment while also fostering sustainable economic growth. In this regard, the Commission is supportive of any such legislative reforms which will achieve this intended outcome.

The Commission would however like to emphasise, that it is essential that any 'sectoral' or 'stand-alone' environmental approval framework must contain suitable mechanisms to clearly determine which projects will trigger the need for assessment as well as to clearly determine the level of assessment required. These mechanisms need to be particularly robust, such that they serve to ensure a reasonable balance is achieved between the level of detail of the environmental assessment required and the potential environmental impacts of a particular project.

This is of particular relevance to the Commission as the primary body in the Territory responsible for the development of strategic land use plans and area plans for inclusion in the NT Planning Scheme. In order for the Commission to

undertake its duties in this regard effectively, the level of environmental assessment required, must be balanced appropriately - taking into account that if too detailed a level of assessment is required, this could prove cost prohibitive and effectively prohibit necessary strategic land use planning from taking place.

Subject to this concern being adequately addressed, the Commission has no objection to the NT EPA's recommendation for an alternate model for a 'single environmental approval' framework. The Commission does however request that it is further consulted as the environmental regulatory reform project progresses.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gary Nairn', with a stylized, cursive script.

The Hon Gary Nairn AO  
**Chairman**  
**Northern Territory Planning Commission**

31 October 2016