

# STRATEGIC PLAN

## 2018-2020

Territorians as well as non-Territorians value the unique range of biodiversity, cultural and recreational assets in the Northern Territory. The development and use of these natural resources enhances the prosperity and well-being of Territorians, but also presents environmental risks that can limit societal benefits if they are not managed carefully.

In a time when communities are taking an increasing interest in environmental protection and regulation and expectations are shifting towards greater community involvement in environmental assessment and approval processes, the Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority (NT EPA) must be both proactive and responsive to changing community, government and industry expectations while focussing on what is important. This includes contributing to and influencing the significant environmental regulatory reform agenda that the Government has embarked upon that seeks to deliver a contemporary environmental management framework for the Territory.

This Strategic Plan is a high level plan that clarifies the purpose of the NT EPA and the direction it will take over

the next two years in fulfilling its statutory roles and responsibilities.

The NT EPA's role is established by the Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority Act. The NT EPA assesses the environmental impacts of development proposals, regulates some activities, and provides strategic advice on environmental matters. There are many other entities responsible for making decisions about the regulation and management of the environment.

The NT EPA aims to show leadership in delivering its role, to work with and influence others in promoting the ecologically sustainable development of the Northern Territory and to ensure its decisions and advice are timely, transparent and based on contemporary evidence.

This Strategic Plan will inform the development of more detailed operational plans by the Environment Division of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources that supports the NT EPA and that are consistent with the strategies and priorities established by the NT EPA.

### Our Purpose

To ensure environmental assets are used sustainably and protected for the benefit of current and future generations.

### Our Objectives

The *Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority Act* establishes the following objectives for the NT EPA:

- promote ecologically sustainable development
- protect the environment, having regard to the need to enable ecologically sustainable development
- promote effective waste management and waste minimisation strategies
- enhance community and business confidence in the environmental protection regime of the Territory.

## Priorities

Our focus for the first year of this Strategic Plan (2018-19) will be:

1. **Environmental impact assessment** – implementing administrative and policy reforms to establish a consistent and focused environmental impact assessment framework.
2. **Managing waste and pollution** - in particular illegal dumping and hazardous chemicals in our environment.
3. **Advising on environmental management of onshore petroleum activities** – providing independent advice on standards, guidelines and environmental management plans.
4. **Better integration of land use planning and environmental protection** – increasing engagement with planning and consent authorities and providing early advice.
5. **Mine planning, closure and rehabilitation** – early consideration and integration of mine operations with closure planning, progressive rehabilitation and transparent evaluation of closure options in a catchment context.
6. **Develop guidance material for proponents and consultants** – ensuring clarity and consistency of environmental information to support decision-making.

## Outcomes sought

1. Influence the siting, design and environmental management of proposed development in the Territory.
2. Protect people and the environment, now and in the future, from significant harm arising from emissions and discharges to land, air and water.
3. Decisions about activities that may affect the environment take account of the likely consequences.

## Our Key Strategies

### 1 Provide sound, independent and transparent advice to Government

We will:

- ensure our advice on environmental impact assessment and other matters is based on a contemporary understanding of the environment and measures to protect it
- seek expert technical and scientific advice as appropriate, including through peer review
- properly consider risk and uncertainty when making judgments about environmental protection
- ensure our advice to Government and our statutory decisions are clear, robust and published.

### 2 Inform, engage and communicate with stakeholders

We will:

- develop community consultation guidelines and a stakeholder engagement strategy
- engage early with proponents in the assessment of their development proposals
- invite community, government and industry stakeholders to present and discuss environmental matters and other issues with the NT EPA
- inform and communicate with stakeholders on the business of the NT EPA and listen to their concerns and ideas.

### 3 Be an effective, trusted and influential regulator

We will:

- ensure our decisions and actions are underpinned by sound science and evidence
- ensure our regulatory responses are proportional, consistent and timely
- be transparent and accountable for our decisions by publishing our reasons for making statutory decisions
- build a regulatory framework and culture that reflects contemporary thinking about 'smart' regulation
- follow through on decisions by doing what we say we will do.

### 4 Build a contemporary regulatory framework

We will:

- work with others to 'front-end load' environmental considerations in decision-making
- implement administrative and policy reforms to the environmental impact assessment process
- develop environmental guidance to support the NT EPA's statutory functions
- advise the Northern Territory Government on its environmental regulatory reform agenda
- implement legislated reforms to environmental regulation in accordance with Government policy.