

NT EPA Position Statement:

Application of the PFAS National Environmental Management Plan (NEMP 3.0) in the Northern Territory

Purpose

This position statement outlines the Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority (NT EPA) position on implementing the [National Environmental Management Plan](#) (NEMP) for the regulation of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in the Northern Territory.

Regulatory Context

PFAS are known to be highly persistent environmental pollutants, and due to the potential for long-term impacts and uncertainty around safe exposure levels, the precautionary principle guides the regulation of these so-called forever chemicals.

The PFAS NEMP, published by the Commonwealth Government, is the product of State, Territory and Federal Governments and was endorsed by Environment Ministers across Australia. The PFAS NEMP provides a framework for the environmental management of PFAS-contaminated materials. The NEMP is updated periodically to reflect the current state of knowledge rather than provide static guidance.

NEMP 3.0, published on 4 March 2025, builds on the foundation established by NEMP 2.0, incorporating updated scientific knowledge, policy developments, and nationally agreed practices.

The NT EPA acknowledges that there are currently contrasting draft Default Guideline Values (DGVs) for perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS) released in 2023 by the *Australian and New Zealand Guidelines for Fresh and Marine Water Quality* (ANZG). In addition, the National Health & Medical Research Council (NHMRC) has recently finalised its determination of the Australian Drinking Water Guidelines, which may result in amendments to the current version of the NEMP.

As a living document, the PFAS NEMP is likely to undergo further revisions to account for advances in scientific knowledge and contrasting guidance values.

NT EPA Position

The NT EPA supports the Commonwealth PFAS National Environmental Management Plan, using a risk-based approach to the implementation of the NEMP 3.0 that considers environmental, social and economic factors.

The NT EPA recognises that in some circumstances, the risks of harm from PFAS can be reduced as far as reasonably practicable, and that exceedance of the NEMP guidelines do not necessarily mean that there is elevated risk to the environment or human health.

The NT EPA also acknowledges that site assessment and remediation for existing projects may have commenced prior to 4 March 2025, based on previous versions of the PFAS NEMP.

Accordingly, the NT EPA will consider transitional or alternative arrangements for existing remediation projects on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the risk profile of projects including mass flux¹ calculations, exposure pathways and intended final land use.

Expectations

Everyone in the Northern Territory is required to comply with Section 12 of the [Waste Management and Pollution Control Act 1998](#), which describes General Environmental Duty (GED). To demonstrate compliance with the GED, among other things, a person must take all measures that are reasonable and practicable to prevent or minimise pollution or environmental harm. This may include following industry best practice or the most current scientific advice, including but not limited to the usage of NEMP 3.0.

Further Information

For further information on the management of PFAS contamination and application of NEMP 3.0 in the Northern Territory, or to seek advice on specific circumstances, please contact the NT Environmental Regulation Division at environmentalregulation@nt.gov.au

¹ Mass flux considers contaminant concentration levels and migration pathway flow rates to establish a detailed understanding of exposure risk. Mass flux can be used to inform targeted remediation strategies in line with best practice research.