



# **1 TERRITORY**

HONESTY. INTEGRITY. UNITY.

*For all Territorians*

**POLICY**  
**ENVIRONMENT**



## ENVIRONMENT

### YOUR ENVIRONMENT, YOUR FUTURE

In the Territory we are privileged to breathe fresh air, drink clean water and to live in a mostly pristine natural environment, but this may not last forever. Our way of life is threatened by poorly regulated resource development, inadequate environmental protection legislation and political apathy.

Managing our environment is both a challenge, and an opportunity. We recognise that climate change is one of the most important issues facing the Northern Territory, economically, socially and environmentally. We also recognise that many of the activities we undertake, both for business and pleasure, put pressure on the environment. But, they also provide us with lifestyle that we love and enjoy.

1 Territory wants to meet these challenges and in doing so will ensure that the Northern Territory's pristine environment is maintained while sustainable economic development continues. Our approach is based on four key goals:

- Addressing climate change
- Protecting the Northern Territory's unique natural environment.
- Maintaining water quality and availability
- Creating liveable cities and communities with shrinking environmental footprints.

Enabling change and a more sustainable future.

The above statements mean nothing unless the Government enables the changes necessary to achieve our goals. To do so, 1 Territory is committed to providing leadership on environmental issues. We will put in place the

structures and processes necessary to deliver the goals we've set. Our key priorities are:

- An independent EPA
- Effective legislation, which provides a framework for a healthy and resilient environment.
- An engaged and supportive community
- Supporting the transition to renewable energy and the creation of less waste

### BACKGROUND

The protection of the Northern Territory's environment is currently managed by excessive political discretion and conflicts of interest.

The Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority (NT EPA) has insufficient powers and currently serves as nothing more than an advisory body. The Northern Territory Environmental Assessment Act (EA Act) provides the NT EPA with the function to assess the environmental impacts of a development and make recommendations on the type of environmental conditions that need to be attached to licences and approvals for the development.

The NTEPA and Minister for Environment have no power to issue a separate environmental approval and are dependent on other Minister, like the Minister for Mines and Energy, taking their recommendations into account. There are inadequate safeguards to ensure that good environmental outcomes occur.

There is no obligation to accept the NT EPA's recommendation and as a result many developments have been approved without the necessary environmental conditions and in

some cases no approvals have been required; for example the Port Melville incident.

The CLP Government has identified the need to reform the EA Act and previous governments have made attempts to review the Act, but in each case reform was prevented due political intervention.

Most recently the Chief Minister engaged Dr. Allan Hawke to undertake a Review of the Northern Territory's Environmental Assessment and Approvals Processes and make recommendations to strengthen the environmental approvals process.

This review was complete and issued to the Northern Territory Government in May 2015, but not released to the public until November 2015. The review concluded that the Northern Territory Government should work towards implementing standalone environmental approvals, but in the interim it should create a 'one stop shop' model. To achieve this the Northern Territory Government will have to reform all other legislation; mining, petroleum, planning, waste, environmental and water to ensure they contain appropriate environmental provisions. These provisions will also need to be 'accredited' by the NT EPA, under the EA Act.

This level of legislative reform is far more costly, complicated; and will take years to complete compared with reforming the EA Act and empowering the NT EPA to issue standalone environmental approvals. The only benefit from reforming all the other legislation is the Ministers will retain the power to approve developments at their discretion and are not bound by the NT EPA's recommendations.

## **INDEPENDENT EPA**

We will maintain a truly independent Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority (NT EPA) whose recommendations are implemented without intervention by government.

We will reform the environmental assessment process to enable the NT EPA to issue standalone, enforceable, environmental approvals for developments with potential to cause environmental harm.

## **EFFECTIVE LEGISLATION**

We will consolidate all environment protection laws into one Act to be administered by the NT EPA.

We will ensure the environmental decision making process is open and transparent by making key documents available to the public through an online portal.

We will reform other environmental and planning legislation to ensure Australia's international obligations on ecologically sustainable development are reflected in our laws.

Decision makers will have to consider the impacts of climate change when making key decisions and they will also need to apply the precautionary principle to all development projects approvals and policies: "If there is a threat of serious or irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason to approve an action or policy."

We will ensure separation between the regulatory functions and business development functions of government.

## **COMMUNITY SUPPORT**

We will provide additional funding to independent environment organisations such as Environment Centre NT, Amateur Fishermen's Society of the Northern Territory and the Environmental Defenders Office who provide an important community service.

We will recognise and strengthen protection cultural heritage.

## **SUPPORT ADOPTION OF LOW EMISSION TECHNOLOGIES AND RECYCLING**

We will support research and development of new environmental technologies where the Territory has a natural advantage, including solar and biofuels.

We will reduce our landfill waste and increase recycling initiatives.

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We will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by supporting development of renewable energy sources and improving energy efficiency across the Northern Territory government.

We will facilitate the creation of new environmentally sustainable businesses, such as sustainable agriculture, electronic waste recycling and renewable energies.