Frequently asked questions

Environment and Water Legislation Amendment Bill 2026

About the Bill

1. What is the Bill intended to do?

The Bill proposes changes to clarify environmental and water regulation, reduce unnecessary administration and improve compliance tools.

2. Which laws would change?

The Bill proposes amendments to seven Acts covering environmental protection, mining environmental regulation, water, waste and pollution, container deposits, heritage, marine pollution and petroleum.

3. When would the changes start?

When the Administrator assents. It provides for commencement the following day. Some measures, including the new dredging categories and activity notification requirements, would also require regulations.

Environmental assessment and mining

4. What would change for environmental assessments and approvals?

The Bill would clarify the powers supporting environmental assessment procedures. It would also allow the Minister to review related approval conditions when an approval holder requests an amendment, and clarify environmental officers' information-gathering powers.

5. What are the main mining changes?

The Bill would allow related applications or licences held by the same operator to be consolidated, clarify licensing processes and change some consultation periods. It also proposes additional pathways for refunding mining security, subject to statutory requirements.

Water

6. What would change for water allocation plans?

Plans would continue until revoked and require review at least every five years. The Bill would clarify their content and require at least 20 business days of public consultation on draft plans and amendments other than administrative amendments.

7. How would environmental needs be considered?

Environmental needs would be considered when determining estimated sustainable yield. This does not mean all water in a resource would be available for extraction.

8. What would change for water licences and Aboriginal water reserves?

The Bill would clarify powers to request information and terminate applications on specified grounds. Transfers of entitlements from Aboriginal water reserves would be temporary and subject to eligibility requirements.

Waste, pollution and container deposits

9. Would licences and approvals still need renewal?

The Bill would allow waste and pollution licences to continue without routine renewal, although the NT EPA could still specify a term. Container deposit scheme approvals and supplier registrations would no longer require routine renewal. Applicable conditions and compliance obligations would continue.

10. What other waste and pollution changes are proposed?

The Bill would expressly cover commissioning of relevant premises, expand compliance tools and remove 'collecting' as a standalone licensing trigger for listed waste. Other applicable licensing requirements would remain.

11. How will dredging be regulated?

The Bill would establish approval and licensing categories for prescribed dredging in prescribed areas. Regulations would be needed to specify their coverage. Existing environmental assessment and other applicable requirements would remain relevant.

12. Would any activities need to be notified before starting?

The Bill would allow regulations to specify activities that must be notified to the NT EPA. This will allow the NT EPA to record and measure cumulative impacts over time and activity volumes.

Compliance and heritage

13. What is an enforceable undertaking?

An enforceable undertaking is a voluntary, legally enforceable commitment that may be accepted by a regulator in response to an alleged breach. The Bill would introduce this option under water and waste legislation. Enforceable undertakings are available under other NT legislation.

14. What would change for heritage consultation and review?

People could still make submissions and receive notice of relevant decisions. Making a submission alone would no longer give a person statutory review or appeal rights. Standing would remain for people who qualify under the relevant provisions of the Heritage Act.

Existing arrangements and further information

15. Would existing licences, applications and review rights be affected?

The Bill includes transitional provisions. The position would depend on the particular licence, application or decision. Existing licence holders would still need to meet their current obligations.

Where can I find more information?

Read these FAQs alongside the general information sheet. Information on specific reform areas is available through the following resources:

- Mining reforms – Information paper and FAQs
- Waste and pollution reforms – Fact sheet
- Water reforms – Information paper and FAQs

The Bill and explanatory materials contain the detailed changes and are available through legislation.nt.gov.au.