Approval notice and statement of reasons

Applicable law

The revised Environment Management Plan (EMP) was submitted for assessment under regulation 17 before 30 July 2026, prior to the amendment of the Regulations by the *Petroleum Legislation Amendment Regulations 2026* (NT). As such, pursuant to regulation 50(3) and 51(1) of the *Petroleum (Environment) Regulations* 2016 (NT) (Regulations), this EMP revision is to be assessed using the regulations as in force before 30 July 2026 and applying the 2025 Code of Practice: Onshore Petroleum Activities in the Northern Territory (the Code).

Note: References in this notice and statement of reasons are to the Regulations as in force before 30 July 2026 and the Code.

Interest holder	Central Petroleum Mereenie Pty Ltd ABN: 66 605 831 025 Echelon Mereenie Pty Ltd ABN: 72 650 386 360 Cue Mereenie Pty Ltd ABN: 22 650 385 336 Horizon Australia Energy Pty Ltd ABN: 95 673 423 295
Petroleum interest(s)	Production Licence 4 and 5 (OL4 and OL5)
Environment management plan (EMP) title	Mereenie Oil and Gas Field
EMP document reference	CTP6-7
Regulated activity	The regulated activity includes: • civil activities, including maintenance of firebreaks, well sites, roads and access tracks and erosion and sediment control • well operations and production • operation of production facilities including gathering, storing and processing of hydrocarbons for processing to sales point • well workovers • installation of upgraded wellhead equipment, safety systems and infield flowlines • flaring of gas and liquid hydrocarbons • progressive rehabilitation • support activities including accommodation, waste and wastewater handling, power generation, water supply and chemical storage and handling • care and maintenance activities. No drilling or hydraulic fracturing is proposed in the EMP.
Is the EMP a new plan submitted under reg 6 or a revision of a current plan submitted in accordance with reg 18, or regs 15 and 17?	This is a part revision with respect to an increase in flaring activities at the Mereenie Oil and Gas Field Environment Management Plan (CTP6-4) submitted in accordance with regulations 15 and 17

Was the regulated activity referred[1] for consideration whether environmental impact assessment was required?	No
Was environmental impact assessment[2] required?	N/A
Has an environmental approval[3] been issued for the regulated activity?	N/A
Has an Authority Certificate under the *Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act 1989* been issued for the regulated activity?	Yes Authority Certificate C2023/105
Date an EMP compliant with reg 8 was first submitted under reg 6	9 January 2026
Date within which the EMP was published for comment under reg 8A, if applicable	N/A
Date further information was required and submitted under reg 10, if applicable	7 April 2026 (requested) 2 July 2026 (received) 29 July 2026 (requested) 18 August 2026 (received) 17 September 2026 (requested) 25 September 2026 (received)
Date of resubmission notice under reg 11(2)(b) and date EMP was resubmitted, if applicable	7 April 2026 (requested) 2 July 2026 (received)
Date of resubmission notice under reg 11(3) and date EMP was resubmitted, if applicable	29 July 2026 (requested) 18 August 2026 (received)
Date a notice setting out a proposed timetable for consideration of the EMP was issued under reg 11(2A), or reg 11(3)(c), if applicable	11 September 2026
Proposed timetable given in notice under reg 11(2A), or reg 11(3)(c), if applicable	30 October 2026
Where provided under s29B of the *Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority Act 2012* (NT) (NT EPA Act), the dates the Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority (NT EPA) was requested to, and provided, advice on EMP	N/A
Date of decision	6 / 11 / 2026
Decision maker	Signature Hon Joshua Burgoyne MLA, Minister for Lands, Planning and Environment

1 Approval notice

1. I approve the EMP under reg 11(3)(a).

[1] This means a referral under the *Environment Protection Act 2019* (NT) (EP Act) and/or the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth) (EPBC Act).
[2] This means a requirement for an environmental impact assessment to be conducted under the EP Act and/or the EPBC Act.
[3] This means an approval granted under the EP Act and/or the EPBC Act.

2. The approval is subject to the following conditions:

Monitoring and Reporting Conditions

Condition 1: By 1 October of each year, the interest holder must submit to Onshoregas.DLPE@nt.gov.au a completed Annual Environmental Performance Report (AEPR) for the preceding 12 month period of 1 July to 30 June using the AEPR form. The AEPR must be submitted in accordance with the Onshore Petroleum Annual Environmental Performance Reporting Form, as published and updated on the Department's website from time to time.

Condition 2: During the Wet Season, the months of October to April inclusive, the interest holder must submit to Onshoregas.DLPE@nt.gov.au each Monday for the preceding week or part thereof, weekly reports with the following information:

i. daily inspection reports for secondary containment in use; and

ii. where relevant, the type and date of corrective actions taken, or date proposed to be taken, in response to issues identified in the daily inspection reports.

Condition 3: The interest holder must undertake six-monthly groundwater monitoring at established groundwater monitoring bores (RN017898, RN017657, RN004620, RN013861 and RN018955) and any new or replacement groundwater monitoring bores established in the Mereenie Field.

Condition 4: By 1 October of each year, the interest holder must submit to Onshoregas.DLPE@nt.gov.au an interpretive report of groundwater quality based on groundwater monitoring undertaken (as per condition 3) which includes:

i. identification of any change to groundwater quality or level attributable to conduct of the regulated activity, including flaring activities and discussion of the significance and cause of any such observed change;

ii. an assessment of data quality and variability, including identification and interpretation of any statistical outliers for each of the analytes listed in Table 6 of the Code;

iii. a summary of the results including descriptive statistics;

iv. discussion of any trends observed;

v. establish and apply site-specific performance standards for groundwater quality and interquartile ranges for analytes at each of the groundwater monitoring bores, based on at least 3 years of groundwater monitoring; and

vi. the results of groundwater monitoring in a format to be determined by the Department.

Condition 5: Within 60 days of the date of decision specified in this approval notice, the interest holder must develop and provide to Onshoregas.DLPE@nt.gov.au a Trigger Action Response Plan (TARP) for arsenic and contaminants of concern associated with the flaring of liquid hydrocarbons. The TARP must be approved in writing by the Department. The interest holder must implement and comply with the approved TARP, including any amendments required or approved by the Department in writing. The TARP must:

i. include the results of a representative assay of the liquid hydrocarbons flared and identify contaminants of concern based on the composition of the liquid hydrocarbons and their potential emissions from flaring;

ii. establish a trigger value for arsenic as any detection above the laboratory limit of reporting in environmental media, including but not limited to soil, groundwater, surface water and dust deposition samples;

iii. establish trigger values for all other contaminants of concern in environmental media, including but not limited to soil, groundwater, surface water and dust deposition samples;

iv. identify and justify suitable monitoring and background locations;

v. specify actions to investigate the source and cause of any contaminant detections;

vi. identify corrective actions and timeframes for implementation to reduce emissions and environmental impacts attributable to flaring activities;

vii. specify notification reporting requirements to the Department via Onshoregas.DLPE@nt.gov.au when trigger values are exceeded.

Condition 6: For 12 months from the date of this approval, where dust deposition and/or soil monitoring results reach a trigger value specified in the TARP required under Condition 5, the interest holder must undertake surface water monitoring to assess whether arsenic and contaminants of concern associated with the Central Treatment Plant (CTP) flare are being mobilised in surface runoff and entering drainage lines leaving the site.

The results of any surface water monitoring undertaken, including laboratory analytical results, comparison with upstream monitoring locations and an interpretation of the findings, must be reported in the interpretive report of environmental monitoring associated with flaring activities required under condition 8.

Condition 7: For the purpose of monitoring the accumulation of contaminants in soil arising from atmospheric deposition associated with flaring, dust deposition samples must be collected monthly and soil samples must be collected quarterly from monitoring locations identified in the EMP and TARP.

Soil samples must be representative of the upper 1 cm of the soil profile and analysed for contaminants specified in the EMP. Where the TARP identifies additional contaminants of concern associated with flaring, the monitoring program must be updated to include those contaminants.

Condition 8: By 1 October of each year, the interest holder must submit to Onshoregas.DLPE@nt.gov.au an interpretive report of environmental monitoring associated with flaring activities at the CTP that:

i. quantifies the total volume of liquid hydrocarbons flared during the reporting period;

ii. identifies any changes in environmental conditions attributable to flaring;

iii. assesses the significance and cause of any such changes;

iv. analyses monitoring results and trends over time;

v. assesses whether adverse environmental impacts have occurred as a result of flaring emissions, deposition, accumulation, or cumulative effects associated with flaring; and

vi. identifies any corrective actions required to remediate, prevent or minimise future impacts.

Air and Greenhouse Gas Emissions Conditions

Condition 9: For 12 months from the date of this approval, the interest holder may flare liquid hydrocarbons at the CTP flare, excluding crude oil or a hydrocarbon mixture containing crude oil, up to 300 barrels per day and no greater than 70,000 total barrels, as a temporary contingent management measure.

Condition 10: For 12 months from the date of this approval, the interest holder may only flare liquid hydrocarbons, excluding crude oil or a hydrocarbon mixture containing crude oil, as a temporary contingent management measure where the interest holder can demonstrate, through clear and maintained records, that approved alternative liquid hydrocarbon management options are unavailable at the time of flaring.

Condition 11: For periods where flaring is undertaken under condition 9, the interest holder must submit a Flaring Liquid Hydrocarbons Phase-Out Report to Onshoregas.DLPE@nt.gov.au 15 days after the end of each quarter, being 15 April, 15 July, 15 October and 15 January. The report must:

i. detail progress in implementing alternatives to flaring liquid hydrocarbons;

ii. identify milestones achieved during the reporting period;

iii. identify any delays and corrective actions;

iv. quantify the volume of liquid hydrocarbons flared during the reporting period;

v. include the environmental monitoring results for arsenic and identified contaminants of concern and identify any detections, exceedances, changes or trends observed during the reporting period; and

vi. demonstrate progress towards cessation of flaring liquid hydrocarbons within 12 months of the date of this approval notice.

Condition 12: By 31 October of each year, the interest holder must submit to Onshoregas.DLPE@nt.gov.au the emissions report required by clause D.6.2[4] of the Code, which must:

i. calculate emissions in accordance with the *National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting (Measurement) Determination 2008*;

ii. document actual annual greenhouse gas emissions from regulated activities estimated and reported under the *National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting Act 2007* (Cth) (NGER Act) versus predicted emissions from regulated activities in the EMP (CTP6-7);

iii. demonstrate actual emissions from regulated activities have been verified by an auditor registered under the Register of Greenhouse and Energy Auditors established under section 75A of the NGER Act;

iv. include a summary of all regulated activities which have contributed to greenhouse gas emissions during the reporting period; and

v. account for differences between actual and predicted emissions with reference to all parts of the regulated activities with potential to create greenhouse gas emissions.

[4] Clause D.6.2(b) of the Code requires actual annual greenhouse gas emissions to be provided even where emissions are below the NGER Act threshold of 25 ktCO2-e for scope 1 and scope 2 emissions reporting.

Incident Management Conditions

Condition 13: Except for flaring permitted under condition 9, the interest holder may only flare liquid hydrocarbons at the CTP flare during an emergency situation where, and for so long as, the flaring is necessary to prevent a serious public health risk or risk of significant environmental harm that cannot reasonably be managed by other means.

The Department must be notified via Onshoregas.DLPE@nt.gov.au within 24 hours after the emergency flaring commences and within 24 hours after the emergency flaring ceases.

Within 7 days after emergency flaring ceases, the interest holder must provide the Department with a written report that includes:

i. the circumstances giving rise to the emergency situation;

ii. the serious public health risk or risk of significant environmental harm that necessitated the flaring;

iii. why the risk could not reasonably be managed by means other than flaring;

iv. the commencement and cessation times and total volume of liquid hydrocarbons flared; and

v. any actions taken or proposed to prevent recurrence of the circumstances giving rise to the emergency flaring.

Flaring undertaken in accordance with this condition does not contribute to the limits specified in condition 9.

Condition 14: The interest holder must record all accidental releases of liquid contaminant or hazardous chemicals in a site spill register, which records:

i. the liquid contaminant or hazardous chemical spilled or leaked;

ii. the GPS co-ordinates of the location of the spill or leak;

iii. the source and volume of the spill or leak;

iv. the volume of impacted soil removed for disposal and the depth of any associated excavation; and

v. the corrective actions taken or proposed to be taken to prevent recurrence of an incident of a similar nature.

Wastewater Management Conditions

Condition 15: The interest holder must not introduce wastewater into any flare pit unless demonstrated to be impervious, in accordance with conditions 16 to 19 below.

Condition 16: The interest holder must undertake performance testing of any flare pit(s) proposed to contain wastewater that demonstrates the impervious nature of the flare pit.

Condition 17: The interest holder must provide to Onshoregas.DLPE@nt.gov.au within 28 days of completion of performance testing a report detailing:

i. the performance test(s) used to determine flare pit permeability;

ii. the performance test acceptance standards applied; and

iii. the results of the performance test(s) applied for each flare pit.

Condition 18: The interest holder must undertake and keep records of a visual inspection of the flare pit prior to the commencement of any activity that could

result in the introduction of any wastewater. The visual inspection should be sufficient to detect structural defects which could influence the capacity of the flare pit to contain wastewater.

Condition 19: The interest holder must undertake repeat performance testing of a flare pit if any of the following conditions are met:

i. more than 12 calendar months have passed between use of a flare pit to contain wastewater, or

ii. a visual inspection of the flare pit identifies structural defects in the integrity of the liner.

Condition 20: If flare tanks are to be used for storage of wastewater, they must have secondary containment.

Condition 21: The interest holder must undertake six-monthly testing of the quality of all wastewater produced from petroleum wells, consistent with regulation 37B(1) and clause C.5.S(c) of the Code.

Condition 22: The interest holder must review the results of testing undertaken in condition 21 and by 15 January each year, submit a report to Onshoregas.DLPE@nt.gov.au consistent with the requirements of regulation 37B(2). The report must:

i. assess whether the wastewater and spill management practices in the EMP remain appropriate for the concentrations of analytes detected; and

ii. assess whether the storage, treatment and transport of wastewater remain consistent with legislated requirements for NORMs and listed waste.

Rehabilitation Conditions

Condition 23: Progressive rehabilitation must commence no later than 12 months following cessation of the regulated activity at each location where ground disturbance has occurred during conduct of the regulated activity.

Condition 24: By 1 October of each year, the interest holder must submit to Onshoregas.DLPE@nt.gov.au a rehabilitation report which:

i. identifies the rehabilitation activities undertaken in the preceding 12 month period;

ii. provides the dates rehabilitation monitoring was undertaken during the preceding 12 month period;

iii. analyses and compares rehabilitation progress against analogue sites and the rehabilitation criteria in the EMP;

iv. includes corrective actions identified for rehabilitated areas and the date those corrective actions were implemented, or the date they are proposed to be implemented; and

v. is accompanied by geospatial files (as shapefiles and inclusive of metadata) identifying the areas rehabilitated during the preceding 12 month period.

Condition 25: Between 12 and 18 months following cessation of temporary contingency flaring of liquid hydrocarbons, the interest holder must undertake an assessment of soil and other relevant environmental media surrounding the CTP flare for contamination attributable to the flaring activity, including the contaminants of concern identified in the EMP and approved TARP. The assessment must first evaluate and interpret the results of the monitoring undertaken in accordance with

condition 7 and where necessary include additional investigations to determine whether contamination attributable to flaring has occurred.

Within 90 days of completing the assessment, the interest holder must provide an assessment report to Onshoregas.DLPE@nt.gov.au. The report must include:

i. the assessment methodology;

ii. analytical results;

iii. an interpretation of the findings, including where applicable detailed reasons why further investigations were deemed unnecessary;

iv. a comparison of the assessment results against background reference locations, baseline monitoring results, and relevant health and environmental investigation levels specified in the National Environment Protection (Assessment of Site Contamination) Measure 1999 (ASC NEPM), as applicable;

v. determination of whether contamination attributable to flaring activities has occurred; and

vi. a basis for that determination.

The assessment, including interpretation of monitoring results and determination of whether additional investigations are necessary, must be undertaken by a Contaminated Land Auditor.

Condition 26: Where contamination attributable to flaring activities is identified in condition 25, the interest holder must include in the assessment report a remediation plan for approval by the Department. The remediation plan must identify the extent of contamination, remediation objectives, remediation actions, performance criteria, and implementation timeframes.

The remediation plan must be prepared by a Contaminated Land Auditor.

The interest holder must implement and comply with the approved remediation plan, including any amendments required by, or approved in writing by, the Department. Remediation must commence as soon as reasonably practicable and be completed within two years of cessation of temporary contingency flaring, unless otherwise approved in writing by the Department.

The interest holder must demonstrate, to the satisfaction of the Department, that affected areas have been remediated in accordance with the rehabilitation criteria specified in the EMP.

Contaminated Land Auditor means an accredited site auditor specialising in contaminated land assessment who is registered under section 68 of the *Waste Management and Pollution Control Act 1998* (NT) and:

i. has relevant qualifications and experience including, but not limited to, a bachelor's degree in science or engineering and a minimum of three years' experience in undertaking soil contamination assessments,

ii. is not a current employee of the interest holder or otherwise engaged by the interest holder or by any of its subsidiaries, and in the last two years was not a former employee of the interest holder,

iii. does not have a financial interest or any involvement which would lead to a conflict of interest with the interest holder, and

iv. is independent of any company engaged to undertake drilling services and/or leaching testing.

2 Material considered

1. The following material has been taken into account in making this decision:
   a. Revised Mereenie Oil and Gas Field EMP OL4 and OL5, dated 18 August 2026 and includes further information submitted 25 September 2026.
   b. The principles of ecologically sustainable development referenced in reg 5A and the approval criteria set out in reg 9(1).
   c. The Authority Certificate issued under the *Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act 1989*.
   d. The Code of Practice: Onshore Petroleum Activities in the Northern Territory (the Code) as set out in reg 4A.

3 Statement of reasons

1. The proposed part revision to the EMP was submitted under reg 17 of the Regulations because the proposed change in flaring activities gives rise to an increase in an existing environmental impact and environmental risk that was not provided for in the current plan for the activity. In accordance with reg 16(2), Divisions 1 and 2 apply to the proposed revision as if it were a submission of the whole EMP for approval. I have therefore considered whether the whole EMP, as revised, meets the approval criteria in reg 9. **reg 17(2) reg 16(2)**
2. The EMP combined with the conditions meets the approval criterion in reg 9(1)(a), because it contains all the information required by Schedule 1 of the Regulations. **reg 9(1)(a)**
3. I have taken into account the approval criterion in reg 9(1)(b) by noting the nature and scale of the regulated activity and bearing it in mind during my consideration of the environmental impacts and environmental risks. In particular, I note that: **reg 9(1)(b)**
   a. The nature of the regulated activity is as follows:
      i. The continuation of production activities, including ongoing workovers, upgrading above-ground infrastructure with new wellhead equipment, safety systems and the installation and replacement of gathering lines. All activities covered under this EMP are within existing disturbance footprints. The EMP shows an adequate consideration of potential impacts and risks of the regulated activity and proposes appropriate controls.
      ii. Flaring of high arsenic liquid hydrocarbons via the CTP flare.
   b. The scale of the regulated activity is as follows:
      i. Activities are ongoing and will be conducted on the existing disturbed footprint.
      ii. The flaring of up to 300 barrels per day and no greater than 70,000 total barrels of liquid hydrocarbons (excluding crude oil) as a temporary contingent management measure for 12 months where approved alternative liquid hydrocarbon management options are unavailable. Additionally, the flaring of liquid hydrocarbons during an emergency situation where flaring is necessary to prevent serious public health risk or a risk of significant environmental harm that cannot reasonably be managed by other means.
4. The approval criteria in reg 9(1)(c) requires that I be satisfied that the activity will be carried out in a manner by which the environmental impacts and environmental risks of the activity will be reduced to a level that is both: (i) as low as reasonably practicable; and (ii) acceptable. In assessing whether the EMP meets the approval **reg 9(1)(c)**

criteria, I note that my decision is a prescribed decision (under reg 5A) for s 6A of the Act, and as such requires me to consider and apply the principles of ecologically sustainable development. In accordance with reg 12(3), I provide the following information about how the EMP meets the approval criteria, and the manner in which I have taken into account the principles of ecologically sustainable development when considering whether or not the plan meets the approval criteria.

5. The principles of ecologically sustainable development are defined at section 18-24 of the *Environment Protection Act 2019*, and I address each in turn:

   a. The decision-making principle (s 18 *Environment Protection Act 2019*) requires effective integration of long-term and short-term environmental and equitable considerations, and for processes to provide for community involvement in relation to decisions and actions that affect the community. Related to this, I note the following:

      i. The ongoing regulated activity is low impact and well understood, given more than 40 years of operation in the region, and the extensive surveys and studies that have been undertaken in that time. The flaring of liquid hydrocarbons activity is temporary, contingent and limited in scope, and is subject to additional approval conditions, monitoring and reporting requirements to ensure environmental impacts and risks remain appropriately managed.

      ii. Public consultation of the EMP was not required under the *Petroleum (Environment) Regulations 2016*, as the EMP does not propose drilling or hydraulic fracturing activities. The EMP was publicised as under assessment via the Department of Lands, Planning and Environment's (the Department's) website.

      iii. The EMP includes information on stakeholder consultation undertaken by the interest holder in relation to the regulated activity. This consultation provided stakeholders with an opportunity to raise matters for the interest holder to consider and, where appropriate, address those matters in the EMP. I have considered this stakeholder consultation as part of my consideration of the environmental and equitable considerations relevant to the regulated activity in the making of this decision.

      iv. Next, I have considered short-term and long-term environmental impacts of carrying out the regulated activity. Environmental impacts include direct and indirect effects on the physical, biological, economic, cultural and social aspects of the environment, and may include cumulative impacts or occur over time.

      v. The information before me suggests short-term environmental impacts are manageable with the proposed mitigations and approval conditions in place.

      vi. The information before me suggests long-term environmental impacts are unlikely with the proposed mitigation measures and approval conditions in place to phase out the flaring of liquid hydrocarbons as a temporary contingent management measure.

      vii. There is no particular contest between economic, social and environmental considerations that requires further mention.

      viii. Taking an integrated view of long-term and short-term environmental and equitable considerations, I am satisfied that the considerations on balance and taken together support approval of the EMP.

   b. The precautionary principle (s 19 *Environment Protection Act 2019*) applies when there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, and requires

that lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation.

i. There is some information that indicates the regulated activity may pose a threat of serious or irreversible environmental damage, namely from the contribution of air pollutants associated with the flaring of liquid hydrocarbons and greenhouse gas emissions.

ii. On the basis that the threat does warrant the application of the principle, it is necessary to consider if there is a significant degree of uncertainty as to the nature and scope of the environmental damage that may occur. In relation to the regulated activity under consideration, there is some uncertainty as to the contribution the emissions from the proposed activities in this EMP will have on the local environment and climate. In relation to the flaring of liquid hydrocarbons, the assessment identified uncertainty regarding the potential local environmental impacts of emissions from flaring liquid hydrocarbons. The effect of this uncertainty is reduced by conditions limiting flaring of liquid hydrocarbons as a temporary contingent management measure to no more than 12 months and requiring the interest holder to phase out the activity within that period.

iii. The effect of the uncertainty for climate risk is reduced on the basis that the interest holder must meet the obligations of the Australian Government's safeguard mechanism if the trigger value of 100,000 tCO_2-e per annum is exceeded. The interest holder commits to a number of emissions reduction measures including restrictions on venting, regular leak detection inspections and implementing alternatives to flaring of liquid hydrocarbons.

iv. To address uncertainty regarding the potential for long-term accumulation of contaminants in the receiving environment, I have imposed conditions that limit contingency flaring to no more than 12 months and require environmental monitoring during the period in which flaring occurs and remediation following its cessation.

v. To ensure greenhouse gas emissions are understood, I have imposed a condition requiring provision of an annual report of actual emissions, confirmed by an auditor registered under the Register of Greenhouse and Energy Auditors.

vi. I have carefully evaluated the proposed precautionary measures against the risk-weighted consequences of impacts given the options available, and with a view to avoiding serious or irreversible damage to the environment wherever practicable. Alternative liquid hydrocarbon management options exist and are being pursued by the interest holder; however, these options are not yet ready for implementation and require approval. This time-limited and conditioned approval provides an opportunity for alternatives to be implemented while ensuring that environmental impacts and risks continue to be monitored and managed. The EMP combined with the conditions I have imposed mitigates risks of serious or irreversible damage due to lack of full scientific certainty to a level that is both as low as reasonably practicable and acceptable.

c. The principle of evidence-based decision-making (s 20 *Environment Protection Act 2019*) requires decisions to be made on the best available evidence in the circumstances that is relevant and reliable. I am satisfied that the best available evidence in the circumstances has been obtained because it is relevant and reliable in the following ways:

i. The EMP was developed by persons who have professional qualifications, training, skills and experience on the subject matter of environment, safety, risk management, and petroleum development and operations.

ii. The interest holder employed a comprehensive process to obtain relevant information including environmental assessments, baseline studies, environmental monitoring, stakeholder engagement and cultural heritage surveys.

iii. The EMP has undergone review and assessment by a multi-disciplinary team in DLPE and NT government agencies, which has informed my decision on the EMP.

iv. The interest holder has modified the EMP to address areas of uncertainty or requiring clarification.

v. Some concerns have been raised as to whether the information before me satisfies the principle of evidence-based decision-making. I now turn to consideration of these concerns:

Air Quality

1. Concerns were raised about the potential impacts of flaring liquid hydrocarbons on air quality, including the potential for emissions to affect environmental values and sensitive receptors. In response, the interest holder provided additional information regarding emission sources, the location of sensitive receptors and the potential for impacts associated with flaring activities. Flare consequence modelling conducted found the maximum exposure risk occurs at distances between 55 and 110m from the CTP flare location. The information identifies that the closest lease boundary is approximately 3 km from the flare site and the nearest offsite sensitive receptor, Watarrka National Park, is approximately 17 km from the CTP flare site. The closest human sensitive receptor off the lease is located 20km from the CTP flare.
2. This approval notice includes conditions requiring environmental monitoring, additional operational controls (including Trigger Action Response Plans) and reporting to the Department to address the concerns raised above.
3. The requirement for routine air emissions monitoring or modelling have not been imposed because the flaring activity is temporary, with an approval period of 12 months, and any potential impacts are expected to be limited in duration and adequately managed through operational controls and compliance with approval conditions.

Atmospheric Processes

4. Concerns were raised about the greenhouse gas emissions associated with flaring liquid hydrocarbons and the contribution of those emissions to atmospheric processes. In response, the interest holder revised the EMP and provided further information regarding forecast greenhouse gas emissions, alternative management options, emissions reduction measures and the temporary and contingent nature of the activity.

vi. I believe the information regarding the proposed regulated activity adequately provides the best available evidence in the circumstances that is relevant and reliable to the evidence-based decision-making process.

d. The principle of intergenerational and intra-generational equity (s 21 *Environment Protection Act 2019*) requires that the present generation should ensure that the

health, diversity and productivity of the environment is maintained or enhanced for the benefit of present and future generations. I have given consideration to the impact on present and future generations as follows:

i. This criterion requires me to turn my mind to whether the benefits of the proposal disproportionately burden present or future generations, or particular groups or communities of present or future generations.

ii. I have considered the use of groundwater and am satisfied that the proposed use will not result in either short-term or long-term impacts to other groundwater users.

iii. To ensure any potential impacts to groundwater, soil and air are identified and understood over time, I have imposed conditions requiring environmental monitoring and interpretive reporting of monitoring data, including identification and assessment of changes and trends that may be attributable to the regulated activity.

iv. I have considered whether the health, diversity and productivity of the environment is maintained or enhanced for the benefit of each of these relevant groups.

v. I have imposed conditions requiring assessment and, where necessary, remediation of contamination attributable to flaring activities following cessation of the temporary contingency flaring to ensure the health, diversity and productivity of the environment are maintained for the benefit of future generations.

vi. I have considered the protection of cultural heritage and am satisfied that conduct of the regulated activity will not impact on preservation of cultural heritage for the benefit of future generations.

vii. Stakeholders have been informed about the proposed activities in the EMP and environmental burdens of the regulated activity will not disproportionately affect particular stakeholders.

viii. I consider that cumulative greenhouse gas emissions are not significant when considered in context of 2024-25 Financial Year up to June 2025 NT and Australian emissions, which were approximately 27.69 million tonnes and 437.5 million tonnes respectively. I note that the Australian Government's Safeguard Mechanism applies to projects in the Northern Territory that exceed the trigger threshold.

ix. Cultural values relating to sacred sites will be protected through the application of Authority Certificates issued to the interest holder under the *Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act 1989* and measures for reporting on discovery of archaeological sites during civil maintenance activities. No new ground disturbance is planned to occur.

x. Accordingly I do not believe that the carrying out of the regulated activity in accordance with the EMP would have an effect contrary to the principle of inter or intra-generational equity.

e. The principle of sustainable use (s 22 *Environment Protection Act 2019*) requires that natural resources should be used in a manner that is sustainable, prudent, rational, wise and appropriate. In applying this principle, I have considered the following:

i. I note the findings of the Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracturing (HFI) in the NT states: "..... *in the short to medium, the Australian National Energy Market is likely to require higher levels of flexible, gas-fired generation, which can*

provided a reliable, low emissions suitable for ageing coal-fired generation, and essential security services to complement variable renewable electricity generation."[5] The regulated activity supports the continued supply of natural gas from an existing production field.

ii. No additional groundwater extraction licences are currently required for the regulated activity. Any future consideration of groundwater use will include an application for an extraction licence.

iii. I am satisfied that the concept of sustainable use of natural resources has been taken into account.

f. The principle of biological diversity and ecological integrity (s 23 *Environment Protection Act 2019*) requires that biological diversity and ecological integrity should be conserved and maintained. I have applied this principle as follows:

i. I believe the information I have regarding the existing biodiversity and ecosystems that are to be affected by the regulated activity; the effects that are likely; and the mitigation measures reasonably available, is sufficient.

ii. The potential impacts and risks of the activity identified in the EMP do not pose a significant risk to threatened species. Specific adequate measures for protection of flora and fauna are included in the EMP.

iii. The measures to conserve and maintain biological diversity and ecological integrity in the EMP are appropriate, given the nature and scale of the regulated activity.

iv. If carried out in accordance with the EMP combined with the conditions, the risks of the regulated activity to the conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity are considered to be mitigated to be as low as reasonably practicable and acceptable.

g. The principle of improved valuation, pricing and incentive mechanisms (s 24 *Environment Protection Act 2019*) requires that environmental factors should be included in the valuation of assets and services, through application of the 'polluter pays' principles, consideration of full life cycle costs of providing goods and services and pursuing environmental goals in the most cost-effective way. I have applied the principle as follows:

i. The pollution and waste that will be generated by the regulated activity in the general course of its operation includes air pollutants, domestic waste, workover fill/cuttings, sewage and grey water.

ii. I am satisfied that this pollution and waste will be managed by the interest holder at its own cost as set out in the EMP in Sections 3.9.4 and 3.9.6.

iii. In relation to the risks of a pollution event that may occur unintentionally during the operations of the regulated activity, I consider that the following measures are in place to ensure the interest holder bears the costs of containment, avoidance, and abatement:

1. Impacts and risks associated with contamination of soil, surface water and groundwater, which are managed through meeting mandated requirements for well integrity and clean-up of spills and leaks and remediation of impacted soil.

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[5] Refer Section 9.7.4 of the Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracturing in the Northern Territory; p 233. Available at: https:/ /frackinginquiry.nt.gov.au/inquiry-reports?a=494286

2. Impacts and risks associated with loss of containment of wastewater, which are managed through containment measures.
3. Impacts and risks associated with flaring liquid hydrocarbons are managed through operational controls, environmental monitoring and site remediation as part of closure planning. Consistent with the waste management hierarchy, I have imposed conditions requiring the interest holder to investigate and take actions to phase out the contingency flaring of liquid hydrocarbons, including actively pursuing approvals for alternative liquid hydrocarbon management measures described in the EMP. Consistent with the waste management hierarchy in Section 27 of the *Environment Protection Act 2019*, these conditions support the avoidance and minimisation of liquid hydrocarbon flaring and the associated environmental impacts and risks.

iv. In relation to full life cycle costs, it is expected that ongoing production activities will continue into the foreseeable future. The temporary contingent flaring of liquid hydrocarbons is time limited to the period specified in the conditions of this approval and is required to be phased out within that period. At the end of the regulated activity, the interest holder will take action to remove any residual pollution and waste as detailed by the EMP and conditions.

v. All interest holders are required to provide an environmental security related to the activities in the EMP, as per the onshore petroleum environmental security calculation guideline and prior to commencement of the activities.

vi. With these measures in place, I am satisfied that the EMP and any relevant conditions ensures that environmental costs are not left as externalities to be paid for by Territory taxpayers or the local community. They will be fairly paid for by those who stand to benefit from the regulated activity, such as the interest holder, and consumers who choose to purchase the interest holder's products.

vii. In relation to options to pursue environmental goals in relation to the regulated activity, I have taken into account that these goals should be pursued in the most cost-effective way. This is the case with regard to the conditions set for flaring liquid hydrocarbons. The conditions reflect a balanced approach to mitigating risks of environmental harm in a cost effective and reasonable manner.

viii. I believe approval of the EMP with the conditions I have imposed is consistent with the principle of improved valuation, pricing and incentive mechanisms.

h. The EMP was not referred under the *Environment Protection Act 2019*, as the regulated activity does not have the potential to cause a significant impact on the environment. reg 9(3)

i. The existing environment along with its particular values and sensitivities is appropriately identified in section 4 of the EMP, and to the extent I do not agree or there is some uncertainty, I have imposed conditions to address the relevant risk or risks. reg 9(1)(c)

j. I agree with the risk assessment set out in Appendix A of the EMP, and to the extent I do not agree I have imposed a condition or conditions to address the relevant risk or risks.

k. The interest holder's risk assessment is applicable to activities in all seasons and the outcomes are reflected in the EMP that includes, for example; a wet season management plan; a weed management plan; bushfire management plan; wastewater management plan; rehabilitation management plan; emergency response plan; a methane emissions management plan; and spill management plan. The EMP also includes the required elements for the ongoing management of erosion and sediments. This is consistent with the requirements of the Code that allows for the regulated activity to occur in the wet season months when contingency planning is provided and minimum freeboard in wastewater infrastructure is maintained.

l. The anticipated environmental impacts are appropriately identified in section 6.2 to section 6.10 of the EMP. The regulated activities are a continuation of current activities and cumulative effects have been identified and assessed.

m. The EMP demonstrates how the interest holder will comply with relevant requirements of the Code in undertaking these regulated activities. This includes reference to applicable Australian and international standards that have been adopted for regulated activity, as applicable. The EMP cross references relevant sections of the Code that apply to the mitigation and management measures to enable the reviewer to identify and confirm that the proposed activities comply with the Code, as applicable.

n. I am satisfied that the interest holder has conducted ongoing stakeholder engagement in accordance with the Regulations. The EMP provides details of stakeholder engagement that meets Regulation 7 and Schedule 1, Clause 9 of the Regulations (Section 5 and Appendix B). Stakeholder engagement records (Appendix B) demonstrate that stakeholders did not raise objections about environmental impacts of the proposed activity that required specific changes from the interest holder. The risk assessment in the EMP details the potential environmental impacts of the activity and proposed environmental outcomes to manage impacts on social and cultural surroundings.

o. I recognise the importance the community places on the protection of water, human health management of chemicals and waste, stakeholder engagement, social impacts and regulation and compliance. The EMP appropriately identifies the risks and potential impacts from the regulated activity and commits to mitigation and management measures to address these risks and potential impacts. Where the EMP has not addressed risks and potential impacts, I have required conditions to ensure the interest holder does not rely on flaring of liquid hydrocarbons as a long term management option and requiring the interest holder to seek approval of alternative options aligned with the waste management hierarchy.

p. Having regard to the EMP, together with the conditions applied to this approval, there are no environmental impacts or environmental risks relating to the proposed regulated activity that I consider to be unacceptable.

q. Overall, having regard to the above, I am satisfied that the EMP is appropriate for the nature and scale of the activity, and demonstrates that the regulated activity is to be carried out in a manner by which the environmental impacts and environmental risks are reduced to a level that is:

    1. as low as reasonably practicable; and
    2. acceptable.