



Reform of Environmental Assessment and Approval Processes

- The Northern Territory Government is committed to developing the North in a way that protects and values our precious environment and lifestyle
- A robust, efficient and effective environmental management system will build public and industry confidence
- Government will consult and engage with key industry and community stakeholders to implement environmental reform

The Hawke II Review

The Northern Territory Government is committed to a healthy and sustainable environment through a robust, leading practice environmental regulatory system.

In January 2013, the independent Northern Territory Environmental Protection Authority (NT EPA) was established as part of government's commitment to improving environmental management in the Northern Territory.

In 2014, Dr Allan Hawke AC, was asked to undertake an Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracturing (the Inquiry) in the Northern Territory. In February 2015 the Report of the Inquiry was publicly released. A key finding of the Inquiry was that environmental risks associated with hydraulic fracturing can be managed effectively subject to the creation of a robust regulatory regime.

Dr Hawke was asked to undertake a Review of the Northern Territory's Environmental Assessment and Approvals Process (the Hawke II Review). This recognised that the Territory's existing environmental regulatory framework has been in place for many years and had not kept pace with changes in modern technology or project methodology.

The Review's Findings

In May 2015, Dr Hawke delivered his Review to the Northern Territory Government which offers 3 environmental regulatory structural options. Option 3 is Dr Hawke's recommended regulatory structural option as it will enhance the integrity of the current system.

Fact Sheet

In May 2015, Dr Hawke delivered his Review to the Northern Territory Government which offers 3 environmental regulatory structural options and makes a number of recommendations which will substantially improve:

- The environmental assessment process
- Project approvals with the option for conditions following environmental assessment
- Assurance monitoring and reporting by the NT EPA
- Enforcement mechanisms.

Key features of this option include:

- Certainty for major project proponents by providing a 'single front door' to enter into the system
- Testing and accrediting of project legislation and agency procedures by the Minister for the Environment in consultation with the NT EPA
- Establish the Minister for the Environment as the decision-maker for projects not subject to approval by an accredited approval process
- Transparent public reporting by proponents on compliance with environmental conditions
- Strengthened audit and compliance role for the NT EPA
- The Minister for the Environment to give proponents and the community certainty by publishing policies and procedures
- Clarity in the roles and responsibilities of government agencies and the NT EPA in the system.

Engagement Through 2016

Following its acceptance in principle of all the recommendations in Dr Hawke's report, the Government will be engaging with a wide range of stakeholder groups about:

1. the immediate task of implementing Option 3 from Dr Hawke's report, which will build on the current system and strengthen it considerably. This implementation work will incorporate feedback from stakeholders, and will be completed by 1 January 2017. Improvements will be implemented in a carefully staged and coordinated way, with clear communication in advance of changes occurring. In the meantime all agencies will be working together to ensure that business works smoothly and efficiently as improvements in the system are made.
2. how the NT should build on Option 3 and continue to improve our regulatory system into the future. The Government's longer-term goal is to move towards a model of single environmental approval, as recommended by Dr Hawke. This will involve careful consideration of the features of the model to ensure it is well suited to the Territory's circumstances. Government will seek input from a wide range of groups between now and September 2016 (including formal advice from the EPA) in deciding the final model that should be adopted.