CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK

The department's Governance Framework outlines the principles and approach to governance and accountability.

The department is governed by 9 principles with operational requirements giving effect to each principle. Accountability controls that govern the department's activities are listed against each operational requirement.

This framework allows the department to navigate the accountability requirements of its governance structure and understand how it is addressing each governance principle.

Governance principles

1. Government and public sector relationship	The department's relationship with the government is clear
2. Management and oversight	The department's management and oversight is accountable and has clearly defined responsibilities
3. Organisational structure	The department's structure serves its operations
4. Operations	The department plans its operations to achieve its goals
5. Ethics and integrity	Ethics and integrity are embedded in the department's values and operations
6. People	The department's leadership in people management contributes to individual and organisational achievements
7. Finance	The department safeguards financial integrity and accountability
8. Communication	The department communicates with all parties in a way that is accessible, open and responsive
9. Risk management	The department identifies and manages its risks

Governance structure
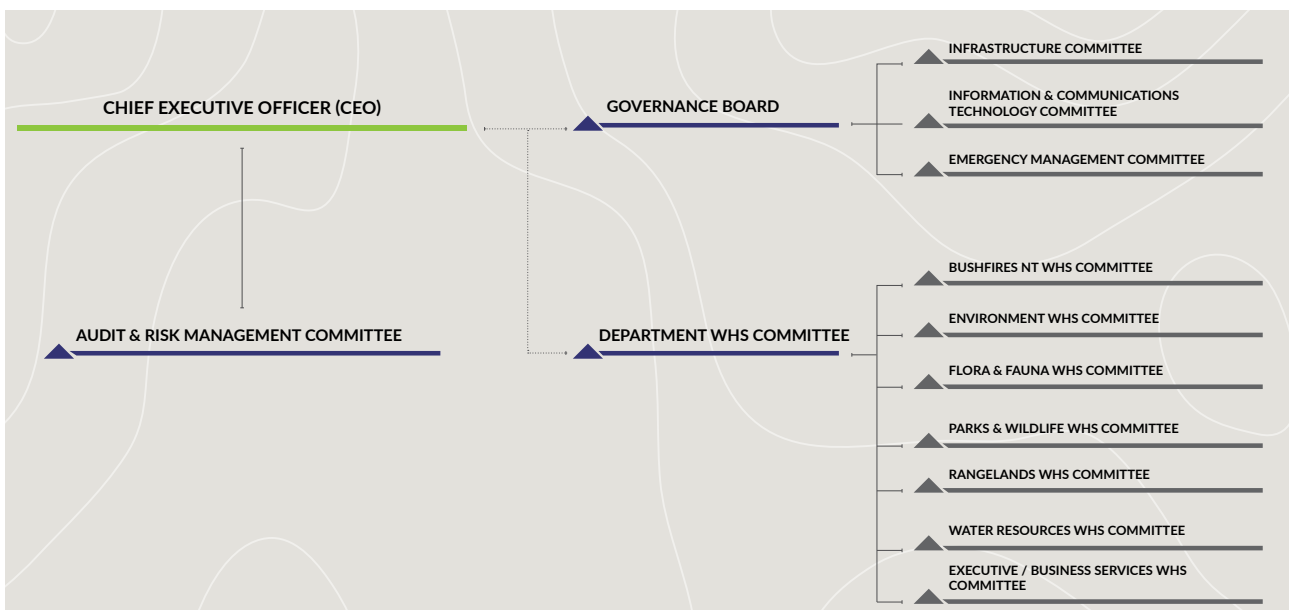
GOVERNANCE BOARD

The Governance Board is integral to the department's strategic governance arrangements and provides direct support to the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) in the development and implementation of strategic direction, risk management, performance of the department, and operational delivery.

The Governance Board is the senior planning and decision-making body for the department responsible for strategic leadership, direction and whole of department policy setting, to ensure the department is positioned to deliver government's objectives and meets its corporate responsibilities and priorities.

The Governance Board has the power to appoint committees as required.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEES

Audit and Risk Management Committee

The Audit and Risk Management Committee (ARMC) provides independent advice and assurance to the CEO on the effectiveness of the agency's audit, risk management and internal control processes.

Infrastructure Committee

The Infrastructure Committee provides whole of department direction (including the Government Business Division - Territory Wildlife Parks) on infrastructure planning and investment decisions.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Committee

The ICT Committee provides effective governance and oversees the process, technology and data components of the department's Strategic Plan and ICT environment and activities to ensure alignment of the agency's business objectives and ICT architecture, as well as adherence with whole of government requirements.

Emergency Management Committee

The Emergency Management Committee is responsible for leading the departments emergency mitigation, business continuity, preparedness, response and recovery responsibilities and objectives and responsibilities in line with the Territory Emergency Plan.

Work Health and Safety Committee

The Department Work Health and Safety Committee provides whole of department direction on policies, strategies and safe systems of work.

The Committee exists to ensure the department complies with its statutory work health and safety obligations to staff and other persons.

Divisional Work Health and Safety Committees

Each division has its own committee to collaborate and contribute health and safety matters, policies and procedures.

STATUTORY COMMITTEES AND BODIES

As at 30 June 2021, the department was responsible for 15 statutory committees and bodies. Membership details can be found at Appendix 2.

NON-STATUTORY COMMITTEES AND BODIES

As at 30 June 2021, the department was responsible for 22 non-statutory committees and bodies. Membership details can be found at Appendix 2.

CORPORATE PLANNING FRAMEWORK

Organisation structure

The CEO is supported by the Governance Board through a clearly defined organisation structure. The organisation structure is published on the department's intranet and is shown on page 10.

Strategic Plan 2021–2024

The department's Strategic Plan 2021–2024 (as shown on pages 8-9) outlines key priorities and activities in delivering services for the next 4 years and includes the department's vision, purpose, goals and values.

Customer Service Charter

The department is committed to providing a high standard of service that is responsive and helps our customers meet their goals. To formalise this, the department has developed a Customer Service Charter that outlines what the department's customers can expect from our services how they can assist us in our delivery of professional, reliable and consistent customer service.

Strategic Workforce Development Plan 2016–20

The Strategic Workforce Development Plan 2016–20 has actionable strategies to address current and future workforce challenges. Priorities outlined in the plan are leadership, diversity, culture and workforce planning for the future.

A key challenge for the department is to ensure our workforce has the capacity and capability to deliver against the strategic priorities set by government.

The NT Public Sector Workforce Strategy 2021–2026 was released on 23 June 2021 and a new Strategic Workforce Development Plan is currently being developed for the department.

Aboriginal Employment Strategy 2016–20

The Aboriginal Employment Strategy focuses on sourcing and developing the right people and ensuring they have a supportive, sensitive and appropriate workplace to grow and develop.

The strategy aims to increase Aboriginal employment in the department in all occupations, levels of employment and locations, improve Aboriginal workforce capability, and grow the department into a mature and culturally competent workplace.

The Aboriginal Employment and Career Development Strategy 2021–25 was released on 24 June 2021 and a new Aboriginal Employment Strategy is currently being developed for the department.

Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Strategic Plan 2015–19

The ICT Strategic commenced redevelopment in 2020–21. Divisional ICT roadmaps are being finalised, providing a business-focused bottom-up approach to the strategy design. Upon completion of these roadmaps, work will start on a whole of department data strategy and enterprise architecture. These roadmaps and strategies will be used to inform the new ICT Strategic Plan.

Business plans

The Strategic Plan is the basis of our business planning, and in turn, our performance planning. Divisional Business Plans and Personal Development Plans focus on linkages and implementation against the strategic direction.

Business plans are continually reviewed (with quarterly updates) and adjusted in response to changes to internal and external environments that affect the department.

Annual Strategic Risk Assessment

Throughout 2020-21, the Governance Board reviewed the department's risk register against any strategic and operational changes and participated in a risk workshop. This year, the assessment scope was to identify risk sources that may hinder achievement of the goals in the department's Strategic Plan.

The assessment identified new and emerging risks within the current operating and internal control environment and new treatments, to address the risks, continue to be determined. These activities contribute to the assurance that risks are controlled and the department is responsive to managing risk as a priority. Work health and safety operational risk registers are managed within each division.

COVID-19

In line with the Northern Territory Government's commitment to keep Territorians healthy and safe and to protect businesses and jobs as well as keep the Territory on the road to recovery, the department's Governance Board developed a COVID-19 Response Plan.

The Plan informed staff of measures and requirements to ensure their health and safety, ensure the department's compliance with the Australian and Northern Territory Government's directions for

COVID-19 while ensuring critical business continuity, guidance for implementation of the department's priority and critical activities, and make sure communication methods were streamlined and consistent.

The Response Plan and messaging is updated as circumstances change and communicated to staff through regular updates from the CEO.

DEPARTMENTAL COMMUNICATIONS

Internal communications

The CEO produces a regular e-newsletter to promote department news, staff achievements, and project and program outcomes. It is emailed to all department staff and posted on the department's intranet. Staff are encouraged to contribute articles and information.

As part of the People Matter Action Statement, Governance Board meeting outcomes are distributed to department staff via email from the CEO and are placed on the department's intranet.

Each division in the department holds regular staff meetings to share news, achievements and information. Executive directors and senior directors are also encouraged to present to regional staff on whole of government and agency priorities and issues.

Other internal communication activities include regular corporate emails to staff about important warnings or events. Directors are also required to maintain contact lists for all of their staff members for use in the need for direct communication such as team texts or individual phone calls.

External communications tools

Our webpage depws.nt.gov.au is the primary resource for information on the department's key functions.

The department uses the NTG's 'Have Your Say' online engagement platform for external engagement activities that require public feedback or submissions, as well as directly engaging with key stakeholders.

The department produces newsletters to regularly communicate information to stakeholders. Bushfires NT, for example, produces a quarterly newsletter called 'Hot Topics' which has been in production since May 2015. The newsletter provides a regular update of interesting stories and events from Bushfires NT and the bushfires brigade volunteers. Volunteers are encouraged to supply articles and achievements.

The department also holds regular community engagement activities to directly communicate with the public and stakeholders. The Parks and Wildlife Commission's 'Be Crocwise' program continues to educate people about crocodiles and reduce the risk of attack.

The division's popular Junior Ranger Program offers 9 to 12 year old children the opportunity to discover the NT's natural and cultural environment through fun, hands-on activities. The program runs annually in Alice Springs, Katherine and Darwin.

The department regularly contributes to other newsletters and the department provides support to the Pastoral Land Board to produce a quarterly newsletter to keep pastoralists up to date on current activities.

The department holds regular external community engagement activities to build awareness and capacity for corporate social responsibility among its stakeholders. For a list of these activities see 'Corporate Social Responsibility'.

The department manages 7 Facebook pages, 4 Instagram accounts and Google business pages for many of the Northern Territory's parks and reserves.

Future priorities

- Implement a new ticket-based project management system.
- Continue to improve on campaign monitoring and evaluation.
- Update department's social media policy and guidelines to better reflect new department direction.
- Ongoing review of content and improvements to user accessibility for the department's intranet and internet web pages.
- Continue to gain followers for the department's social media accounts and grow engagement with digital content.
- Seek out innovative ways to showcase the expertise of department staff.
- Successfully deliver communications and media requirements for department campaigns and climate change priorities.
- Support the divisions in successfully delivering stakeholder engagement.

CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

Corporate governance accountabilities

The department is required to comply with the *Financial Management Act 1995*, *Public Sector Employment and Management Act 1993*, *Procurement Act 1995* and other legislation, such as the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1992* and the *Work Health And Safety (National Uniform Legislation) Act 2011*.

The department's corporate governance framework and the relevant statutes are promoted to staff in many ways, including through the department's induction programs.

Internal controls

The department has a number of internal control mechanisms and policies in place to mitigate workplace risks, including fraud.

Corporate delegations

The CEO delegates certain powers to other employees under the *Financial Management Act 1995*, *Public Sector Employment and Management Act 1993*, *Contracts Act 1978* and *Procurement Act 1995*. In 2020-21, the following CEO approved delegations were in place:

- Human Resources delegations.
- Procurement and Contract delegations.
- Financial delegations.
- Information (Records) Security delegations.
- ICT delegations.

Conflict of interest

Conflicts of interest, whether real or perceived, can erode confidence in the department's integrity. Employees are responsible for completing a Disclosure Declaration as soon as they become aware of any real or perceived conflict and must take all reasonable steps to prevent involvement in any declared conflicts.

Reporting suspected and improper conduct

The department is committed to high levels of professionalism and ethical behaviour in delivering its services, and values honesty and integrity in its administrative and management practices.

Effective mechanisms are in place to facilitate the notification, assessment and management of disclosures of information about wrongdoing or danger.

Staff can report suspected wrongdoing in accordance with the *Independent Commissioner Against Corruption Act 2017*. As at 30 June 2020, the department's Executive Officer, was the department's nominated recipient.

Code of conduct

Through internal training, such as the corporate induction program, staff are informed of their responsibility to act in accordance with the NTPS Code of Conduct.

Freedom of information and privacy

In accordance with the *Information Act 2002*, a range of Northern Territory Government policies and procedures are in place to enable individuals to access records and information held by the department.

Accounting and property manual

In accordance with the *Financial Management Act 1995*, the department has an Accounting and Property Manual that specifies finance procedures and internal control requirements. The Accounting and Property Manual was updated in 2020-21 and made available on the department's intranet.

INFORMATION MANAGEMENT

Information requests

The department is subject to the *Information Act 2002* (the Act) and is required to meet the obligations placed on it under the Act. Members of the public can gain access to documents or records held by the department through Freedom of Information requests unless the document is within an exception or exemption category specified in the legislation.

The Act also defines strict timeframes for dealing with these requests for information. During 2020-21, the department received 18 applications for access to government or personal information under the Act. The table below provides statistical data about the formal access applications the department received.

INFORMATION ACT REQUESTS	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
Applications carried over from previous year	-	1	4	3
Applications to access personal information	-	-	2	-
Applications to access government information	12	12	12	18
Applications to access personal and government information	-	2	-	-
Applications to correct personal information	-	-	-	-
Applications transferred		-	6	2
Requests withdrawn	1	1	-	3
Requests refused	-	-	-	4
Internal reviews	-	-	-	-
Responses completed within 30-day period	10	10	5	3
Responses completed exceeding 30-day period	-	-	4	5
Applications handled as at 30 June	10	10	9	17
Applications pending	1	4	3	4

Ombudsman enquiries

The department received no enquiries from the Ombudsman during the reporting year.

Records management

The CEO of a public sector organisation has a duty to ensure that the organisation complies with Part 9 of the *Information Act 2002*. The Records and Information Management Standards require agencies to comply with core principles for the effective management of records and information.

This is to ensure records are disposed of in accordance with the Act. All organisational records, including records in business systems, must be covered by a current and authorised records disposal schedule and be reviewed when major legislative or policy change affects the regulatory environment.

MONITORING THROUGH AUDITS AND REVIEWS

Internal audits

There were 6 risk-based internal audits conducted under the department's 2020-21 Internal Audit Plan as detailed below:

INTERNAL AUDIT	FOCUS	OUTCOME
Official Travel	To review the department's official travel against the whole-of-government Travel Policy Framework.	The audit found inconsistent application of the controls. Recommendations were made to strengthen existing controls and practices.
Cabinet Information Security Compliance Check	To assess the department's compliance with the required Cabinet information security measures.	The annual compliance check identified no material weaknesses in controls.
Guarantees and Indemnities	To assess the department's compliance with the Treasurer's Directions – Guarantees and Indemnities and any other legislative requirements	The audit found no material fraud or breaches of financial legislation.
Value for Territory Procurement	To assess the department's compliance against the Northern Territory Government's Procurement Rules, Governance Policy and Buy Local Plan.	The audit identified minor breaches to the Procurement Rules. 4 instances of inadequate management of perceived conflicts of interest were identified. Recommendations were made to strengthen existing controls and practices. The Buy Local Industry Advocate reviewed the report and concluded that overall, the department demonstrated a satisfactory level of compliance.
Work Health and Safety Committee Framework	To review the department's work health and safety committee framework for compliance with legislative requirements.	The audit recommended improvements to training arrangements for committee members. One breach of S79(4a) of the Act was detected where injured workers' identities were inadvertently provided to the Committee.
Waste Discharge Licences	Assess level of compliance with legislative requirements for the granting of new Waste Discharge Licences.	The audit found a satisfactory level of compliance with several recommendations made to improve existing processes and regulatory decision making.

External audits

The Office of the Northern Territory Auditor-General selected the department for the 7 following external audits during 2020-21. Audit results are published in the Auditor-General's reports to the Legislative Assembly.

EXTERNAL AUDIT	FOCUS	OUTCOME
Agency Compliance Audit ending 30 June 2020	To assess compliance against the *Financial Management Act 1995* and other Northern Territory Government policies and directives.	The audit found a 'satisfactory' level of compliance. One recommendation was made to improve existing controls.
End of Year Review 30 June 2020	To assess the adequacy of selected aspects of end of financial year controls over reporting, accounting and material financial transactions and balances with the primary purpose of providing support to the audit of the Treasurer's Annual Financial Statement.	The audit found a 'satisfactory' level of compliance. Recommendations were made to improve existing controls.
Corporate Credit Cards Data Analytics	To examine verified transactions using corporate credit cards to identify the existence of fraud or other irregularities.	The audit found several non-compliances. Recommendations were made to improve existing controls and raise awareness of staff.
Buy Local Industry Advocate	To assess compliance with Contractor Management and Contractor Performance Reporting rules.	The audit found several non-compliances. Recommendations were made to improve existing controls and raise awareness of staff.
Territory Wildlife Parks Financial Statements	To form an audit opinion of the financial statements of the Territory Wildlife Parks.	An unmodified audit opinion was issued. One audit issue was identified.
Nitmiluk (Katherine Gorge) Nation-al Park Board Financial Statements	To form an audit opinion of the financial statements of the Nitmiluk (Katherine Gorge) National Park Board for the year ending 30 June 2020.	An unmodified audit opinion was issued. 2 audit issues were identified.
Cobourg Peninsula Sanctuary and Marine Park Board Financial Statements	To form an audit opinion of the financial statements of the Cobourg Peninsula Sanctuary and Marine Park Board for the year ending 30 June 2020.	An unmodified audit opinion was issued. 3 audit issues were identified.

Insurable risk

Insurable risks are generally related to workers compensation, assets and inventories, public liability and indemnities.

INSURABLE RISK CATEGORY	MITIGATION STRATEGIES
Public liability	• Formal risk assessments completed • Repairs and maintenance program in place to reduce risks associated with physical assets, managed by the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics. • Ongoing review of practices and procedures to ensure public safety • Appropriate signage • Education campaigns for staff • Building audits, for example security, maintenance, compliance • Appropriate security and testing, for example fire systems, alarms, patrols and staff
Workers' compensation	• Work Health and Safety (WHS) Management system in place • WHS policies and standard operating procedures in place • Risk assessments and Job Safety Analysis undertaken • Workplace Hazard Inspections • Job-specific training and support • Utilisation of Employee Assistance Program (EAP) • Early intervention program • Critical incident debriefings • Work life balance strategies
Asset and inventories	• Formal risk assessments completed • Ongoing review of policies and practices to guide standard operating procedures to protect assets and inventories • Asset registers maintained for fixed and leased assets
Vehicles (for example motor vehicles, ATVs and boats)	• Regular service and maintenance checks • Driving training (4 wheel drives, ATVs, boat handling)
Indemnities	• Formal risk assessments completed each year and with each new agreement