



Local Government Association of the Northern Territory

LGANT Submission to **ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATORY REFORM**

Via email to: environment.policy@nt.gov.au

14 June 2017

NT EPA provided its Roadmap for a Modern Environmental Regulatory Framework for the Northern Territory

Please provide any comments you may have on the NT EPA's Roadmap.

LGANT supports the guiding principles of the regulatory framework as outlined in the discussion paper.

Quality of information used in decision making processes

What other initiatives could be introduced to improve the quality of information available in the assessment and approval process?

Information needs to be online and there needs to be email alerts provided to stakeholders (through subscription) in much the same way that is proposed for the NT government's 'opening the parliament to the people' exercise proposed as a means of alerting people to legislative proposals and hearings.

What mechanisms could be introduced to better access and use Indigenous traditional knowledge in the system?

Greater use of the government's Aboriginal Interpreter service as well as more use of graphical content in presentations and publications.

Encouraging public participation

Should draft Environmental Assessment Reports be made available for review? Either to proponents or publicly? What value is there for either proponents or the public by making the draft reports available for review?

Yes. The greatest value will be in identifying mistakes or oversights that have been made. There could also be impacts that were not properly identified during the early stages of the process.

Should upfront engagement with the community be legislated so that all referral documents are required to contain a consultation report as well as an ongoing stakeholder engagement plan?

Yes. Legislation provides certainty over process and given the quantity of four major groupings of stakeholders a stakeholder engagement plan would be practical and proper. The public access to information provisions in the *Local Government Act* (Section 200) could be used as a reference.

Making the best use of our community's eyes and ears

Do you support any of the options outlined? Please provide information to explain why an option is supported.

Option 3 is supported on the basis it is difficult to give priority to stakeholders and leaving people out might cause conflicts that are unnecessary or avoidable.

If either Option 1 or 2 is chosen local government would want the sector specifically mentioned whereas at the moment it is only implied in Option 1. Also if Option 3 is not chosen there is a case for suggesting the process goes against what are standard environment management objectives.

Introducing review (appeals) processes

How can this proposal be improved to strike the appropriate balance between providing business certainty and ensuring accountability in decision making? What groups or entities should be included or not included? Please provide information to explain your position.

Local governments have to be included because of the possibility of projects having impact on council infrastructure, services and facilities into the future.

Do you have any suggestions for how we can ensure frivolous and vexatious applications are minimised or avoided?

Apply penalties to the persons that make them. There are provisions NT legislation which could be copied or considered. The *Local Government Act* has sections on misleading representations (Section 253) and procedure for disciplinary committees (Section 81) that could be useful.

Tony Tapsel,
Chief Executive Officer