



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

No. 254

WRITTEN QUESTION

J Davis to the Minister for Lands, Planning and Environment, Hon Joshua Burgoyne MLA:

Middle Arm Precinct and Darwin Harbour

1. **Both the NT EPA and the Australian Government are conducting environmental assessments relevant to the Middle Arm precinct, the NT EPA under the Environment Protection Act 2019 and the Commonwealth under the EPBC Act.**

- a. **What is the current status of each assessment, and has either regulator raised issues of concern about the precinct's potential impacts on Darwin Harbour?**

The Middle Arm Precinct Proposal requires a strategic environmental assessment by an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority (NT EPA) issued the final Terms of Reference (ToR) for an EIS to the proponent. The ToR requires the proponent to provide information to address concerns with potential significant environmental impacts from the proposal including on Darwin Harbour. The draft EIS is due for submission to the NT EPA by 7 October 2026.

For further information please see [Middle Arm Sustainable Development Precinct | NTEPA](#) and [Middle Arm Sustainable Development Precinct Strategic Assessment - DCCEEW](#).

Questions regarding the Commonwealth assessment should be directed to the National Environment Protection Authority and/or NT Department of Logistics and Infrastructure (DLI).

- b. **The answer to Written Question No. 140, given by the Minister for Logistics and Infrastructure, advised that the Environmental Impact Statement “will be released for public exhibition when the draft is complete”. What is its current status, and when is public exhibition expected?**

The draft EIS is due for submission to the NT EPA by 7 October 2026. Following submission of the draft EIS to the NT EPA, it will be published and the public and government authorities will be invited to make a submission on the draft EIS during a 60-business day consultation period.

Open consultations are available at:

<https://ntepa.nt.gov.au/consultation/open-consultations>

You may subscribe to receive NT EPA notifications about environmental impact assessments at:

<https://ntepa.nt.gov.au/publications-and-advice>

2. **In October 2025, the Commonwealth determined that the proposed action for the installation of acid gas removal units at the Ichthys facility on the Middle Arm Peninsula was not a controlled action. Records of the Commonwealth Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water released under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 record that “This referral relates to construction activities only”, that “consideration of greenhouse gas emissions was not within scope of the assessment”, and that “The referral is not part of the Middle Arm Strategic Assessment”.**

- a. **Which proposals within the Middle Arm precinct have been, or are being, assessed outside the Middle Arm strategic assessment?**

The Middle Arm Precinct is located on the Middle Arm Peninsula, where there are several existing and expanding operations.

The following operations are proposed by INPEX Operations Australia Pty Ltd on the Middle Arm Peninsula (outside of the Middle Arm Precinct) and require assessment under the *Environment Protection Act 2019*:

- [Ichthys LNG AGRU Upgrades and CCS Preparedness Project](#);
- [Ichthys Carbon Capture and Storage Project](#); and
- [Bonaparte Carbon Capture and Storage Project – INPEX Operations Australia Pty Ltd](#)

- b. **Please provide the proponent and the date of referral for each.**

Proponent and dates are available at the links in the item above.

- c. **On what basis is a proposal within the precinct assessed outside the strategic assessment rather than under it, and who makes that decision?**

The referred Middle Arm Precinct is currently subject to the environmental impact assessment process.

- d. **What does the Middle Arm strategic assessment assess that separate referrals do not?**

The Middle Arm Precinct strategic environmental assessment is examining a program for establishing an industrial precinct including consideration of regional impacts rather than seeking approval for individual projects.

3. **Has the Government committed to a low emissions outcome, including carbon capture, for the Middle Arm Sustainable Development Precinct; if so, in which document is that commitment recorded and in what terms?**

- a. **Will the addition of new LNG or gas processing infrastructure at the precinct increase the net emissions footprint of Darwin Harbour?**
- b. **What modelling supports the Government's position, and will it be tabled?**

Questions regarding the potential environmental objectives of the Middle Arm Precinct should be directed to the DLI.

4. **The Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade's brochure Darwin region future water supply records, as Option 2 of the Preliminary Assessment released in February 2021, "A desalination plant to be located at the Middle Arm Sustainable Development Precinct and drawing sea water and discharging wastewater into Darwin Harbour (12,000 ML/y)", together with a water recycling project of 5,000 ML/y.**

- a. **Is a desalination plant at Middle Arm still proposed; if so, at what capacity, and in which current document is it recorded?**
- b. **The brochure records that a Detailed Business Case was to be prepared by PricewaterhouseCoopers. Was it completed, on what date, and what did it conclude in relation to desalination?**

- c. **What assessment has been undertaken of the impact on Darwin Harbour of discharging desalination wastewater at that volume, and has that assessment been completed?**

The Middle Arm Precinct EIS is yet to be submitted to the NT EPA.

- d. **Will that assessment, and the Detailed Business Case, be published?**

The Middle Arm Precinct EIS is yet to be submitted to the NT EPA. The completed assessment register is available at: <https://ntepa.nt.gov.au/your-business/public-registers/environmental-impact-assessments-register/completed-assessments>

5. **What formal role have Larrakia traditional owners had in decisions about Middle Arm's development - not as proponents in specific commercial ventures, but in decisions about whether and how the precinct proceeds, what industries are permitted and how Darwin Harbour is protected?**

The Middle Arm Precinct EIS is yet to be submitted to the NT EPA.

The *Environment Protection Act 2019* and *Environment Protection Regulations 2020* outline the requirements for public consultation during the EIA process. These consultation periods include:

- 20 business days after the NT EPA decides to accept a referral to inform the NT EPA's decision on whether assessment is required and, if so, by what method;
- 15 business days on the draft ToR, should the NT EPA determine that assessment is required by EIS method;
- 30-60 business days on the draft EIS; and
- 15 business days on the EIS supplement.

Furthermore, it should be noted that the objects of the *Environment Protection Act 2019* are:

- a) to protect the environment of the Territory;
- b) to promote ecologically sustainable development so that the wellbeing of the people of the Territory is maintained or improved without adverse impact on the environment of the Territory;
- c) to provide for broad community involvement during the process of environmental impact assessment; and
- d) to recognise the role that Aboriginal people have as stewards of their country as conferred under their traditions and recognised in law and the importance of participation by Aboriginal people and communities in environmental decision-making processes.

6. **If the role of the Larrakia people has been limited to commercial partnerships rather than decision-making about their country, how**

does the Government reconcile that with its obligations under the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act and the principles of free, prior and informed consent?

The Middle Arm Precinct EIS is yet to be submitted to the NT EPA. Questions regarding the development of the EIS for Middle Arm Precinct should be directed to DLI.

- 7. What is the Government's definition of success for Middle Arm, by what date does it expect to demonstrate that success, and what happens to the public investment already made if the precinct does not attract sufficient private investment to proceed?**

Questions regarding the operation of the Middle Arm Precinct should be directed to DLI.