

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

WRITTEN QUESTION

Mr Higgins to the Minister for Environment and Natural Resources:

Environment

1. When it comes to the rehabilitation of mine sites and the sites of other extractive and industrial activities, what are the terms and conditions for this rehabilitation? Who determines these terms and conditions? Can these terms and conditions be changed at any point after the commencement of the operation? Can these terms and conditions be changed without the consent of the operator?
2. On page 201, the Budget refers to “[a]ddressing historical contamination to minimise environmental and health impacts”. Which historical contamination is being referred to here?

ANSWERS:

1. In relation to mine and extractive sites, during the application for an authorisation a proponent is required to include information regarding the rehabilitation of the site. At the commencement of mine life the closure objectives and criteria are typically conceptual. As a mine moves towards closure, a detailed closure plan is developed. This includes consultation with stakeholders, including the land holder, regarding the proposed final land use. At this time the final rehabilitation objectives and criteria are determined. The proponent would put forward proposed criteria subject to government review and approval by the responsible Minister or authority. The ability to change the terms and conditions of rehabilitation will depend on the legislation being used to authorise the activity and its rehabilitation.

The Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority (NT EPA) does not “approve/determine terms and conditions” for proposed developments. However, the NT EPA may influence the terms and conditions that may be applied to rehabilitation activities on a project by project basis by providing recommendations to the responsible Minister or consent authority to incorporate as conditions of a project approval. This is only possible if the proposed project is subject to an environmental impact assessment under the Environmental Assessment Act 1982. The responsible Minister or consent authority must decide whether to adopt any recommendations on rehabilitation that the NT EPA may make for the particular proposal that was assessed.

2.

This strategic issue is referring to a range of historical sources of contamination. Historical contamination often results from land uses such as: industrial activities, intensive agriculture and horticulture, waste disposal, firefighting activities (PFAS) and from natural events such as Cyclone Tracy (e.g. asbestos contamination).