

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

WRITTEN QUESTION

Mr Maley

to Minister for the Environment and Heritage

Environmental damage, financial deterrents

Does the NT Government intend to implement more effective financial deterrents to health, heritage and environmental damage caused by local and foreign owned companies?

ANSWER

Legislation to protect public health, heritage sites and the environment focuses on outcomes. The nationality of an offending individual or company is not relevant and does not influence the actions required to prevent an inappropriate activity or to penalise that offender.

The Northern Territory has several modern pieces of legislation aimed at addressing these issues. These include the *Waste Management and Pollution Control Act 1998* and the *Water Act 1992*.

In general, the levels of penalties for environmental offences incorporated in these laws are comparable to those in other States and Territories. The *Environment Offences and Penalties Act 1996* includes penalties up to \$1,250,000 for a body corporate and up to \$250,000 for an individual found guilty of the most serious environmental offences. Penalties are geared to the scale of the particular environmental issue and the culpability of the offender. The penalties established under the *Environmental Offences and Penalties Act* are picked up under a range of statutes including the *Waste Management and Pollution Control Act*, the *Water Act* and the *Mining Management Act*.

The Government continues to examine ways of improving the legislative base for protecting the health of Territorians and the unique heritage and environmental values of the Northern Territory. The *Heritage Conservation Act 1991* will be reviewed over the next 18 months to strengthen the protection of heritage sites. This review will include an evaluation of the adequacy of the penalties under the Act. The protection of public health has been a significant concern, and the Government will consider the

Public and Environmental Health Bill in the near future. These initiatives aim to ensure that there are adequate deterrents to individuals and companies that may act with disregard for public health, heritage conservation and environmental protection. The Government has also established the Parliamentary Environmental Committee and charged it with considering the need for an Environment Protection Authority in the Northern Territory. If such an agency is considered necessary, the Committee will consider the most appropriate structure.