

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

WRITTEN QUESTION

Mr Higgins to the Minister for Environment and Natural Resources:

Environment Management

1. Please advise whether carbon pollution is now considered when assessing the environmental impact of large projects? How does this differ from previous practice?
2. What are the responsibilities, targets and strategies of the Aboriginal Carbon Unit?
3. Is there any cost associated with the re-instatement of the Darwin Harbour Advisory Committee?
4. Have the Energy Smart and Water Smart programs for small business been established?
5. Has the proposed amendment to the Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act to recognise Indigenous Ranger groups been finalised yet?
6. Has a Renewable Energy Unit been established within DCM?
7. When can we expect the proposed changes to the Environmental Protection Act?
8. Has the Public Environment Report threshold been lowered?

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1. Yes. The NT Environment and Protection Authority (NT EPA) considers whether emissions have the potential to have a significant effect on the environment, and if so, requires those potential impacts to be assessed under the *Environmental Assessment Act*. To assess the significance of potential impacts from greenhouse gas emissions (GGEs), the NT EPA considers estimates of Scope 1 (direct) and Scope 2 (energy indirect) emissions for the construction and operational phases in absolute and carbon dioxide equivalent values for each year of the proposal (in accordance with the National Greenhouse and Energy Reporting Act 2007). There has been no significant change in practice. The NT EPA has not recently assessed a large scale

emissions proposal such as a gas plant or large industrial development.

2. The Aboriginal Carbon Unit (ACU) was established with the broad goal of supporting the further development of emissions reduction projects on Aboriginal land. In its first year, the ACU moved to develop more detailed guidelines by consulting widely with existing and potential project proponents to seek industry views on how the NTG could best support further development of the industry.

Following the initial round of consultation, an industry forum was organised. Representatives of all major emissions reduction projects on Aboriginal land, along with Aboriginal Land Councils, consultants and advisers working with project groups, and researchers working on emissions reduction methodologies reached an agreed position on areas where NTG support would best contribute to further industry development.

The key areas identified were:

1. Clarification of the right to conduct a carbon project on the range of land tenure arrangements that exist in the Territory.
2. Support for the establishment of a networking/information sharing framework to strengthen knowledge sharing and development of best practice recognition within the industry.
3. Support for key industry support services such as the North Australian Fire Information website.
4. Development of clear policies addressing climate change, environmental and other offset arrangements and the emissions reduction and broader environmental services industries.

The ACU developed a draft Aboriginal Carbon Industry Strategy that is scheduled to be considered by Cabinet in the next month. The draft strategy proposes Government positions on all the issues raised by industry, and spells out the activities of the ACU.

3. Total estimated costs for 2017-18 for Darwin Harbour Advisory Committee is \$85 000 including salaries and operations.
4. Not applicable. Refer question to Department of Chief Minister.
5. Not applicable. Refer question to Department of Tourism and Culture.
6. Not applicable. Refer question to Department of Chief Minister.
7. A draft environment protection exposure bill is expected to be available for public consultation activities during October/November 2018. Introduction to Parliament is expected to be in March 2019.
8. There are no amendments to the existing Environmental Assessment Administrative Procedures. The test for whether or not impact

assessment will be required remains whether or not there is potential for a significant effect on the environment. It is the responsibility of the NT EPA to determine the appropriate level of assessment for projects given their potential environmental impacts and risks. The NT EPA may require an Environment Impact Statement or a Public Environment Report.

The new environment protection Act will introduce the following levels of assessment:

- Tier 1: which is assessment based on referral information
- Tier 2: which is assessment based on referral information supplemented by additional information
- Tier 3: assessment by environmental impact statement
- Assessment by inquiry.

The new Tier 1 and Tier 2 processes replace the public environment report process currently contained in the Environmental Assessment Administrative Procedures.