



# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

## READING A BILL

Bills are proposed laws which the Assembly considers. Once the Assembly has agreed to a bill, the Administrator assents to (formally approves) the bill and it becomes an act (law).

The purpose of a bill is to either introduce new law or amend an existing act. When a new act is established, it is called the principal act.

### Short title

The short title appears on the first page of the bill. It is what the bill is commonly referred to as. For example:

*Weapons Control Amendment Bill 2020.*

### Long title

The long title is a brief summary of the scope of the bill. At the first, second and third reading stages of a bill, the Clerk reads the long title of the bill. For example:

*A Bill for an Act to amend the Weapons Control Act 2001*

### Structure of a bill

Every bill has a formal structure and, for ease of reading and interpretation, is divided into a number of smaller elements.

### Table of provisions

Every bill has a table of provisions listing each part of the bill's title and its contents.

### Parts

The text of a bill is divided into parts. Each part deals with a different aspect of the bill's subject matter.

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### Divisions and subdivisions

A part may be split into divisions and subdivisions. These are also listed in the table of provisions.

### Clauses and subclauses

Divisions are divided into numbered clauses for convenience. Clauses are numbered consecutively throughout the whole bill. Clauses can be further divided into subclauses.

### Sections and subsections

Once a bill becomes an act, clauses and subclauses are known as sections and subsections.

### Commencement clause

Acts usually commence (come into force) on either assent, proclamation (published in the Government Gazette) or on a specific date in the act.

### Objects clause

If included, the objects clause sets out the underlying purpose of the proposed act. It can help interpret the act.

### Definitions clause

If any specific definitions are required in a principal act they are listed in alphabetical order.

Formal definitions help avoid disputes over meanings and save unnecessary repetition.

## SUMMARY

The **short title** is what the bill is commonly referred to as.

The **long title** is a brief summary of the scope of the bill.

A bill is divided into:

- Table of provisions
- Parts
- Divisions and sub divisions
- Clauses and sub-clauses.

### Amending clauses

There are a number of ways that a bill can amend existing legislation. Most commonly these amendments will delete words, insert words or substitute words.

### Schedules

Schedules appear at the end of bills, after all the clauses, under the main heading of 'Schedules'. If there is more than one schedule, they are numbered. Some matters are more suited to be in a schedule than to be a clause. Schedules can list amendments to other acts, which are called 'consequential amendments', or rules, maps, forms and fee scales.

### Endnotes

Endnotes give more information, especially in complex bills. Often they detail the amendment history of a principal act.