



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

No. 318

WRITTEN QUESTION

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

Darwin Airshed Cumulative Air Quality

1. What advice has the Minister received on whether cumulative emissions from existing liquefied natural gas (LNG) facilities, the proposed Middle Arm precinct and future industrial development in the Darwin airshed will remain within applicable air quality standards?
 - a. Has the Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority ('the Authority') advised the Minister of any level of deterioration in air quality it would regard as unacceptable? If so, on what date, and can that advice be provided?
 - b. Has the Authority advised the Minister of the level of uncertainty in the modelling relied on, and can that advice be provided?
 - c. Which modelling assumptions would need to prove incorrect before air quality standards could be exceeded, and is that sensitivity analysis recorded in any document?
 - d. If monitoring identified increasing pollution levels, what action would be taken and by whom?
2. What is the current cumulative pollution load in the Darwin airshed, by pollutant, and what proportion of the applicable standard does it represent?
 - a. In which document or system is the cumulative load recorded, and is it published?
 - b. If a cumulative load is not maintained in that form, on what basis are cumulative impacts assessed when a licence is granted or varied?
3. Has the Authority advised the Minister, or recorded in any published document, a point at which no further industrial emissions should be approved in the Darwin airshed regardless of an individual proposal's compliance with its licence conditions?

- a. If so, what is that point, and in which document is it recorded?
 - b. If not, has the question been considered and, if so, on what date?
- 4. Has a maximum allowable emissions limit been determined for the Middle Arm precinct?
 - a. If so, what are the limits, for which pollutants, and in which document are they recorded?
 - b. Which pollutants are expected to be the limiting factors?
 - c. What proportion of the airshed's remaining capacity would the proposed precinct consume?
 - d. Will those limits be published before final approvals are granted?
- 5. In which published guideline, policy or procedure is the Authority's approach to assessing cumulative air quality impacts set out? Please provide the title and date of each.
 - a. Has the Authority advised the Minister that the current regulatory framework is sufficient to protect the community from predicted increases in industrial air pollution? If so, on what date, and can that advice be provided?
 - b. Has the Authority recommended stronger air quality protections, or dedicated clean air legislation, at any time? If so, on what date, in which document, and what was the Government's response?
- 6. The Authority's Environmental Factor Guidance: Atmospheric Processes — Greenhouse Gas Emissions was approved on 1 August 2025.
 - a. Are cumulative greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions assessed alongside cumulative air pollution impacts, and in which document is that requirement recorded?
 - b. Is there a greenhouse gas emissions threshold beyond which a proposal may be assessed as environmentally unacceptable? If so, what is it and where is it published?
 - c. That Guidance states that in determining whether a proposal has the potential to have a significant impact on the environment, the Authority "will consider statutory decision-making processes that can regulate GHG emissions to meet the NT EPA's objectives such as the Petroleum Act 1984 for onshore gas projects and the Australian Government's Safeguard Mechanism for industrial projects". For how many proposals since 1 August 2025 has the Authority relied on either of those processes in that way, and in which document is that reliance recorded in each case?

- d. That Guidance records a document review period of 12 months from its approval on 1 August 2025. Has it been reviewed? If so, on what date and with what outcome; if not, when will the review be completed?
 - e. How are a proposal's greenhouse gas emissions weighed against the Territory's and the Commonwealth's emissions reduction targets when an environmental approval is decided?
 - f. Has any proposal been refused, or had conditions imposed, by reference to those targets? If so, which, and on what date?
7. NT Health engaged SLR Consulting Australia Pty Ltd to prepare an Independent Preliminary Human Health Risk Assessment of emissions from the Ichthys LNG Acid Gas Removal Unit hot venting, revision 3.0 dated 26 February 2026. That assessment records that it “is not a health study monitoring specific individual health responses in the community”, and that it “covers only one of the two LNG facilities at Bladin Point”. Other than that assessment, what work has been commissioned or undertaken to assess the long-term health impacts of industrial air pollution on Darwin residents?
- a. Has any epidemiological study of respiratory illness rates near industrial areas been conducted or commissioned? If so, by whom, on what date, and has it been published?
 - b. Has any assessment been made of the combined effects of industrial pollution and bushfire smoke exposure?
 - c. That assessment was commissioned by NT Health in response to the discovery of under-reporting, rather than as part of granting, renewing or varying a licence. When an environment protection licence for a Darwin airshed LNG facility is granted, renewed or varied, is health advice obtained? If so, from whom, and where is that advice recorded?
 - d. That assessment recommends, in relation to benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene and xylenes (BTEX), “that a screening-level, Darwin airshed-wide HHRA be undertaken that considers all significant BTEX sources across facilities, including (but not limited to) hot venting, acid gas incinerators, ship loading, tank venting, and other relevant point and area sources”. Will that assessment be commissioned, by what date, and what funding has been allocated to it?
 - e. That assessment also recommends that future assessments be based on dispersion modelling considering “Facility-wide, rather than just hot venting Acid Gas Removal Unit (AGRU) emissions” and that “emissions for ethylbenzene and xylenes also be included at a minimum”. Has that recommendation been accepted, and has

facility-wide modelling including ethylbenzene and xylenes been required of either Bladin Point licensee?

- f. That assessment records that SLR agrees with the recommendation of Air Environment (2025) that “an independent long-term monitoring program in the Darwin airshed would be useful”. Has such a program been established or committed to? If so, what funding is allocated to it in each of 2025–26 and 2026–27, and under which output is it recorded; if not, on what basis was that recommendation not adopted?
8. How are vulnerable populations, including children, older residents and people with respiratory illness, accounted for when pollution impacts are assessed?
- a. Are licence conditions set by reference to average population exposure or to protection of the most sensitive group, and in which guideline is that recorded?
 - b. Has any assessment been undertaken of schools, childcare centres or aged care facilities near industrial areas? If so, which, and on what dates?