

VEGETATION COMPLIANCE UNIT COMPLIANCE PLAN 2026-2027

The Vegetation Compliance Unit has been established to support compliance with the requirements of the *Planning Act 1999* in relation to works associated with the clearing of native vegetation on unzoned land. The team comprises a Principal Compliance and Regulation Officer and a Remote Sensing Analyst.

This plan prioritises the compliance activities for the work unit over the next 12 months. Given the team has been newly established, this plan is subject to review and the program may extend and broaden in the future.

COMPLIANCE PRIORITIES *The Compliance Plan has several priorities, and will deliver these across phases as outlined below:*

PRIORITY 1



Investigate and respond to formal complaints lodged under section 78 of the *Planning Act 1999*.

Investigate enquiries raised informally or self-initiated where suspected breaches of the *Planning Act 1999* have been identified.

PRIORITY 2



Conduct audits of land clearing permitted areas. This audit will support the department in understanding uptake of land clearing approvals and inform data held on the extent of land clearing undertaken across the NT. Currently, permits issued are assumed to have been completed. Verifying this will support more accurate data on the extent of clearing in the NT.

Verification of permitted clearing will also enable investigation into any matters which might prevent works proceeding; and support investigation on how to better support industry in progressing with development.

Opportunities for education with industry will also be opened through the audit program.

AUDIT PROGRAM

PHASE 1

In the first instance, a review of permits issued in 2020, followed by 2021 will occur. This will provide information on permit completion and take-up. Permits issued in 2020 and 2021 were nominated on the basis that permits are issued with a validity period of 2 years, with an automatic extension of a further 2 years if substantially commenced. These permits are expected to have completed works by 2024 and 2025 respectively.

Pending the findings of the audit on permits issued over 2020 and 2021, the audit may continue to focus on permitted land clearing to support the objectives of priority 2.

PHASE 2

The findings of phase 1 will influence when phase 2 commences. If the permits have been found to have been substantially completed in line with conditions, the audit will then move to phase 2, taking a precinct approach to reviewing land clearing.

The purpose of transitioning to a precinct style approach enables a more focussed educational campaign in collaboration with industry groups to encourage compliance and awareness of obligations under the *Planning Act 1999*.

COMPLIANCE OUTCOMES

Compliance activity can result in a range of outcomes. The outcomes will align with the culpability of the breach and could include:

- Engagement and education to prevent further breaches
- Penalty Infringement Notices
- Enforcement Notices
- Prosecution and criminal charges.

The Vegetation Compliance Unit is well placed to support industry in understanding their obligations and works closely with the Vegetation Assessment Unit who engage with industry and process land clearing applications.

If you are undertaking land clearing and are unsure of your obligations, contact the Vegetation Compliance Unit for further support and advice. Contact details are provided below.

LIMITATIONS

The *Planning Act 1999* sets a limitation on enforcement action.

As this is the first year of the audit program, the extent of information collated will need to be managed to ensure it is within the team's capacity to respond to. This may mean that the phases of the work will be delivered over the coming years.

The next compliance plan to be released by the Vegetation Compliance Unit will be better informed on the capacity to progress the program.