

Consultation summary

Katherine water allocation plan 2026-2036

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1.0	23 December 2025	External consultant	Final draft
1.1	15 January 2026	Water Resources	Final amendments for WAC
2.0	06 June 2026	Water Resources	Final

Acronyms	Full form
AEP	Australian Energy Producers
AFANT	Amateur Fishermen's Association of the Northern Territory
AMEC	Association of Mining and Exploration Companies
AWR	Aboriginal water reserve
Act	Water Act 1992
CLA	Cambrian Limestone Aquifer
Controller	Controller of Water Resources
Department	Department of Lands, Planning and Environment
ECNT	Environment Centre NT
ESY	estimated sustainable yield
FAQ	frequently asked questions
GDE	groundwater dependent ecosystem
GIS	Geographic Information System
HYS	Have Your Say
LGANT	Local Government Association of the Northern Territory
ML	megalitre
NIAA	National Indigenous Australians Agency
NLC	Northern Land Council
NRM	Natural Resource Management
NT	Northern Territory
NTG	Northern Territory Government
PFAS	Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances

RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
RWEA	Restricted Water Extraction Area
SOG	Senior Officers Group
TLA	Tindall Limestone Aquifer
TO	Traditional Owner
WAC	water advisory committee
WRD	Water Resources Division

Acknowledgement of Country

The Department of Lands, Planning and Environment respectfully and proudly acknowledges the Northern Territory's Aboriginal people and their rich cultures. We pay respect to Elders past and present.

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners and custodians of the lands and waters of the Katherine plan area. We recognise the intrinsic connection of Traditional Owners to Country and value their ongoing contribution to managing the lands and waters.

We support the need for genuine and lasting partnerships with Traditional Owners to better understand cultural connections, and we will work to establish lasting partnerships to manage water together, now and into the future.

Disclaimer

The Department of Lands, Planning and Environment (the department) engaged GHD to prepare a Consultation summary of feedback received in response to the draft Katherine water allocation plan (draft plan) to provide a status update on the key feedback and changes or otherwise as a result of the process.

This report and its associated schedules have been prepared by GHD for the department and may only be used and relied on by the department for the purpose of summarising records of community consultation for the Katherine water allocation plan.

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The services undertaken by GHD in connection with preparing this report were limited to the analysis and summarisation of consultation records provided to GHD by the department from the public consultation period. For the preparation of the Response and Resolution sections, GHD relied on content provided by the department.

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1. Executive summary

This overview describes the consultation undertaken, the feedback received, and how this feedback was considered in the final Katherine water allocation plan 2026–2036 (the plan).

Consultation occurred via three main mechanisms, over a period of 12 months between May 2025 and May 2026, through the Daly River water advisory committee (the committee); stakeholder engagements and information provided by the Department of Lands, Planning and Environment (the department); and a 4-week public consultation period where online submissions were accepted via the NT Government Have Your Say website.

A total of 12 submissions were received. Submissions demonstrated engagement with and understanding of the plan materials, with submissions raising concerns about water security, environmental protection, Aboriginal rights and water governance. While the number of submissions was relatively small, the breadth and technical nature of the feedback reflected consideration of plan documents and the local context by respondents. Submissions were received from a range of stakeholder groups including Aboriginal community members, Katherine residents, industry and environment groups. Twelve responses to a short form survey were also received with most respondents indicating that they had read the plan documents, that they felt the science and other information was clearly and logically explained in the background report, and that they were interested in ongoing engagement about water resource management.

The department also received feedback through a series of direct engagements with key stakeholders. In total, 44 engagement activities were undertaken between 3 September and 27 May 2026, including in-person meetings in Katherine, virtual briefings, phone discussions, and targeted emails.

1.1 Feedback received

While the draft plan was positively received during many of the department's stakeholder engagement events, submissions largely concentrated on the more complex and contentious elements. The following key themes were raised during the review of the consolidated comments and submissions on the plan (refer to Schedule 1 on details of the submissions, including the frequency that themes were raised).

- **Plan scope and boundaries:** Submissions raised concerns about the reduced plan area, exclusion of key lands and groundwater systems, and risks of unregulated extraction outside of plan boundaries. There were mixed views on merging into a holistic Daly River plan and many call for more frequent plan reviews.
- **Sustainable yield, allocations and extraction:** Questions about estimated sustainable yield (ESY) and modelling adequacy, unmetered extraction, and some misconceptions about the potential for trading to increase actual extraction. Concerns that dry-year triggers for announced allocations may fall below ecological limits. Support for proposed restricted water extraction area (RWEA) but emphasis on broader safeguards needed.
- **Environmental and ecological values:** Concerns that dry-year triggers for announced allocations may not protect key species and habitats; calls for higher minimum flows. Knowledge gaps thought to persist on aquifer connectivity and recharge/discharge dynamics. Water quality concerns including contamination risks.
- **Cultural and Aboriginal values:** Boundary changes and tenure rules limit Aboriginal water reserve access. Insufficient engagement and lack of co-designed processes; technical language barriers. Requests for immediate cultural site safeguards and cumulative impact assessments.
- **Community engagement and participation:** Consultation considered insufficient, too technical, compressed, and not inclusive, especially for Aboriginal communities. Community seeks more transparent, accessible information and genuine opportunities to influence decisions.

- **Economic and social outcomes:** Industry seeks certainty; concerns over-extraction or policy shifts could impact investments. Rural stakeholders fear restrictions may stifle development. Recreation and tourism emphasised as economically significant and flow-dependent. Town water security requires ongoing vigilance.
- **Science, data and knowledge gaps:** Some concerns that decisions may be being made with limited science, perceived short climate records, sparse monitoring, unclear connectivity. Calls for longer modelling, stronger baselines, precautionary approach, more frequent monitoring, and public reporting.
- **Implementation and governance:** Scepticism about enforcement of flow protections and whether collaborative dry-year management will deliver outcomes. Concerns expanded licensing/trading could increase extraction. Call for formal co-designed governance mechanisms and proactive cumulative impact management.
- **Perceived risks and future opportunities:** Risks include over-allocation relative to ecological thresholds, reduced regulation outside boundaries, climate variability, and increased extraction through trading. Call for robust safeguards and transparency. Opportunities include stronger collaboration, community innovation, and Aboriginal participation.
- **Other issues:** PFAS and water quality concerns as ongoing health risks. Trust and transparency issues with some feeling facts withheld. Requests for plain language materials and infographics. Lessons from other jurisdictions cited as cautionary examples.

1.2 Response and resolution

The department carefully considered all submissions and made targeted updates to the background report to clarify the rationale behind the reduction of the plan boundary, licensing and trading, integration with other plans, licensed and unlicensed extraction trends and protection close to the river, announced allocations, pathway to access water for Aboriginal economic development, and aquifer connectivity knowledge.

The plan now focuses on interconnected groundwater and surface water resources of the Tindall Limestone Aquifer (TLA) and the Katherine River that is directly influenced by TLA groundwater discharges between the department's Ironwood and Wilden surface water gauging stations. Water use outside of the plan area remains regulated under the *Water Act 1992* (the Act) and the NT Water Allocation Planning Framework. Surrounding areas could be assessed further through the development of a future larger Daly River plan which could include the Katherine area and other water resources for integrated catchment management.

The plan balances economic certainty through clear allocation rules with the ability to respond to changing conditions. The 10-year duration (with a review at 5 years) is maintained as per the Act, however the plan's adaptability is supported through robust risk and adaptive management measures including announced allocations for dry-year management. Improved understanding and management of unlicensed water use has been committed to in the implementation actions.

The ESY represents a well-informed precautionary limit based on modelling, monitoring data and local values. Risks associated with water trading are managed through regulation which prevents trades from causing water extraction to exceed the ESY. Dry year environmental flow triggers are based on science, and they represent conditions expected to occur naturally in around 10% of years (refer section 11.3 in the background report for details). Data to support this approach goes back to as early as the year 1900. A collaborative project to refine environmental flow requirements incorporating Aboriginal knowledge is identified as an implementation action for the plan.

Aboriginal water reserves provide a dedicated water allocation for Aboriginal economic development, with additional water access available through other beneficial use categories within the plan area and through general water availability outside plan areas.

Cultural site protection and cumulative impact assessment are embedded in the adaptive management framework and other regulatory mechanisms, and are key objectives of the plan. Implementation actions are included to understand the water requirements of Aboriginal cultural sites and to include key sites in the department's monitoring program.

The department acknowledges more work is needed on co-designed engagement and commits to ongoing improvement in culturally appropriate consultation, plain-language materials, and visual aids in future activities. Ongoing engagement will occur through the Daly River water advisory committee, annual public implementation reports, and multiple direct contact channels.

Analysis of current and potential future water use has been considered in the development of the plan. Allocation of water for town water supply and domestic use are prioritised in the plan alongside the protection of recreation and tourism values dependent on healthy river flows.

The Department of Lands, Planning and Environment (the department) thanks the committee and those who provided feedback and submissions through the consultation process, all of which contributed to the new water allocation plan for Katherine.

2. Introduction

This consultation summary has been prepared to document the outcomes of public and stakeholder engagement undertaken for the Katherine water allocation plan 2026–2036 (the plan). The purpose of this document is to provide a clear record of feedback received during the consultation period, outline key themes raised by stakeholders, and explain how these have been considered in the development of the final plan.

A water allocation plan is a statutory instrument under the *Water Act 1992* that sets out how water resources within a defined area will be managed to ensure sustainable use. It specifies the estimated sustainable yield, establishes rules for water extraction and trade, identifies environmental, social, and cultural values, and includes provisions such as Aboriginal water reserves. These plans are critical for balancing competing demands - such as agriculture, industry, community needs, and environmental protection - while safeguarding long-term water security.

The plan is the fifth iteration of a water allocation plan that specifically manages the portion of the Tindall Limestone Aquifer (TLA) that occurs within the Katherine River catchment. The first plan was declared in this area in 2009 and was named the Water Allocation Plan, Tindall Limestone Aquifer, Katherine 2009-2019. The current plan (Katherine Tindall Limestone Aquifer water allocation plan 2024-2026) expired on 16 February 2026.

The draft plan has been named the Katherine water allocation plan to align with the plan area. The plan applies to an area of approximately 1,176 km² (Katherine plan area) within the [Daly Roper Beetaloo water control district](#) (the district) (Figure 1). The Katherine plan area includes the township of Katherine and the Rockhole community. Pastoral leases cover approximately 17% of the plan area and 0.05% of the plan area is designated Aboriginal land.

The plan area is situated within the Daly River basin (the basin), the largest river basin in the Northern Territory. The NT Government has committed to developing a Daly River water plan in the future to support holistic and integrated water management across the basin. This would incorporate both the Katherine and Ooloo water plans as chapters within the Daly River water plan.

The Katherine water allocation plan will provide for the protection, allocation and management of the portion of the TLA which is responsible for sustaining baseflows in the Katherine River during the dry season. The plan also manages surface water in the Katherine River between the Ironwood and Wilden gauging stations. The surrounding areas are managed under other plans or the NT Water Allocation Planning Framework.

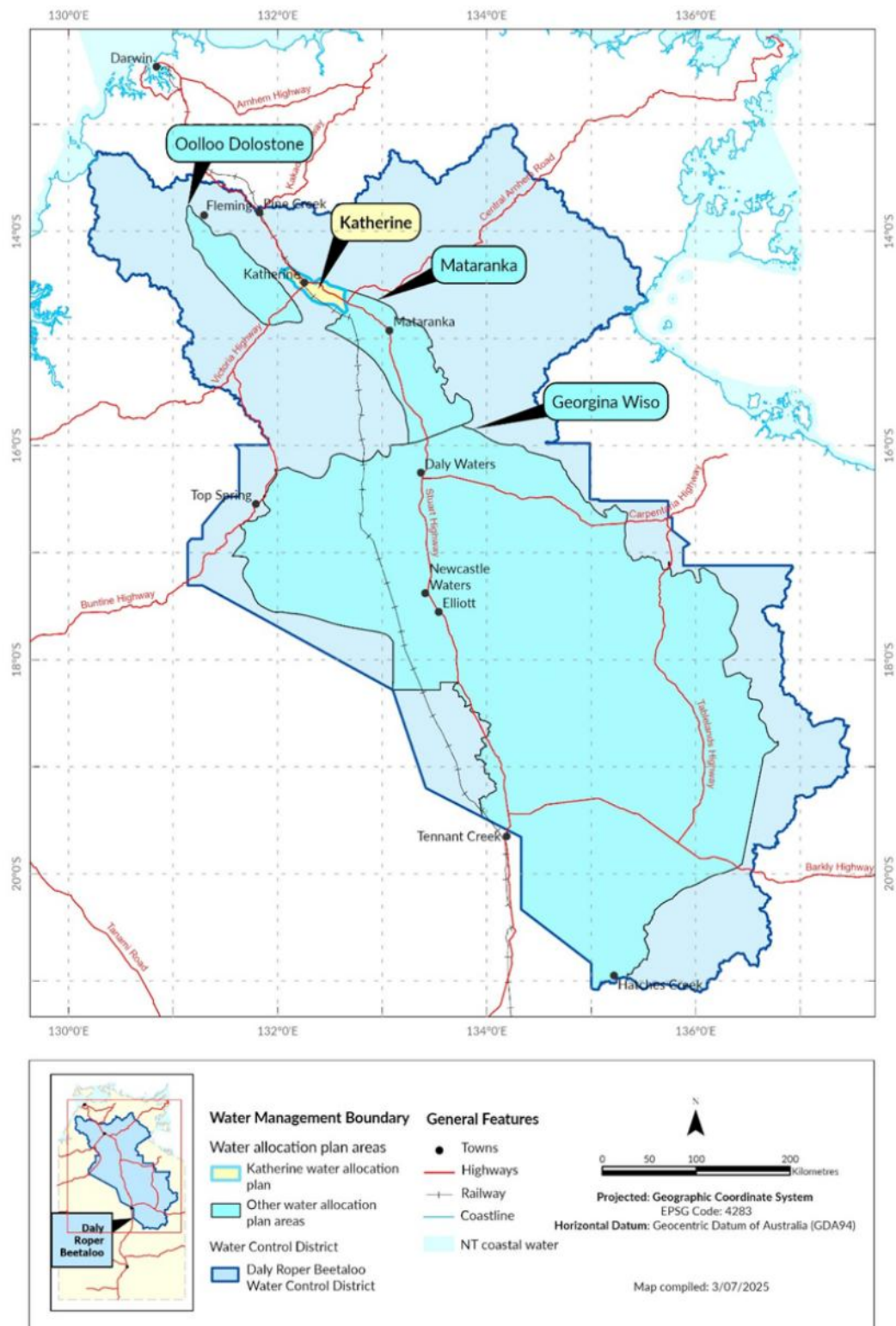


Figure 1. Daly Roper Beetaloo water control district area and water allocation plan areas

2.1 Water Act

The *Water Act 1992*¹ (Act) sets out the statutory requirements of water allocation plans. The Act requires the Minister for Water Resources (the Minister) to ensure:

- water is allocated within the ESY (estimated sustainable yield) to beneficial uses, including an allocation to the environment and an Aboriginal water reserve
- the total water use for all beneficial uses is less than the sum of allocations to each beneficial use

Consistent with the Act, water allocation plans comprise of 3 core documents:

- water allocation plan: the statutory document required to be gazetted; describes the estimated sustainable yield for the water resources of the district and apportions water for particular uses
- background report: collates the data and knowledge regarding the district at the time it is made
- implementation actions: outlines the continuous program for the assessment of water resources including investigating, collecting, collating and analysing water resource information.

As part of the regulatory framework, the independent [Controller of Water Resources](#) (Controller) is responsible for decisions on surface water and groundwater extraction licences. The department is responsible for the administration of the Act.

2.2 Community engagement on water

Effective engagement is the keystone of ‘good’ practice principles in contemporary water resource management. Effective, thorough and well-informed community engagement is needed to support reform in all aspects of water resource management and water service provisions². The department is committed to successful engagement, and as a result, has adopted the well-regarded International Association for Public Participation model (IAP2 Spectrum³) for its engagement activities. The IAP2 Spectrum identifies the five differing levels of participation, outlined in table 2.

Table 2. Overview the definition of the public participation for engagement activities

IAP2 Spectrum	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Goal of engagement*	Community members are well informed	Community members are well informed and give feedback that government considers	Community members are well informed and actively contribute to government decisions		
			Some say	High level or equal say	Total say

*[Remote engagement and coordination strategy](#)

3. Consultation process

There were 3 key pathways for consultation during the development of the replacement plan:

- water advisory committee
- stakeholder engagement
- public comment period.

¹ <https://legislation.nt.gov.au/Legislation/WATER-ACT-1992>

² https://assets.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/water-reform-2020/report/water-reform-2020-supportingj.pdf?utm_source=chatgpt.com

³ <https://iap2.org.au/resources/spectrum/>

3.1 Water advisory committee

The Daly River water advisory committee was established in 2024 under the *Water Act 1992*. The Act allows for an independent advisory body to be formed whenever a water allocation plan is developed. The committee's purpose is to provide advice and recommendations to the department and the Minister on the development, interpretation and implementation of the plan. It is not a decision-making body, but provides input on the environmental, social and cultural values associated with the water resources being managed under the plan.

The Daly River water advisory committee is responsible for providing advice on water allocation plans developed in the following plan areas:

- Katherine (the subject of this consultation report)
- Ooloo
- Daly River catchment.

The current committee was appointed on 14 November 2024 for a four-year term, with its first meeting held on 26 November 2024 at the Katherine Research Station. The committee remained in place throughout the development of the Katherine water allocation plan 2026–2036 and is expected to continue to support its implementation.

The committee is chaired by Rod Marsh, an independent facilitator, and includes representatives from:

- Agriculture: Simone Cameron, Andrew Dalglish, Whitney Dollemore, Sam McBean, Daniel Niceforo
- Aboriginal interests: Joy Cardona, Joshua Hunter, Mona Liddy, Alister Andrews
- Tourism: Russell Draper
- Recreational fishing: David Ciaravolo
- Community interests: Alison Ross.

Membership reflects a broad cross-section of interests in the Daly/Katherine region, including cropping, mixed farming, Aboriginal custodianship, tourism, fishing, and community advocacy.

The committee's responsibilities include:

- reviewing and advising on the draft water allocation plan
- identifying knowledge gaps and research priorities
- recommending adaptive management triggers and implementation actions
- supporting stakeholder engagement and consultation
- providing feedback on plan objectives, ESY, allocation volumes, and management rules.

The committee held five meetings over a period of 12 months to provide advice on development of the plan, and was supported with information from the department throughout this process. Detailed minutes from these meetings can be accessed at this webpage ([Daly River water advisory committee meetings](#)) and a summary is provided in table 3.

Table 3. Summary of the Daly River water advisory committee information and feedback

Meeting	Date	No. of attendees	Key information	Feedback and outcomes
Meeting 1	26 November 2024	11 committee members	Introduction to the committee's purpose and Terms of Reference. Emphasis on long-term engagement beyond plan development. Members shared personal connections to the Daly River and their interest in water planning.	Strong desire for balanced water use and accessibility. Recognition of water's importance for agriculture, biodiversity, tourism, and culture. Agreement that issues with committee management should be raised with DLPE.
Meeting 2	5 and 6 March 2025	11 committee members	Overview of NT water management and the Katherine water allocation plan. Discussion of science, monitoring programs, and recovery of unused water. Presentation on policy interactions and risks of misalignment.	Committee requested review of the timeline for seeing the draft plan. Emphasis on identifying knowledge gaps and research priorities. Desire to contribute to implementation actions and provide recommendations to the Minister.
Meeting 3	20 and 21 May 2025	10 committee members	Review of the Katherine Tindall Limestone Aquifer water allocation plan (2024–2026). Proposed changes for the 2026–2036 plan: - revised spatial extent of the plan area - announced allocations process - recovery of unused water - minor changes to objectives, plan term, and management arrangements. Discussion of the Water Amendment (Aboriginal Water Reserves) Bill 2025.	Agreement on updates to the Terms of Reference. Support for clearer communication of changes and rationale. Interest in ensuring Aboriginal water reserves deliver economic benefits.
Meeting 4	19 and 20 August 2025	10 committee members	Presentation of the draft Katherine water allocation plan (2026–2036). Discussion of plan objectives, ESY, allocation volumes, and management rules. Review of stakeholder feedback received to date.	Committee provided detailed comments on the draft plan. Suggestions for improving clarity around announced allocations and RWEA. Continued emphasis on Aboriginal engagement and environmental protections.

Meeting 5	Day 1 & 2 5 and 6 February 2026 Day 3 – 18 February Day 4 – 27 May	Variable attendance across the four days	Day 1 & 2 Presentation and review of proposed Katherine water allocation plan 2026-2036 and supporting documents Review of stakeholder feedback received through Have Your Say and other consultations. Day 3 Further discussion on how the plan addresses matters raised by committee, including protections close to the Katherine River Day 4 Presentation of updated draft plan and department response to targeted questions raised by committee	Committee and the Department discussed the draft plan and updates made to account for committee perspectives. Committee prepared formal advice to the Minister – process concluded out-of-session with submission of advice to Minister on 16 June 2026.
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3.2 Stakeholder engagement

The department undertook dedicated engagement with key stakeholders to provide briefings on the draft Katherine Water Plan and to seek feedback. In total, 44 engagement activities were undertaken between 3 September and 27 May 2026, including in-person meetings in Katherine, virtual briefings, phone discussions, and targeted emails.

The following groups that were contacted or engaged include:

- Aboriginal Investment NT
- Amateur Fishermen's Association of the Northern Territory (AFANT)
- Association of Mining and Exploration Companies (AMEC)
- Australian Energy Producers (AEP)
- Chamber of Commerce
- Controller of Water Resources
- Cotton Australia
- Department of Defence
- Environment Centre NT (ECNT)
- Environmental Defenders Office
- Jawoyn Association
- Kalano Association
- Katherine Camping and Fishing
- Katherine Town Council
- Land Development Corporation
- Landcare NT
- Local Government Association of the Northern Territory (LGANT)
- Mangoes Australia
- Manbulloo Limited
- National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA) – Katherine
- National Water Grid Authority
- NLC Water Committee
- Northern Land Council (NLC)
- NT Cattlemen's Association
- NT Farmers
- NT Government Department of Agriculture and Fisheries
- NT Government Lands Resources Team
- NT Government Petroleum Regulation
- NT Government Strategic Policy Group
- Office of Water Security
- Rod and Rifle Katherine
- Roper Gulf Regional Council
- Sunrise Health Service
- Territory Coordinator
- Territory NRM
- Victoria Daly Regional Council
- Wurli-Wurlinjang Health Service

These engagement sessions provided opportunities to present the draft plan, clarify key policy elements, address concerns, and coordinate communication with community groups. Stakeholders typically used these sessions to ask questions and seek clarification on elements of the draft plan.

Stakeholder engagement activities held during the development of the plan are outlined in table 4.

Table 4. Summary of the Katherine stakeholder engagement events between September 2025 and May 2026

Date	Stakeholders	Format	Purpose
3 September 2025	Rod and Rifle Katherine; Katherine Camping and Fishing; NIAA Katherine	In-person meetings	Sharing plan information
16 September 2025	Territory Coordinator	In-person meeting	Presented draft plan
16 September 2025	National Water Grid Authority; Petroleum Regulation; NT Government	Virtual meetings	Presented draft plan
23 September 2025	Katherine Town Council; Roper Gulf Regional Council; Northern Land Council	In-person meetings	Presented draft plan
24 September 2025	NIAA Katherine; Wurli-Wurlinjang Health Service (attempted consult but meeting did not proceed)	In-person meetings	Presented draft plan
25 September 2025 to 13 October 2025	NT Government; NT Government Lands Resources Team; NT Government Strategic Policy Group; Office of Water Security; Controller of Water Resources	In-person meetings	Presented draft plan
13 October 2025	Roper Gulf Regional Council; Northern Land Council; NIAA; NT Government; Daly Water Advisory Committee	Emails	Advising that the draft Katherine plan has been released for public consultation and offering briefing
14 October 2025	Katherine Town Council; Department of Defence; Wurli-Wurlinjang Health Service; Sunrise Health Service; Jawoyn Association; Kalano Association; NT Government Department of Agriculture and Fisheries	Emails	Advising that the draft Katherine plan has been released for public consultation and offering briefing
15 October 2025	Office of Water Security; AFANT; Aboriginal Investment NT; NT Farmers; Cotton Australia; Chamber of Commerce; LGANT; Victoria Daly Regional Council; Land Development Corporation; Mangoes Australia; Environment Centre NT (ECNT); Australian Energy Producers (AEP); Association of Mining and Energy Companies (AMEC); Landcare NT; Territory NRM; NT Cattlemen's Association; Environmental Defenders Office; Environment Centre NT	Emails	Advising that the draft Katherine plan has been released for public consultation and offering briefing
16 October 2025	NLC Regional Council Meeting	Virtual meeting	Presented draft plan
21 October 2025	Victoria Daly Regional Council	Virtual meeting	Presented draft plan
24 October 2025	NLC Water Committee	In-person meeting	Presented draft plan
27 October 2025	Australian Energy Producers (AEP)	Virtual meeting	Presented draft plan
4 November 2025	Environment Centre NT	Phone	Addressing questions about the Katherine plan

4 February 2026	Manbulloo Limited	Virtual meeting	Presented draft plan
6 March 2026	NLC	Email	Verification of land parcels for AWR submitted by NLC
13-27 May 2026	NLC Regional Council Meeting	Emails	Written update on the Katherine Plan provided via NLC staff, and further feedback from the Katherine RCM provided to DLPE.

3.3 Public comment

The draft Katherine water allocation plan 2026–2036 was released for public comment on 13 October 2025 via the Northern Territory Government Have Your Say website. The closing date for submissions was 10 November 2025. Three submissions were received after this date and were accepted.

During this period, the [draft plan](#), [background report](#), [frequently asked questions](#) and [implementation actions](#) were made publicly available on the Have Your Say platform, as well as the Department of Lands, Planning and Environment website.

In addition, the department provided an option for Aboriginal landholders to submit a request for review of land parcels for eligibility for the Katherine Aboriginal water reserve. One submission was received after closure of the consultation period. The department also briefed the NLC's Katherine regional water committee consisting of Traditional Owners from the region, to discuss the Aboriginal water reserve and seek their feedback.

Across the public consultation period, the plan documents were viewed or downloaded 261 times; 90 times the plan document, 66 times background report, 43 times implementation actions and 62 times FAQ. The department received a total of 17 responses, and the "Have Your Say" page recorded 516 visitors. These responses comprised of 5 written submissions provided via email and 12 submissions via Have Your Say, including:

- 7 written submissions (5 also completed some survey questions)
- 5 survey responses.

Respondents were asked if they authorise the publishing of their submission. Submissions that were not authorised for publishing were incorporated into the consultation analysis and discussion but were not published in schedule 1 or on the Have Your Say webpage. Themes from all submissions are represented in section 4 and schedule 2.

The following organisations and individuals provided comment either through written submission or survey response and permitted the release of their submissions:

- Louise Visser
- Joshua Hunter
- Professor Matthew Currell & Riley Nicholson, Australian Rivers Institute (Griffith University)
- Manbulloo Limited
- NT Farmers
- Northern Land Council
- Environment Centre NT
- Australian Energy Producers
- AFANT
- Local residents and businesses within the plan area
- Northern Territory residents.

The schedules at the back of this report provide further details on the feedback received.

- Schedule 1. Alignment of submissions to themes: lists comments received.
- Schedule 2. Discussion of themes and resolution: provides a detailed summary of the comments, the department's response and how these were resolved in finalising the plan.
- Schedule 3. Survey responses: provides the details of the Have Your Say survey results including how responses were received and a breakdown of those responses.

4. Summary of feedback and resolution

4.1 Plan scope and boundaries

Stakeholders expressed concern about the significant reduction to the plan area, fearing that extraction activities beyond the plan boundary would be unregulated, and could still affect groundwater levels, baseflows and values within the plan area.

Views on integrating Katherine into a broader Daly River plan were mixed. Some welcomed holistic catchment management, while others worried that local needs would be diluted. The 10-year duration of the plan was widely viewed as too long, given uncertainties; stakeholders advocated for 2 to 5-year adaptive reviews.

Addressing feedback

The department reduced the plan area to focus on those parts of Tindall Limestone Aquifer (TLA) which have the strongest connection to the Katherine River, aiming for more efficient management and better alignment with hydrogeology and water use patterns. The plan now explicitly states that it applies to groundwater of the TLA within the plan area and to surface water from the Katherine River between the Ironwood and Wilden gauging stations (together described in the plan documents as the Katherine water resource). The new boundary has retained most metered bores and licensed entitlements, but some Aboriginal land parcels now fall outside the plan area. Water allocation plans reserve a volume of water for Aboriginal economic development inside plan areas to ensure that water remains available for Aboriginal economic use in areas where there is increased competition for water resources from other uses. Outside of plan areas, water for Aboriginal economic development is less constrained due to lower competition for resources, and water availability is determined using the NT Water Allocation Planning Framework. In assessing licence applications outside a plan area, consideration is given to the potential eligibility of Aboriginal land for AWR purposes to avoid impacting on any future AWR.

To address concerns about this change, the department has updated the plan document and background report to reinforce the integrated approach taken in the plan, by expanding on the groundwater-fed nature of dry-season river flows, describing conditions of the surface water system and incorporating surface water licences into water use estimates. The plan documents also clarify decision-making and water sharing outside the plan boundary, to describe how water is managed outside plan areas, to explain Aboriginal water reserves and alternative access, to clarify the role of the Katherine plan in the Daly River plan and the development of that plan. Plan duration and review cycles remain unchanged but are supported by risk and adaptive management.

4.2 Sustainable yield, allocations and extraction

Several submissions questioned the adequacy of the ESY, citing a perception of short modelling periods, limited data, and unmetered uses (unlicensed bores) that could inflate sustainability estimates. There were also concerns that trading would stimulate actual water usage towards full use of entitlements. Some stakeholders called for more water for environmental flows, Aboriginal development, and town supplies; and less to large-scale consumptive uses. Dry year adaptive settings, particularly the 1.8 cumec trigger at Wilden, were seen as below minimum ecological requirements (often cited at 2.0 cumecs) and too discretionary. The concept of a restricted water extraction area (RWEA) received general support, but stakeholders emphasised it must be paired with broader safeguards, enforcement, and management of licensed and unlicensed bores.

Addressing feedback

The ESY represents a precautionary limit informed by scientific knowledge, community values and policy. Modelling based on full use of licensed entitlements shows the aquifer would remain above 1970 levels,

indicating resilience under the last 50 years' climate regime. Water trading cannot cause an ESY to be exceeded; it only transfers existing entitlements between licence holders.

The minimum flow requirement of 1.8 cumecs represents a 'very dry' year in the model. Modelled Katherine River flow data at Wilden shows variability, with dry year sequences clustering in the early 1900s and limited persistence of low-flow periods. Modelled natural flows of the Katherine River show that flows during the 20th century regularly fell below 1.8 cumecs at the Wilden gauging station during the months of September and October.

Water allocations in the plan allow up to 39,000 ML per year to be extracted and allocates this volume between a range of beneficial uses. The plan fully provisions the Aboriginal Water Reserve and sets out implementation actions to support access to this reserve. Water not allocated to beneficial uses is retained in the environment.

Announced allocations is an adaptive management tool explicitly included in the Katherine plan to allow for the temporary reduction of water allocations to protect river flows in dry years (discussed further in [section 4.3](#)).

Maintaining aquifer-fed flows is important to maintaining the ecological communities of the Katherine River. Water use in close proximity to groundwater discharge zones at the Katherine River could pose a greater risk to dry season flows. While licensed take is the largest component of use in sensitive areas near the river, these areas will be closely managed in the plan as a Discharge Protection Zone. The intent is to cap total entitlement near the river while allowing limited flexibility for licensed water to move to its most productive use over time. Total licensed entitlement within the zone is capped at 13,816 ML/year, equivalent to existing licence entitlements. New licences and permanent trades would not be granted if they would cause total entitlement to exceed the cap; however, where water is recovered or licences relinquished, new entrants may apply for water within the existing cap.

Unlicensed use has also steadily increased over time, with most future residential development for Katherine earmarked within 5km of the river. Consistent with the draft plan, implementation actions have been established to better characterise unlicensed use, and to implement additional controls to balance sustainable residential development and protect river flows. Since release of the draft plan, it was identified that a RWEA would prohibit new commercial licences within the area, in addition to controlling unlicensed use. As a result implementation action 3.4.1 was updated to include independent analysis of domestic water use and growth estimates with recommendations for broader management strategies. The need for a RWEA will be reconsidered as part of the plan's mid term review. Refined analysis of water use trends has been undertaken for the final plan, as presented in section 5 of the background report. No changes to actual allocation volumes or other settings have been made in the new plan.

4.3 Environmental and ecological values

Respondents argued that current limits and triggers may not protect key species (e.g., sooty grunter, barramundi, pig-nosed turtle) and their habitats, and called for higher minimum flows. Responses often cited an ecological minimum flow of 2.0 cumecs, in contrast to the 1.8 cumec trigger proposed by the plan. Stakeholders felt that knowledge gaps persist on recharge/discharge dynamics and connectivity between formations (e.g., Tindall and Jinduckin aquifers), with particular concern about extraction near the river and local flow paths/lag effects. Stakeholders had concerns about water quality, including contamination risks and land use impacts, and called for enhanced monitoring to safeguard ecological and human health.

Addressing feedback

The plan establishes thresholds to more closely manage take in dry years based on best-available science and the local context. An analysis of modelled natural flows for Wilden gauging station between 1960/61 to 2017/18 was used to determine a range of river flow scenarios. In accordance with the analysis and interpretation of the dataset, the lowest 10% of modelled natural flows were classified as 'very dry' where modelled natural flow on 1 November is less than 1.8 cumecs (155 ML per day). Environmental flow

triggers in the plan are based on this model, representing conditions expected to occur naturally in around 10% of years. River flows prior to 1970 were frequently below 1.8 m³/s. This indicates that flow below this trigger level is a natural feature of the system under dry climatic conditions, rather than an indicator of extraction-related stress. If natural flows are predicted to be less than the minimum flow trigger (1.8 m³/s), announced allocations may be implemented to maintain the target proportion of flows in the river (87%) (refer section 4.3 in plan document and section 11.3 in background report).

A project to refine environmental flow requirements incorporating Aboriginal knowledge is identified as an implementation action for the plan (refer Action 3.13 in the Implementation Actions report). The plan acknowledges connectivity between aquifers and commits to further research on recharge/discharge dynamics. Water quality monitoring continues at key sites with results publicly reported.

While the department has high confidence in its understanding of connectivity between the TLA and the Katherine River at a regional scale, it acknowledges that there are greater uncertainties for local flow paths. Implementation actions have been included in the plan to improve understanding of the system over time, and to more closely manage water take close to sensitive areas around the Katherine River.

The plan recognises the importance of maintaining water quality for both human and ecological health and commits to ongoing monitoring of groundwater and surface water quality.

No substantive changes have been made to the plan regarding these matters.

4.4 Cultural and Aboriginal values

Submissions criticised how boundary changes and tenure rules limit access to Aboriginal water reserves and questioned whether reserves deliver tangible economic benefits to Traditional Owners. Contributors highlighted insufficient engagement and the lack of co-designed processes, noting technical language as a barrier to meaningful participation. There is a strong push for immediate safeguards of cultural sites and cumulative impact assessments, ensuring water management respects cultural connection today and for future generations.

Addressing feedback

Aboriginal water reserves provide a dedicated allocation for Aboriginal economic development in perpetuity, in plan areas such as Katherine where there is competition for water. This is to ensure that Aboriginal people are not 'locked out' of economic opportunities if all available water is licensed to other users before they are ready to utilise it.

Outside plan areas, water access is less competitive, and licensing decisions are made through consideration of the NT Water Allocation Planning Framework. In these areas, the department considers each water user and the resource they wish to access on a case-by-case basis, as well as the availability of water for a potential AWR where a water plan may be developed in the future e.g. a Daly River plan. The department has updated the background report to clarify how Aboriginal people can access water outside of the plan area. The department is committed to working with potential AWR beneficiaries and the land council to promote and activate opportunities available through the AWR.

During the life of the plan, a proposed project to refine environmental flow requirements incorporating Aboriginal knowledge has been identified as an implementation action. The department has also committed to a suite of implementation actions to support the identification of water-related Aboriginal cultural sites and species and documentation of their water requirements, as well as including key cultural sites in the plan's water monitoring program. In addition, water extraction licence applicants must comply with other laws and regulations (for example, the *Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act 1989*) and can be conditioned to monitor and proactively manage impacts of water extraction. For example, significant licence applications must include monitoring and adaptive management plans that identify clear triggers and management objectives to mitigate impacts on other water users and environmental and cultural receptors dependent on water.

4.5 Community engagement and participation

Some submissions stated that consultation has been insufficient, too technical, too compressed, and not inclusive, especially for Aboriginal communities. Beyond process concerns, the broader community voiced uncertainty about how the plan affects livelihoods, access to water, and long-term regional sustainability, calling for more transparent, accessible information and genuine opportunities to influence decisions.

Addressing feedback

The department engaged with a broad range of stakeholders through in-person meetings, virtual meetings, emails, and phone discussions between September 2025 and May 2026. Stakeholders were briefed on the draft plan, invited to provide feedback, and offered further discussion during the public consultation period. These engagements helped improve transparency, clarify technical matters, and ensure the draft plan considered environmental, cultural, community and water use perspectives. However, the department acknowledges the consultation challenges and commits to improving accessibility and inclusiveness of engagement processes, particularly for Aboriginal communities. The Daly River water advisory committee has provided substantial advice throughout the development of the plan. The committee will provide ongoing input throughout the implementation of the plan, and annual implementation reports will be publicly available. Community members can access information through the department's website, licence public comment periods, and direct contact via multiple channels.

The department has improved the overall clarity of the background report and will support the declared plan with communication materials – FAQs, fact sheets and engaging visuals – to make information more accessible. Annual State of the Resource reports will be published to provide regular updates on water resource management, the delivery of implementation actions and the condition of the Katherine water resource.

4.6 Economic and social outcomes

Industry stakeholders shared that they seek certainty and stability, warning that over-extraction, unregulated use, or shifting policy settings could impact on investments and jobs. Rural stakeholders shared that they fear restrictions on new bores and subdivision may stifle development and make rural living less viable, advocating more nuanced, targeted measures. Recreational fishing and tourism are repeatedly emphasised as economically and socially significant and dependent on healthy river flows. Ongoing vigilance is urged for town water security, with PFAS history cited as a reminder to maintain transparency and safeguards.

Addressing feedback

The plan aims to provide certainty for industry, communities, and residential users through clear allocation rules and transparent processes. The proposed investigations to better understand unlicensed use aim to balance sustainable growth with environmental protection. Water for town supply and domestic use will continue to be secured and the plan recognises recreation, tourism, and healthy river flows as economically and socially significant.

Risk and adaptive management approaches allow the plan to respond to changing conditions while maintaining stability for investment. Announced allocations provide a collaborative process for dry-year management that is also considerate of economic impacts, whilst recognising the Controller's powers to limit usage to within sustainable limits. The plan and supporting documents clarify how the plan protects town water security, supports economic development, and enables sustainable residential growth.

Allocations between beneficial uses and controls for unlicensed use are discussed further in [section 4.2](#).

4.7 Science, data and knowledge gaps

Some stakeholders suggested that decisions are being made with limited science, short climate records, sparse monitoring, unclear aquifer connectivity, calling for longer modelling periods, stronger baseline data, and a precautionary approach. Stakeholders requested more frequent, transparent monitoring with adaptive management as conditions change, plus regular public reporting.

Addressing feedback

The Katherine TLA is one of the most well studied water resources in the Northern Territory. The department has high confidence in the broad aquifer characteristics through extensive exploratory drilling, satellite data, historical monitoring, geological mapping, and scientific research.

The department has a continuous groundwater and river level monitoring program in the plan area. This monitoring network includes both discrete and time-series data from a network of groundwater monitoring bores. The monitoring program is reviewed annually and data collected by the monitoring program is available on the department's Water Data Portal. Monitoring results are also published in the annual State of the Resource Report, a recent initiative aimed at improving transparency and public reporting.

The plan, however, acknowledges the inherent uncertainty in natural systems which influences water resource management, and applies precautionary principles where data is limited. The plan commits to adaptive management—ongoing monitoring, assessment of the effectiveness of further actions, and adjustment based on new information.

The department will seek external funding to further investigate ecological flow requirements as part of the implementation actions. The plan's 5-year mandatory review provides an opportunity to incorporate new science and refine management approaches. Research priorities will continue to improve our understanding of aquifer connectivity, climate impacts, and ecological water requirements.

No changes to plan documents have been made in response to this theme.

4.8 Implementation and governance

There is scepticism about enforcement of minimum flow protections and whether collaborative dry-year administration will deliver real environmental outcomes. Concerns that expanded licensing/trading could increase actual extraction without robust checks were also shared. Stakeholders suggested formal, co-designed governance mechanisms that deliver on commitments (e.g. advisory groups, cultural monitoring) and proactively manage cumulative impacts, unlicensed extraction, and sacred sites through precautionary, adaptive risk management.

Addressing feedback

To ensure licence holders comply with the Act and regulations, the department undertakes active compliance and enforcement activities. The department also regulates the process of water trading. For example, each request to trade water is submitted to the department for assessment and must be reviewed and approved by the Controller.

The Daly River Water Advisory Committee has also been appointed for the broader Daly Basin. The committee's purpose is to provide advice and recommendations to the department and the Minister on the development, interpretation and implementation of the Katherine plan and other plans in the Basin. It is not a decision-making body, but provided input on the environmental, social and cultural values associated with the water resources being managed under the plan.

The plan itself establishes clear implementation and governance practices that support delivery of the plan objectives. For example, the plan establishes a collaborative dry-year management process through announced allocations, which require Controller assessment and stakeholder engagement before

implementation. The plan also commits to monitoring and reporting within the implementation actions to proactively identify and manage any cumulative impacts. In addition, water extraction licences can include conditions that require water users to monitor and proactively manage impacts of water extraction. For example, significant licence applications must include monitoring and adaptive management plans that identify clear triggers and management objectives to mitigate impacts on other water users and environmental and cultural receptors dependent on water.

The department has updated the description of the announced allocations process in section 11.3 of the background report to clarify how it will operate. The core governance arrangements and commitments in the plan have not been amended.

4.9 Risks to water security and future opportunities

Perceived risks include over-allocation relative to ecological thresholds, reduced regulation (especially outside the plan boundary), climate variability intensifying pressures, and greater extraction if all licences are fully used or trading expands. Submissions called for robust safeguards and transparency. Alongside this caution, some see opportunities: stronger collaboration, community-driven innovation, clearer data governance, and greater Aboriginal participation to achieve sustainable regional outcomes.

Addressing feedback

The plan's precautionary and adaptive management approach provides an enforceable framework for long-term water security, as reflected in plan objective 4. Safeguards include ESY limits, environmental flow objectives, announced allocations for dry years, comprehensive monitoring and commitments to further researching ecological flows and water use in the life of the plan. To protect groundwater discharge areas near the Katherine River and river baseflows without creating unintended consequences from overly rigid restrictions, the plan designates a discharge protection zone within 5 km of the Katherine River. The zone applies to groundwater extraction from the Katherine TLA inside the zone boundary and all surface water extraction from the Katherine River between the Ironwood and Wilden gauging stations. The total commercial licence entitlement within the zone is capped at 13,816 ML/year, and new licences and permanent trades will not be granted if they would cause the total entitlement volume to exceed the cap. Where water is recovered or licenses are relinquished, new entrants may apply for licences within the existing cap.

An implementation action is included to review entitlements within the zone to support the recovery of unused water entitlement and ensure water is available for productive use. Additionally, an independent study will be commissioned to improve residential water use estimates and recommend management strategies. Planned improvements to the public reporting of unlicensed extraction will also build transparency and public awareness of resource use.

The plan commits to transparent reporting and flexibility to incorporate community-driven solutions and new opportunities for sustainable water use as part of the announced allocations process. The department manages NT water resources aligned with national best practice and intergenerational stewardship while tailoring approaches to the Territory's unique conditions.

4.10 Other issues

PFAS and broader water quality matters feature as ongoing human health concerns requiring continued monitoring and transparent communication. Lessons from other jurisdictions (e.g. costly interventions for salinity/over-extraction in the Pilbara) are cited as cautionary analogues. Trust and transparency are recurring themes, with some community members feeling facts are withheld or processes opaque—undermining confidence in water governance. Requests for plain language materials, infographics, and clearer summaries to enable wider understanding and participation are reoccurring throughout submissions.

Addressing feedback

The plan recognises the importance of water for liveability, recreation, and amenity alongside sustainable management. A key objective is safeguarding long-term water security for current and future generations.

The department collaborates with other agencies on water contamination risks, including for PFAS. Water quality monitoring has been strengthened in this iteration of the plan. While the department regularly considers lessons from other jurisdictions, the Katherine plan is informed by local conditions, monitoring, and science.

Community engagement and communication will continue through the Daly River Water Advisory Committee, annual public reports, the department website, public comment opportunities, social media, public advertising and direct contact channels. The department is increasingly refining its engagement and communications approaches.

No further changes to plan documents were made in response to the feedback received.

5. Schedules

Schedule 1. Alignment of submissions to themes

Schedule 1 identifies key comments from submissions and alignment to themes. Submission 10 was a survey entry with no written answers and has therefore been excluded from Schedule 1. Submissions 3 and 12 did not provide permission to publish and therefore comments provided have been excluded from Schedule 1. Comments not published have still been addressed in the themes of Schedule 2 and in discussion in the other sections of this document.

Submission no.	Comment	Discussion in schedule 2
1	Deep concern about the long-term health of water systems due to the new plan.	2a, 3a, 9a
	Scientific data shows significant aquifer (CLA) decline; current extraction limits risk critical river flows.	1e, 2a, 3a, 3b
	The ten-year plan is seen as irresponsible; recommends biannual reviews.	1d, 1g
	Insufficient local consultation, key businesses not included.	5a
	Urges a precautionary, holistic approach prioritising ecological integrity over short-term industry interests.	3a, 9a
	References the Pilbara region, where over-extraction led to severe aquifer depletion and required expensive government intervention, as a cautionary tale for the Katherine region.	1f, 10c
	Recommends that more data relevant to the entire region be included in the plan to ensure decisions are based on comprehensive scientific evidence.	1f, 1g, 7a
	Argues that the plan needs to value small businesses and the environment more, ensuring that economic and ecological interests are balanced.	3a, 6a
	The plan should have a shorter time frame, no reduction in area, more water allocated to the environment, less allocated to large agriculture and consider small local businesses.	1d, 1a, 1e, 1f, 2b, 10c, 6a
	The ESY is not balanced, more water for the environment and drinking.	2b, 6c
	Requests more explanation on all elements of the plan, indicating that the current documentation is not sufficiently clear or accessible.	7c, 10d
	The plan should not be a part of the larger Daly River plan as this is a unique region with specific requirements, and this might allow for too much oversight of specifics.	1c
	There needs to be less water extraction and biannual reviews of the plan.	2b, 1d
	Big agriculture, fracking and PFAS are the biggest risks to water security.	6a, 10a
	The biggest risk to water security in Katherine is poor planning, short term insight and not enough consideration of environmental factors.	1g, 3a, 8d, 9a
	The plan should support better environmental protection.	3a, 9b
2	Boundary reduction (by ~80%) is a major risk; extraction outside the plan area may harm river baseflows and springs.	1a, 1b, 3b
	Explains that the aquifer system is continuous, so extraction outside the plan area can still lower groundwater levels and affect river flows within the plan area.	1b, 1e, 3b
	Highlights that the Jinduckin formation, which is excluded from the new plan, provides substantial baseflow to the river, and that unregulated extraction from this formation could reduce river flows.	1b, 1e, 3a, 3b

Submission no.	Comment	Discussion in schedule 2
	Criticises the lack of detailed analysis and stakeholder consultation regarding the impacts of the boundary change, including the absence of comparative modelling and engagement with affected parties.	5a, 7a, 10d
	Points out that the plan's sustainable yield calculations are based on a relatively short period of climate data, potentially overestimating recharge and underestimating risk.	2a, 7a
	Recommends that the plan be informed by more extensive monitoring, hydrogeological data, and analysis of how different aquifers are connected and respond to extraction.	1e, 7a, 3b
4	Requests clear information on how water entitlements, reporting obligations, and future allocation opportunities will be managed for properties now outside the plan area.	1a, 1b, 8b
	Asks whether licence holders outside the new plan area will be able to trade water, and how trading will be managed to ensure fairness for all users.	8b
	Seeks confirmation that the 30% cap on annual reductions in water entitlements will also apply to users outside the plan area, to provide certainty for business planning.	2c, 1a
	Raises concerns that reduced regulatory oversight outside the plan boundary could lead to unsustainable extraction, negatively impacting groundwater systems and existing users.	1b, 8d, 9a
	Requests a clear outline of the process for obtaining new bores and extraction licences outside the plan area, including how cumulative impacts will be assessed.	8b
	Seeks information on whether proposed restricted extraction areas will affect their licences, and how changes to the estimated sustainable yield will be managed.	2d, 2a
	Asks for clarification on how existing licences in the Jinduckin Formation will be managed now that this area is excluded from the plan.	1a, 1b
	Suggests that the plan should have a shorter initial term or a formal review point within five years to allow for reassessment as more data becomes available.	1d
	Wants to know when the Daly River water plan will be released and how it will affect their current entitlements and obligations.	1c
5	Expresses general support for the plan, noting improvements in transparency, stakeholder engagement, and evidence-based decision-making.	7a, 10d
	Suggests that if the current trial of announced allocations works well, it should be formalised and adopted as standard practice.	8c
	Recommends using more infographics and summary visuals to make technical information accessible to all stakeholders.	7c, 10d
	Endorses the cap on reductions in announced allocations, as it provides certainty for perennial crop industries and long-term planning.	2c, 6a
	Highlights the value of the water allocation committee in integrating local knowledge and ensuring transparent, informed management.	8c, 5a
	Supports measures that enhance water security and engagement opportunities for agricultural users, while maintaining resource integrity.	6a
	Advocates for keeping the announced allocation trial in the final plan, as it allows for flexible and transparent management of variable water availability.	2c, 8a
	Reiterates the need for more accessible communication tools to help stakeholders understand complex water allocation processes.	7c, 10d

Submission no.	Comment	Discussion in schedule 2
	Calls for a single visual summary showing the proportion of water allocated to environmental, cultural, and beneficial uses.	3a, 7c
	Suggests that survey questions should be simplified and separated to allow for clearer, more actionable stakeholder feedback.	7c, 5a
	Expresses confidence that ongoing reviews and implementation support will resolve any issues that arise during the plan's operation.	1d, 9a
6	Does not support the draft plan, citing the drastic reduction in plan area and simultaneous increase in available water as major concerns.	1a, 2a, 9a
	Points out that the new boundaries exclude parcels of Aboriginal land, preventing these areas from accessing water set aside for economic or cultural purposes.	1a, 4a
	Notes that water allocation decisions outside the plan area are made without clear criteria and with less regard for cultural significance.	1b, 4b
	Warns that over-allocation of water is already stressing the environment, and that reduced regulation outside the plan area will worsen this pressure.	2a, 9a
	Highlights that commitments from previous plans, such as establishing advisory groups and cultural monitoring programs, have not been delivered.	8c, 4b
	Criticises the draft plan for not adequately addressing cultural values and for failing to consult with Traditional Owners in the region.	4b, 5a
	Expresses dissatisfaction with the current model for determining eligible land for Aboriginal Water Reserve, which is seen as exclusionary and based on incomplete engagement.	4a
	States that the time allowed for public feedback was not sufficient for proper consultation with Traditional Owners and affected Aboriginal people.	5a
	Expresses willingness to collaborate with the Department to address concerns and improve the plan before it is finalised.	9b, 10d
7	Argues that the plan should not be declared because it poses unacceptable risks to important environmental and cultural values, including significant aquatic ecosystems.	9a, 3a, 4b
	Recommends a moratorium on new water licences until more comprehensive data on groundwater-surface water interactions and ecological requirements is available.	7a, 8d
	Calls for an overhaul of NT water legislation and the development of more robust scientific monitoring programs.	1g, 8c, 7a
	Emphasises the national and global significance of NT's free-flowing rivers and aquifers, and the risks posed by the plan's extraction limits and boundary changes.	1a, 1e, 9a
	Warns that the 80% reduction in plan area could allow significant additional extraction outside the plan, threatening river health.	1a, 1b, 3a
	Modelled flows may be insufficient for key species (sooty grunter, barramundi, pig-nosed turtle).	3a
	Notes that the plan allows extraction of up to 30% of natural flows, exceeding the NT Government's own recommended 20% threshold.	2b, 3b, 9a
	Highlights that excluding the Jinduckin Formation from the plan leaves its baseflow contributions to the river unprotected.	1a, 1b, 1e, 3b
	Points out that the ESY is based on a short period of climate data, potentially overestimating sustainable yield.	2a, 7a

Submission no.	Comment	Discussion in schedule 2
	Recommends further research into aquifer connectivity and the impacts of climate variability on water resources.	7a, 3b
8	Supports the decision to retain the ESY at 39,000 ML/year and the lifting of the licence moratorium, as these provide certainty for industry investment.	2a, 6a, 8b
	Endorses the introduction of a dry-year management trigger and a collaborative approach to managing reductions in water allocations.	2c, 8a
	Endorses 30% cap on reductions and lower recovery threshold (from 90% to 70%).	2c
	Asks for early clarity on the exact boundaries of restricted extraction areas and on transitional arrangements for existing or planned infrastructure.	2d, 8d
	Suggests that any increase in domestic water allocations should be offset by improved monitoring and management.	2b, 7b
	Recommends the publication of clear licensing service standards and integration of the Katherine plan into the broader Daly Basin Plan.	8b, 1c
	Endorses the Department's approach to basin management, which is based on a strong scientific evidence base and peer-reviewed modelling.	1c, 7a
	Requests regulatory certainty, transparent and accessible data, and clear governance protocols to avoid overlapping or conflicting regulatory triggers.	8d, 7c
	Suggests that petroleum water consumption should be included in the broader allocation pool to enable equitable access for all users.	2b, 8b
	Recommends that future reviews be supported by structured industry and stakeholder consultation, with advance publication of proposed changes.	5a, 8c
9	Emphasises that recreational fishing is a major economic and social activity in the region, dependent on healthy river flows.	6c
	Concerned about high proportion of recharge allocated to consumptive use (64% vs. recommended 20%) compared to the NT Water Allocation Planning Framework.	2b, 3a
	Stresses need for transparency, monitoring, and review if extraction increases.	7b, 10d
	Accepts the minor adjustment to ESY but stresses the need for regular review to ensure sustainability.	2a, 7b
	Suggests that any significant increase in water use should trigger a review of groundwater-surface water connectivity and flow modelling.	3b, 7b
	Supports announced allocation changes and 30% cap for business certainty.	2c, 6a
	Recommends more research into the localised impacts of water extraction, especially near river discharge points.	7a, 3b
	Supports the introduction of RWEA but argues that it must be accompanied by broader safeguards to protect river flows.	2d, 8d
	Suggests that the RWEA should be declared at the same time as the plan and that its principles should apply to all water users.	2d, 8d
	Endorses education and communication initiatives to promote water efficiency and recommends expanding bore monitoring, especially during dry years.	7b, 10d
	Calls for regular reporting, review of recharge and discharge assumptions, and the integration of ecological, cultural, and recreational values into water management decisions.	7b, 3a, 4b, 6b
11	The plan does and doesn't provide for the best use of the resource. This is often not determined until after the plan is declared.	2a, 2b

Submission no.	Comment	Discussion in schedule 2
	There should be more water for the environment.	2a, 2b
	It is the right approach to include the Katherine water plan as part of the larger Daly River plan as the groundwater is linked so should be managed together.	1c, 3b
	The biggest risk is poor landscape management which leads to high run off rates and less soil water retention.	3b, 3c
	The plan should support smaller, community driven innovation in the future.	9b, 10d
	Not confident the plan will protect the water resources because we do not know what we don't know.	9a
13	Sustainable water extraction is not valued enough.	2a
	There should be more water for the environment.	2a, 2b
	The Katherine plan should be in the larger Daly River plan as Katherine relies on the full catchment.	1c, 1f, 3b
	Impacts of too much water extracted and too much land clearing should be included in the plan. This should include increased run off, lower rainfall recharge, loss of fishing, impacts to endangered species, tourism and local lifestyle.	2a, 3a, 6b, 10b
	The biggest risk to water security in Katherine is lower water table, drying rivers and loss of fish species.	2a, 3a
	The plan should support more bushwalking, canoeing, tourism and world recognition.	6b, 9b
	Not confident the plan will protect the water resources because there is too much potential water extraction, land clearing and monoculture.	2a,
14	There are lies in the plan.	10d
	More for environment, aboriginal farming industries and population expansion and a lot less for cotton.	2b, 4a,
	Environment and aboriginal industry/farming expansion, residential expansion these should priorities well above big multinationals and cotton	4a, 2b, 2d
	There should be more water for the environment.	2a, 2b
	Katherine plan should not be part of the larger Daly River plan because too much can go wrong, the science and information are withheld/not complete or accurate and could allow for trading of water.	10d, 4a, 7a
	There needs to be more water for Aboriginal development and residential expansion and less for cotton.	4a,
	The biggest risk to water security in Katherine is cotton and fracking.	6a, 10c
	The plan does not disclose all the facts.	10d
15	Have witnessed springs and soaks no longer having water in them throughout most of the year or in some instances at all.	3a, 4c
	Have witnessed damage to important cultural and ritual sites from grazing, feral animals, poor land use planning and implementation.	3a, 4c, 2d
	Aboriginal people not being adequately engaged in the decisions about the use and management of natural resources including in water, instead focusing on a one size fits all approach to water planning through water advisory committees which do not allow for deep interaction and understanding to occur.	5a, 4b, 10d

Submission no.	Comment	Discussion in schedule 2
	Have witnessed expansions in industrial development in more recent times, increased cropping that is reliant on groundwater extraction and unmanaged extraction of surface water for livestock and other uses; land clearing; limestone sinkholes blocked due to soil erosion from poor land use; and PFAS which continues to concern and affect the ability of Aboriginal people to customarily harvest resources.	6a, 3b, 10a, 4c
	The degradation of natural resources is further exacerbated by adverse public policy which has not and continues to not take into consideration Traditional Owners' connection and obligations to country as well as their desire for self-determination including economic self-determination.	4b, 9a, 9b
	The cumulative effect of multiple water licences and allocations must be considered in relation to native title rights and the long-term sustainability of cultural and environmental values.	4b, 4c, 9a
	While we welcome the continuation of the Aboriginal Water Reserve, we stand ready to be able to further define the use of the reserve so that it benefits Traditional Owners directly and not as preferred by broader members of Katherine society.	4a, 9b
	Aboriginal people have not had adequate support to fully consider the current and past water plans and planning processes and its impact on our customary and economic rights and interests.	5a, 4b
	The technical language of water planning documents makes it difficult for Aboriginal people to understand and participate fully in planning processes, impacting their ability to exercise rights and make informed decisions.	7c, 4b, 10d
	There is inconsistency in the volume being proposed for consumptive use versus what is stated in the Water Allocation Framework and a departure from previous approaches to 80/20 rule (80% for the environment and 20% for consumptive use).	2b, 10d
	Some extraction is not monitored including unlicensed bores, water for stock and road construction and especially bores may be having a significant impact on groundwater resources.	2a, 7b
	A lack of engagement with Native Title Claimants (TO's) to design the use and management of the Aboriginal Water Reserve allocation.	4a, 5a, 10d
	There is a need for collaborative monitoring, communication, and impact assessment tools, co-designed with Traditional Owners, to ensure sustainable water management and meaningful participation.	8c, 4b, 7c, 7b
	Some species of fish (black bream, sooty grunter, catfish and others) require water levels to be higher than what is recommended in this draft plan.	3a
	The plan is too ambitious and further collaborative research with TO's should be conducted especially with concerns about customary harvesting of fish.	1f, 1g, 7a, 4c
	Reduce the pool of water for consumptive use to be at 20%, down from 30% to ensure the flows of water (surface and ground) are both conservative and secure.	2b, 3a
	Ensure that industry development in the proposed Daly River Water Plan do not exceed a combined 20% of consumptive use.	1c, 1f, 2b
	Ensure consistency with Aboriginal Water Allocations across all water plans and districts.	4a, 1c
	Ensure regulatory monitoring of all bores and other water extraction to provide transparent and real time water extraction data.	7b, 10d
	Commence a comprehensive governance framework to ensure the ongoing engagement and planning process with Native Title Claimants/Holders regarding	8c, 4a, 4b

Submission no.	Comment	Discussion in schedule 2
	the use and management of water and to develop guidelines for the use of the AWR.	
	Work with native title holders to develop appropriate communication tools.	7c, 4b
	Ensure that sacred sites are protected from further desecration and degradation.	4c, 8d
	The water allocation plan's framework and the granting of licences are 'future acts' under the Native Title Act 1993, with cumulative impacts on native title rights and the ability to protect places, areas, and things of traditional significance.	4b, 4c
16	Modelled flows are not sufficient to protect the ecological integrity of the Katherine River.	3b, 2c, 8a
	The modelling shows that key species – including Sooty Grunter, Barramundi and Pig-Nosed Turtle – may lose critical habitat under the proposed extraction scenarios.	2c, 3a, 8a
	Research indicates that flows of at least 2.0 cumecs are required at Wilden to support these species, yet the plan uses a trigger of 1.8 cumecs and does not even require action when that point is reached. This level of discretion is not acceptable.	2c, 3a, 8a
	The 80% reduction in the plan area is alarming and risks significant additional extraction. This raises the possibility that major new extractions could occur just outside the boundary, placing additional pressure on the aquifer and the river.	1a, 1b, 1e, 3b
	Declaring a 10-year plan with major knowledge gaps risks irreversible harm.	7a, 1d, 3b
	Because only a small portion of current licensed water is actually used, allowing trading greatly increases the risk that extraction could double or more – up to the full 39,000 ML/year.	8b, 2a, 9a
	Unlicensed extraction is still not properly accounted for. With 65% of bores unlicensed, and stock and domestic extraction exempt from reporting, the true level of water take is unknown.	2a, 7b, 8d
	Climate change is intensifying pressures on the Katherine–Daly river system, compounding risks from extraction and making robust, precautionary planning even more critical.	9a, 3a
	The plan does not align with the NT Water Allocation Planning Framework. The plan allows extraction of up to 30% of natural flows – well above the 20% threshold in the NT Government's own Top End Planning Framework.	1g, 2b, 3b, 10d
	The boundary must be reviewed, minimum flow protections strengthened, trading restrictions tightened, unlicensed extraction measured, and scientific knowledge gaps addressed before any long-term plan is put in place.	1a, 1e, 1g, 2c, 8b, 7a, 7b
	Decisions about water management must be made with care, transparency, and a commitment to safeguarding the Territory for future generations, recognising intergenerational responsibility.	9a, 10d
17	Have witnessed springs and soaks no longer having water in them throughout most of the year or in some instances at all.	3a, 4c
	Have witnessed damage to important cultural and ritual sites from grazing, feral animals, poor land use planning and implementation.	3a, 4c, 2d
	Aboriginal people not being adequately engaged in the decisions about the use and management of natural resources including in water, instead focusing on a one size fits all approach to water planning through water advisory committees which do not allow for deep interaction and understanding to occur.	5a, 4b

Submission no.	Comment	Discussion in schedule 2
	Have witnessed expansions in industrial development in more recent times, increased cropping that is reliant on groundwater extraction and unmanaged extraction of surface water for livestock and other uses; land clearing; limestone sinkholes blocked due to soil erosion from poor land use; and PFAS which continues to concern and affect the ability of Aboriginal people to customarily harvest resources.	6a, 3b, 10a, 4c
	The degradation of natural resources is further exacerbated by adverse public policy which has not and continues to not take into consideration Traditional Owners' connection and obligations to country as well as their desire for self-determination including economic self-determination.	4b, 9a, 9b
	While we welcome the continuation of the Aboriginal Water Reserve, we stand ready to be able to further define the use of the reserve so that it benefits Traditional Owners directly and not as preferred by broader members of Katherine society.	4a, 9b
	Aboriginal people have not had adequate support to fully consider the current and past water plans and planning processes and its impact on our customary and economic rights and interests.	5a, 4b
	The technical language of water planning documents makes it difficult for Aboriginal people to understand and participate fully in planning processes, impacting their ability to exercise rights and make informed decisions.	7c, 4b
	There is inconsistency in the volume being proposed for consumptive use versus what is stated in the Water Allocation Framework and a departure from previous approaches to 80/20 rule (80% for the environment and 20% for consumptive use).	2b, 10d
	Some extraction is not monitored including unlicensed bores, water for stock and road construction and especially bores may be having a significant impact on groundwater resources.	2a, 7b
	A lack of engagement with Native Title Claimants (TO's) to design the use and management of the Aboriginal Water Reserve allocation.	4a, 5a
	There is a need for collaborative monitoring, communication, and impact assessment tools, co-designed with Traditional Owners, to ensure sustainable water management and meaningful participation.	8c, 4b, 7c, 7b
	Some species of fish (black bream, sooty grunter, catfish and others) require water levels to be higher than what is recommended in this draft plan.	3a
	The plan is too ambitious and further collaborative research with TO's should be conducted especially with concerns about customary harvesting of fish.	7a, 4c
	Reduce the pool of water for consumptive use to be at 20%, down from 30% to ensure the flows of water (surface and ground) are both conservative and secure.	2b, 3a
	Ensure that industry development in the proposed Daly River Water Plan do not exceed a combined 20% of consumptive use.	1c, 2b
	Ensure consistency with Aboriginal Water Allocations across all water plans and districts.	4a, 1c
	Ensure regulatory monitoring of all bores and other water extraction to provide transparent and real time water extraction data.	7b, 10d
	Commence a comprehensive governance framework to ensure the ongoing engagement and planning process with Native Title Claimants/Holders regarding the use and management of water and to develop guidelines for the use of the AWR.	8c, 4a, 4b
	Work with native title holders to develop appropriate communication tools.	7c, 4b

Submission no.	Comment	Discussion in schedule 2
	Ensure that sacred sites are protected from further desecration and degradation.	4c, 8d

Schedule 2. Discussion of themes and resolution

Theme	Subtheme	Summary of the submission	Response	Resolution
1. Plan scope and boundaries	1a. Reduction in plan area	Some submissions express concern about the significant reduction in the plan area, which they believe leaves important regions unregulated and vulnerable to unsustainable water extraction. Some stakeholders highlight that this boundary change risks excluding Aboriginal land, key properties, and sensitive ecological zones from oversight and management. There is some perception that the new, smaller boundary undermines holistic water management and could facilitate increased extraction just outside the regulated area, potentially impacting the integrity of the aquifer and river systems.	The plan area was reduced to focus on the Tindall Limestone Aquifer (TLA) and surface water from the Katherine River between the Ironwood and Wilden gauging stations, improving management efficiency and targeting the highest-value water resource. The new plan area better aligns with the underlying hydrogeology, its discharge and water use patterns. The new plan area covers the TLA in areas where it is unconfined and has a strong connection to Katherine River and is covered by part of Jinduckin formation that is relatively shallow (150 metres below ground level) and to surface water from the Katherine River between the Ironwood and Wilden gauging stations. The Ooloo Dolostone aquifer is managed separately under the Ooloo Dolostone water allocation plan. The remaining Jinduckin formation is lower-yielding and has generally lower water quality. 94% of licensed bores and 92% of licensed entitlements remain within the new boundary. The Jawoyn Aboriginal Land Trust, Barnjarn Aboriginal Corporation and Binjari Community Aboriginal Corporation land parcels fall outside of unconfined aquifer zone and plan area, hence cannot be designated as eligible land for the Aboriginal Water Reserve (AWR). In addition, NT Portion 4058 and NT Portion 5607 also fall outside the new Katherine water plan boundary; however, both parcels are included within the Ooloo Dolostone Aquifer water allocation plan. The AWR is not the only avenue to access water for Aboriginal economic development; within plan areas water from allocations to other economic beneficial uses can be used. Outside of plan areas, water availability for Aboriginal economic development is based on the NT Water Allocation Planning Framework. Designating eligible land for the AWR, was done in accordance with section 4B and 22C of <i>Water Act 1992</i>. More information on AWR can be found here Aboriginal water reserves NT.GOV.AU	The department made the following updates to the plan documents to address submissions relating to reduction in plan area: • Update section 4 of the background report to clarify how information in the plan documents can inform decision making outside of the plan boundary. • Updated section 2.5, 3.3 and 3.2 of the plan documents and section 3, 4.1, 4.2, 5.2, 6, and 7 of the background report to better describe an integrated groundwater-surface water system (together described as the Katherine water resource). • Update section 4 of the background report to describe how water sharing is considered outside of water allocation plan areas. • Updated section 11.2 of the background report to clarify the importance of the Aboriginal water reserve in areas of high competition for water, and other options to access water outside of plan areas.
	1b. Regulatory certainty outside of plan area	There is considerable apprehension amongst submissions that activities and water extraction occurring outside the new plan boundaries will not be adequately monitored or controlled. Submissions shared concerned that unregulated extraction could have direct and cumulative impacts on river flows, aquifers, and both ecological and cultural values within the plan area. The lack of clear criteria or mechanisms for managing these outside effects is seen as a major gap, with calls for the plan to address the risks of “backdoor” extraction and to ensure that the interconnected nature of the aquifer system is properly managed.	Licences extracting from the TLA outside the plan area are managed under the same regulatory standards as all areas within water control districts in the Northern Territory that fall outside of allocation plan areas. The mechanism for this is the application of the NT Water Allocation Planning Framework. The framework guides the sharing of water resources, especially where scientific research on environmental or cultural water needs is not available. This ensures that extraction outside of the plan area is not vulnerable to unregulated water extraction. The 2% of licensed extraction from the TLA outside the plan area will continue to be licensed and commercial water take will continue to require water licences. Assessment of application and water sharing will be guided by the Water Act and the framework. Information collated within the plan may provide useful context to inform water licence decisions in the broader region.	The department updated section 4 of the background report to describe how water is managed outside of water allocation plan areas.
	1c. Integration with other plans	Views on integration of the plan with the Daly River Water Allocation Plan were divided. Some stakeholders are concerned that integrating the Katherine plan into broader regional water plans, such as the Daly River Water Allocation Plan, may dilute the focus on Katherine’s unique needs and challenges. There is a concern that local issues could be overlooked or lost within a larger basin-wide framework, and that the staged approach to integration could result in inconsistent protections or management standards for the Katherine region. Other stakeholders shared support for the integration as it is seen as a mechanism for holistically managing the whole catchment/resource.	The department has proposed that a larger Daly River plan be developed to incorporate both the Katherine and Ooloo Dolostone Aquifer water allocation plans given the interactions between them and their combined influence on the Daly River System. This will allow for the holistic management of the system. The Daly River plan will ensure effective management of one largest and most iconic water resources of the Territory in an integrated, holistic manner. The Daly River plan will integrate surface water and groundwater management flowing into and through the basin, be based on science, and informed by the community. The department proposes for the Katherine and Ooloo Dolostone Aquifer plans to ultimately become chapters in this overarching plan. This process will maintain the individual focus on both the plan areas while enabling holistic management of interconnected resources.	The department updated section 3 of the background report to improve clarity about how Katherine will be considered in the proposed Daly River plan and will consider this feedback in the preparation of the Daly River plan in the future.

Theme	Subtheme	Summary of the submission	Response	Resolution
			Until the Daly River plan is declared, the Katherine plan will continue to apply to the Katherine plan area.	
	1d. Duration and review cycles	Many contributors object to the ten-year duration of the plan, arguing that it is too long given the current environmental uncertainty, climate variability, and knowledge gaps. There are strong calls for more frequent and adaptive reviews—such as every two or five years—to ensure that the plan can respond quickly to new data, emerging risks, or changes in water use patterns.	The plan duration is set at 10 years, with a mandatory review at 5 years as required by the Water Act. In addition, the plan applies a risk and adaptive management approach to allow for the plan to respond to uncertainty. Risk management typically involves identifying and assessing potential risks to the water resource, such as water availability, or changes in hydrological patterns due to climate change. Actions are then developed and implemented to reduce the likelihood or impacts of these risks. Adaptive management is a complementary approach that recognises that there is often uncertainty and complexity around the effectiveness of actions taken, and that continuous learning and adjustment is needed. Adaptive management involves the ongoing monitoring and assessment of the effectiveness of actions, and the development of new actions as needed based on new information and changing conditions. The plan establishes a new collaborative approach for applying announced allocations which are an adaptive management tool that enables the Controller of Water Resources to temporarily reduce licence entitlements in dry years to minimise the impact of extraction on flows in the Katherine River. To manage potential impacts of unlicensed use while supporting sustainable residential growth, the department will consider the need for a Restricted Water Extraction Area (RWEA) as part of the mid-term review of the plan based on the outcome of further unlicensed use studies (implementation action 3.4.1).	The department will apply risk and adaptive management measures as described in the plan to manage the issues raised in submissions. No change in plan duration and review cycles were made within the plan.
	1e. Impacts to the TLA and Jinduckin formation	Submissions asked for clarification on how existing licenses will be managed that now fall outside of the plan area (e.g. within the Jinduckin Formation) and clarification on how Jinduckin and TLA systems are being treated separately. There were concerns about the river baseflow contribution from these systems being excluded.	Water extraction outside the plan area is still regulated under the NT Water Allocation Planning Framework. The framework guides the sharing of water resources, especially where scientific research on environmental or cultural water needs is not available. This ensures that extraction outside of the plan area is not vulnerable to unregulated water extraction. Previous plans provided limited guidance for the Jinduckin Formation, focussed on managing risks of corrosion in bores. The new plan area covers the TLA in areas where it is unconfined and has a strong connection to Katherine River and is covered by part of the Jinduckin formation that is relatively shallow (150 metres below ground level) and to all surface water licences from the Katherine River between the Ironwood and Wilden gauging stations. The remaining Jinduckin formation is lower-yielding and has generally lower water quality. 97% of metered bores and 94% of licensed entitlements remain within the new plan area. Management of water take from the Jinduckin aquifer has not substantially changed as a result of this plan.	The department updated the background report to clarify that management of the Jinduckin aquifer has not substantially changed in this iteration of the plan and also updated section 4 of the background report to describe how water is managed outside of water allocation plan areas.
	1f. Overall Daly River plan proposal	Stakeholders requested clear inter-basin governance protocols for a new Daly River Plan, including clear licensing standards.	The Daly River plan will enable effective management of one largest and most iconic water resources of the Territory in an integrated, holistic manner. The Daly River plan will integrate surface water and groundwater management flowing into and through the basin, be based on science and informed by the community. The plan will manage the Oolloo, Jinduckin and Tindall aquifers for dry season flows. The plan will also provide certainty for communities by prioritising communities, business and industry, the Aboriginal Water Reserve, and support our territory lifestyle for generations to come.	The department updated section 3 of the background report to improve clarity about how the Daly River plan will be developed and its objectives.
	1g. Plan development gap - changes	Several submissions highlighted a perceived gap between the current state of knowledge and the data required to support the future implementation of the revised water allocation plans. Some stakeholders requested further structured transition arrangements that explain how	Uncertainty is inherent in water resource management (refer section 2.6 of the background report). The background report establishes where known uncertainties exist, tools for the management of uncertainty and considers where knowledge gaps or low confidence in data exists.	No change to plan documents were made in response to this theme.

Theme	Subtheme	Summary of the submission	Response	Resolution
		uncertainties will be managed, what interim protections will remain in place, and how new information - particularly relating to recharge estimates, cultural water values, and climate variability - to be incorporated.	The plan documents adaptive management measures, in acknowledgment of uncertainties. Adaptive management is a complementary approach that recognises that there is often uncertainty and complexity around the effectiveness of actions taken, and that continuous learning and adjustment is needed. Adaptive management involves the ongoing monitoring and assessment of the effectiveness of actions, and the development of new actions as needed based on new information and changing conditions.	

Theme	Subtheme	Summary of the submission	Response	Resolution
2. Sustainable yield, allocations and extraction	2a. Adequacy of ESY	Some submissions challenged the adequacy and calculation of the estimated sustainable yield (ESY), raising concerns that it may be overestimated due to limited data, short modelling periods, and unaccounted-for risks. There is particular anxiety that the ESY does not sufficiently consider the potential impacts if all licences are fully used, especially as water trading increases. Some stakeholders object to the proportion of recharge allocated to extraction, noting that it exceeds recommended guidelines and could threaten the sustainability of the aquifer and river flows.	The ESY is the volume of water that can be allocated from water resources to beneficial uses. The ESY by definition is not precise or exact, rather it is 'estimated' and involves an informed judgement that considers scientific understanding, community values, policy and legislation. It is a precautionary boundary informed by scientific knowledge and declared by the Minister of Water Resources. Modelling and risk assessments informing that plan are based on full licence use entitlements. Modelling scenarios based on the ESY (full use entitlements) shows higher aquifer storage compared to storage in 1970, suggesting a high likelihood of aquifer resilience and buffer capacity under the climate regime of the last 50 years. This means that even if all licences were fully used, the aquifer is expected to remain above pre-development levels, based on current scientific understanding and historical data. Calculating an ESY in terms of recharge alone does not take into account other contextual information. The plan has utilised a detailed scientific understanding of the water resource in the plan area to determine the ESY. Water trading cannot enable the exceedance of allocations set by the ESY as trading cannot result in more water being extracted than what has been allowed for. The NT Water Allocation Framework provides a conservative guideline for extraction outside of plan areas and in the absence of scientific information to protect environmental and cultural values. Within the Katherine Plan area, understanding of the unique resource and its recharge functions informs the acceptable extraction of up to 64% of the recharge volume. When considered part of the water balance, the ESY is approximately 3% of total rainfall over the Katherine plan area. The department acknowledges that the ESY is an estimation in the context of uncertainties as described in section 4.3 of the background report. The ESY has not materially changed in this new plan compared to the previous plan.	The department updated section 4 of the background report to clarify the effect of plan boundary changes on the ESY. Section 3.3 in plan document was also updated to better describe Katherine water resources
	2b. Allocation balancing	There is a call for a more balanced approach to water allocations, with some submissions arguing that too much water is allocated to consumptive uses such as large-scale agriculture and cotton, and not enough is reserved for environmental flows and Aboriginal development. These stakeholders want to see a greater share of water set aside for the environment, cultural values, and local community needs, and express concern that the current allocation model does not deliver equitable or sustainable outcomes.	Water allocations in the plan allow up to 39,000 ML per year to be extracted. This volume has not materially changed in this new plan compared to the previous plan. The Katherine has been well studied and the plan is supported by 70 years of monitoring data, a sophisticated water model and an ongoing monitoring program. These elements support the development of a bespoke ESY for the Katherine plan area. This can deviate from the amount of water that is allocated outside of plan areas, as there is often an absence of relevant scientific information. Specifically, the plan fully provisions the Aboriginal Water Reserve and sets out implementation actions to support access to this reserve. In addition, water that is not allocated to beneficial uses, is retained in the environment. The allocation in the plan of 100 ML to the environment is a nominal allocation to meet the requirement in section 22B(6) of the Act. This water is not extracted and is retained in the environment to maintain ecological functions and environmental values in the region. This does not represent all the water retained in the environment. Updated analysis of water use trends has been undertaken in the final background report, as a result the potential to review the distribution of water allocations to reflect growing demand for domestic water has been identified as a potential outcome of implementation action 3.4.3. Further information on allocations is detailed in sections 4.2 and 5 of the background report.	The department updated section 5 of the background report with revised water use estimates for the new plan area.
	2c. Dry-year management	Some stakeholders are concerned that the flow trigger for announced allocations at the Wilden gauge (1.8 cumecs) is set below the scientifically recommended minimum (2.0 cumecs) required to sustain key aquatic species. There is frustration that the plan does not require mandatory action when this lower threshold is reached, potentially allowing harmful extraction to continue during critical low-flow periods and putting river health and biodiversity at risk.	The plan has minimum flow requirement of <155 ML per day (or <1.8 m³/s or cumecs). This is consistent with the previous plan arrangements and are based on the department's modelled natural flow at Wilden gauging station (G8140536). The minimum flow requirements of <155 ML per day (or <1.8 m³/s) represent a 'very dry' year in the model. Modelled Katherine River flow data at Wilden shows variability, with dry year sequences clustering in the early 1900s and limited persistence of low-flow periods. During the 20th century, the flow of the Katherine River would regularly reduce to below 1.8 cumecs at the Wilden gauge station during the months of October and September. Given the natural occurrence of these low flow events, the department considers that a minimum flow requirement of 1.8 cumecs is acceptable and will enable effective management of water take in dry periods through the announced allocation process.	The department updated section 11.3 of the background report and section 4.3 of plan document to improve the explanation of how the Announced Allocations process is applied.

Theme	Subtheme	Summary of the submission	Response	Resolution
	2d. Restricted Water Extraction Area (including rural community)	While there is general support for the concept of a Restricted Water Extraction Area (RWEA) to protect river flows, some submissions argue that this measure alone is not sufficient. Stakeholders stress that the RWEA must be coordinated with broader safeguards, robust enforcement, and comprehensive management of both licensed and unlicensed bores. There is also concern about the timing and effectiveness of RWEA implementation. There is also some concern that restrictions on new bores and rural subdivision, while intended to protect river flows, may stifle rural development and make rural living less viable. Submissions call for a more nuanced approach that balances environmental protection with the needs of rural communities.	Maintaining aquifer-fed flows is important to maintaining the ecological communities of the Katherine River, water use in close proximity to discharge zones at the Katherine River could pose a greater risk to dry season flows. While licensed take is the largest component of use in sensitive areas near the river these areas, it can be closely managed. Unlicensed use has also steadily increased over time, with most future residential development for Katherine earmarked within 5km of the River. In conjunction with licensing regulation, announced allocations, ongoing monitoring, community education and compliance activities, a RWEA mechanism could provide another layer of protection for the Katherine river system, however it would also prohibit new applications for water extraction licences in the area. Since release of the draft plan, it was identified that a RWEA would prohibit new commercial licenced within the area, in addition to controlling unlicensed use. As a result, implementation action 3.4.1 was updated to include independent analysis of domestic water use and growth estimates with recommendations for broader management strategies. The need for a RWEA will be reconsidered as part of the plan's mid term review. The final plan also introduces a Discharge protection zone to manage licenced take in the most sensitive parts of the system. The total entitlement within the zone is capped at 13,816 ML/year and new licences and permanent trade should not be granted if they would cause total entitlement to exceed the cap, however, where water is recovered or licences are relinquished, new entrants may apply for licences within the existing cap.	The department updated section 5 of the background report to refine the analysis of water use trends and include other considerations and to provide clarity for lifting licensing restrictions. Implementation action 3.4.1 was updated to better characterise unlicensed use and additional actions, including a RWEA to be considered at the mid-term review of the plan.
3. Environmental and ecological values	3a. Species - Flora and Fauna Impacts	Some submissions stress that current extraction limits and flow triggers may not be adequate to sustain healthy populations and habitats for key aquatic species, such as Sooty Grunter, Barramundi, and Pig-nosed Turtle, and there is concern that insufficient protection of environmental flows could lead to long-term declines in biodiversity and ecosystem health.	Ecological protection is a primary objective of the plan and is applied through the prioritisation of aquatic ecosystem and Groundwater Dependent Ecosystem (GDE) health in the determination of the ESY. The background report to the plan summarises available scientific research relating to key species found in the aquatic ecosystems, riparian vegetation and areas within and downstream of the plan area and the basis for flow thresholds used in the announced allocations process (1.8 cumecs). Announced allocations may be implemented to maintain the target proportion of flows in the river (87%) (Refer section 2.3 in plan document and section 11.3 in background report). As set out in the plan's implementation actions, the department has developed a project to refine environmental flow requirements of key sites and species and is currently seeking funding to deliver this in 2026 and 2027. The department acknowledges in the plan that additional research is required to better define the environmental water requirements of key aquatic species (Implementation Action 3.1.3) to inform the protection of the significant biodiversity and cultural values of the catchment.	No change was made to plan documents in response to feedback.
	3b. Recharge/discharge, flow and connectivity	Stakeholders highlight the need for robust understanding and monitoring of aquifer recharge, discharge, and connectivity, particularly between different geological formations. Scientific evidence is cited to support higher minimum flows than those provided in the plan with stakeholders particularly concerned about the impact of extraction near the river and the lack of understanding of local flow paths and lag effects. The uncertainty around how extraction in one area affects other parts of the system is seen as a major risk to sustainable management.	The department has high confidence in the TLA connectivity to Katherine River baseflows and groundwater flow paths towards the river at a regional scale. The plan documents acknowledge that there are greater uncertainties for logal flow paths and lag effects, and includes implementation actions targeted at managing this uncertainty more closely. Implementation actions have been set to address key gaps related to aquifer recharge, discharge and connectivity. For example, implementation action 3.1.3 aims to refine understanding of groundwater flows. Implementation action 3.1.5 is triggered when extraction in the plan area reaches 30,000ML (~76.9% of the ESY) and would result in a review of the integrated groundwater-surface water model and reporting of this review to the advisory committee. Implementation actions 3.4.1, 3.4.3 and 3.4.4 aim to improve confidence in water use estimates and more closely manage unlicensed water take with a focus on locations close to the Katherine River. The plan also introduces a Discharge protection zone to manage take in the most sensitive parts of the system. The total entitlement within the zone is capped at 13,816 ML/year and new licences and permanent trade should not be granted if they would cause total entitlement to exceed the cap, however, where water is recovered or licences are relinquished, new entrants may apply for licences within the existing cap.	The department updated section 5.5 (trends near groundwater discharge areas) and section 5.6 (management implications) of background report and section 4.5, and section 4.4 of the plan was updated including addition of schedule H. The new implementation action (3.5.4) was added to review water entitlements within the discharge protection zone against the recovery of unused licenced water entitlement policy.
	3c. Water quality	While less frequently mentioned, some submissions raise concerns about water quality, including the impacts of extraction, land use, and potential contamination on the health of rivers and aquifers. Submissions call for continued and enhanced monitoring to ensure that water quality is maintained for both human and ecological health.	The plan recognises the important of maintaining water quality for both human and ecological health. The plan includes actions for ongoing and enhanced monitoring of groundwater and surface water quality, with particular attention to potential risks from extraction and land use. Regular monitoring and reporting are core components of the plan's adaptive management approach, ensuring that any emerging risks to water quality are identified early and addressed through targeted management actions. Implementation actions 3.1.1 and 3.1.2 both relate to maintaining water quality.	The implementation action 3.1.2 was reworded to put more onus for action on WRD rather than Lands Planning.

Theme	Subtheme	Summary of the submission	Response	Resolution
4. Cultural and Aboriginal values	4a. Aboriginal Water Reserve and tenure	There is criticism of the exclusion of some Aboriginal land from water reserve opportunities due to boundary changes and tenure complexities. Submissions question whether the Aboriginal water reserve is truly accessible and delivers real economic benefit to Traditional Owners, and raise concerns about the cumulative impact of water licences on native title rights and interests. Some submissions call for further consultation on this.	The plan acknowledges that some land may have been unintentionally excluded from the plan area due to complexity of land records. A systematic GIS review identified eligible land parcels, and the department has developed a mechanism for Aboriginal landowners to seek clarification on eligibility. Exclusive possession native title land can be considered eligible land, providing other eligibility criteria is met. Outside of plan areas, Aboriginal landowners can seek access to water for commercial purposes (licensed water take) and this proposed extraction would be assessed under the NT Water Allocation Framework. In the absence of a reserve of water specifically for Aboriginal landowners, as set out in the Katherine plan, the department considers each water user on a case by case basis.	The department updated the background report to provide information about how Aboriginal people can access water outside of the plan area. Schedule F was updated to better display land parcels designated for Aboriginal water reserve.
	4b. Consultation and cultural recognition	Some submissions highlight insufficient consultation with Traditional Owners and a lack of genuine recognition of cultural values in the planning process. Barriers to participation—including technical language, lack of co-design, and limited engagement—are seen as significant obstacles to meaningful involvement of Aboriginal people in water management.	The department acknowledges a need to improve the delivery of consultation and engagement with Aboriginal community members throughout the planning process. The Daly River committee comprises 40% Aboriginal representation from geographically diverse areas across the Daly River basin. In addition to contributing to the development of the plan, the Aboriginal members are advising the department on how to better listen, engage, inform, and consult with Aboriginal people in high priority water management areas of the broader Big Rivers region. During the development of the plan the committee discussed Aboriginal cultural water values in the context of the broader Daly River basin, with relevant members emphasising the importance of Aboriginal people being involved in water management, and that decisions-makers account for and consider these values in the future. After the public consultation period, the Division was contacted by the Northern Land Council to verify the eligibility of few land parcels that had not been included in the list. Upon review, the Division confirmed that these parcels were not eligible, as they did not meet the area criteria as set in Water Act 1992. The committee will continue to be engaged throughout the implementation of the plan.	No change was made to plan documents in response to feedback.
	4c. Cultural sites and connection	There is a strong call for immediate safeguards for cultural sites and for cumulative impact assessment, rather than deferring protection to future work. Stakeholders emphasise the importance of protecting cultural connections to water for current and future generations.	Objective 2 of the plan states “ensure Aboriginal people can contribute to water resource management to support their cultural values, practices and responsibilities to Country”. Outcomes of this objective as set out in the plan are that water supports Aboriginal relationship to Country, cultural significant water-dependent sites are protected, and Aboriginal knowledge is integrated into water management. The plan’s application of the ESY and conservative approach to water allocation invertedly protects cultural sites through the maintenance of the resource and protection of ecosystems and other values. The ESY also makes a dedicated allocation for water extraction for cultural uses. In addition, water licence applications are assessed for their cumulative impact and applicants must comply with other laws, for example those set out under the <i>Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act 1989</i> and the <i>Environment Protection Act 2019</i>. To address uncertainties, the plan emphasises precautionary and adaptive management strategies, such as maintaining the current ESY, capping licensing take within discharge protection zone, targeted monitoring, and collaborative approaches with major licence holders to managing extraction in dry periods. This balanced approach will help safeguard water-related ecological, cultural, social, and economic values of the Katherine region over the next decade.	No change was made to plan documents in response to feedback.
5. Community engagement and participation	5a. Insufficient consultation	Some submissions express dissatisfaction with the level of community and Aboriginal consultation, arguing that the process has not been transparent, inclusive, or accessible enough. Technical language and procedural barriers are seen as limiting meaningful participation and input from affected communities. Some submissions acknowledged the departments efforts to consult during the development of this plan.	The department acknowledges a need to improve the delivery of consultation and community engagement throughout the planning process. During the development of the Katherine plan, the department engaged with key community representatives through in person and virtual meetings, consulted with the Daly River water advisory committee and released the draft plan for public comment. The department prepared a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document to accompany the draft plan documents which allows a quick reference for communities to access information about the plan.	The department updated the background report to improve clarity throughout. The declared plan will be supported by communication material including FAQs and information presented in engaging visuals.

Theme	Subtheme	Summary of the submission	Response	Resolution
6. Economic and social outcomes	6a. Impact on industry and investment	Some stakeholders are concerned that risks to water security, such as over-extraction, unregulated use, or policy changes, could undermine business confidence and regional development. There is a desire for greater certainty and stability in water management to support investment. Some stakeholders supported the changes proposed in the plan to announced allocations (e.g. 30% cap) as this enabled business certainty and the current application of announced allocations are working well. There was generally support for announced allocations.	A key objective of the plan is to maximise water availability to enable regional economic development. The plan also aims to balance uncertainty through adaptive management and recognise the inherent uncertainty in how water resources behave. The plan does this by establishing an allocation of water for beneficial uses and a dedicated reserve for Aboriginal landowners for the life of the plan (10-years). The plan also recommends a cap on reduced licensed entitlements in dry years as well as a collaborative trial for independent facilitation of licensed reductions. To address uncertainties about unlicensed/unmetered water extraction, the plan proposes an additional implementation action to commence an independent study to improve residential water use estimates and recommend management strategies.	New implementation action (3.4.1) was added to study domestic water use and growth estimates. Announced allocation (section 11.3) explanatory text was updated in the background report to clarify that licensed take will not be reduced by more than 30% and to be clear about how the process works; explain relevance of the 1.8 cumec trigger and to emphasise that announced allocations will be accompanied by water-efficiency communications to rural stock and domestic users in the plan area.
	6b. Recreational and tourism values	The importance of healthy river flows for recreational fishing and tourism is strongly emphasised. Stakeholders warn that declining river health could have significant economic and social consequences for the region.	The plan recognises economic and social values of the region and the interlinked relationship with the environment and water. These are discussed throughout the background report. Objectives 1, 3 and 5 of the plan consider environmental values that underpin recreational values, community wellbeing and liveability of the area and regional economic development. The plan allows for protection of these values and provides a framework for adaptive management of water resources under changing conditions.	No change was made to plan documents in response to feedback.
	6c. Town water security	There is ongoing concern about the need for continued vigilance and transparency to ensure the safety and reliability of town water supplies.	The department works closely with other agencies to understand the demand and other requirements for supply of drinking water to communities in the Northern Territory. An allocation is made specifically for extraction of water for supply to towns and communities. Power and Water Corporation holds a water extraction licence for the Tindal Limestone Aquifer to supply the town of Katherine. This licence allows for extraction of up to 4,000 ML per year. Currently, only around 10% of the licence entitlement being used each year. This allows a very generous 90% buffer to manage for extended dry periods and population growth.	No change was made to plan documents in response to feedback.
7. Science, data and knowledge gaps	7a. Insufficient science and modelling	Some submissions are concerned that decisions are being made without sufficient scientific evidence, robust modelling, or comprehensive data. There is a call for more research, better data collection, and a precautionary approach to water management.	The plan is informed by over 70 years of regional groundwater and surface water monitoring and uses an integrated surface water-groundwater model to understand the resources. The plan commits to a precautionary and adaptive approach which includes: - Ongoing and enhanced monitoring. - Review cycles at least every 5 years or sooner if new risks or data emerge. Implementation actions specifically aimed at filling known knowledge gaps.	No change was made to plan documents in response to feedback.
	7b. Monitoring and review	Stakeholders stress the importance of more frequent, transparent monitoring and adaptive responses as new data emerges. There is a desire for regular public reporting and the ability to adjust management in response to changing conditions.	The plan commits to a continuous program of assessment and monitoring of water resources, including the investigation, collection, and analysis of data on water occurrence, volume, flow, quality, and use. This is detailed in the implementation actions, which outline regular monitoring by both the department and licence holders, and specify that monitoring results will be made publicly available through the Water Data Portal. The department will produce an annual report for the plan area that summarised the status of the resources by sharing monitoring results, regulatory performance and progress on implementation actions. The plan is designed to be adaptive, responding to emerging risks and new data. This allows for management of the resources to respond to changing conditions.	New implementation action (3.5.4) was added to review water entitlements within the discharge protection zone against the recovery of unused licenced water entitlement policy, and outcomes reported in Katherine Status of the Resource Report
	7c. Requests for clear information	There are repeated requests for clearer, more accessible presentation of technical information, including the use of infographics and plain language summaries. The technical complexity of the plan is seen as a barrier to understanding and engagement, especially for Aboriginal people and the broader community.	The plan documents acknowledge that the technical complexity of water planning can be a barrier to understanding and engagement, particularly for Aboriginal people and the broader community. In response, the plan includes a commitment to clearer, more accessible communication. For example, the plan is accompanied by a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document that explains key concepts in plain language, and the implementation actions include objectives for effective communication and engagement to improve public understanding of water use and its impacts.	The department updated the background report to improve clarity throughout. The declared plan will be supported by communication material including

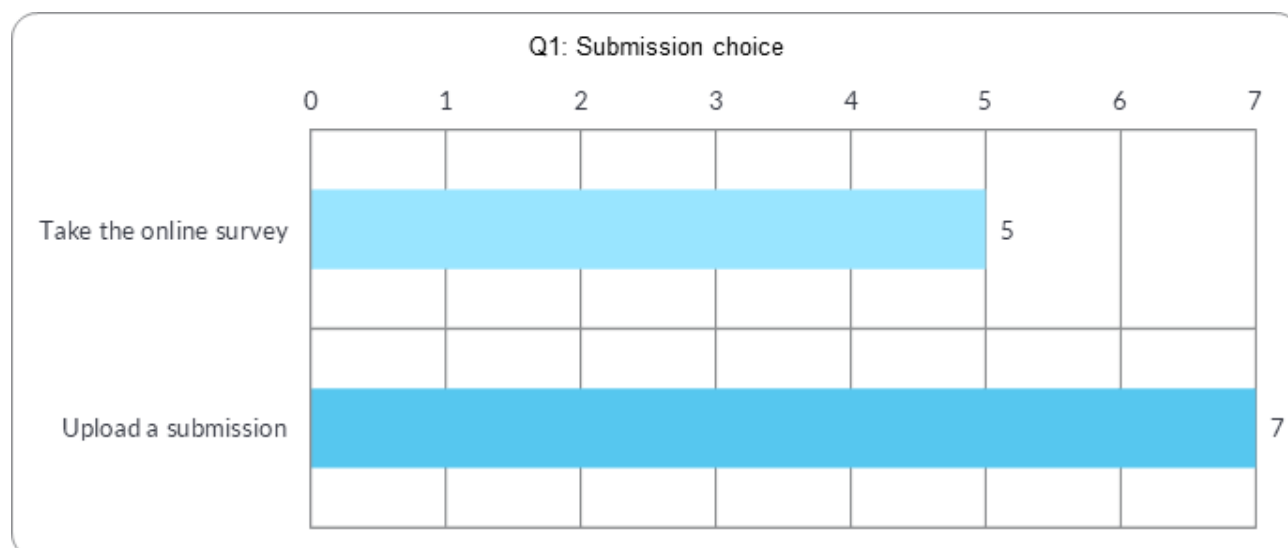
Theme	Subtheme	Summary of the submission	Response	Resolution
			The department is committed to making technical information more accessible and will continue to refine its communication materials in consultation with the community.	FAQs and information presented in engaging visuals.
8. Implementation and governance	8a. Dry-year settings and administration	There is some scepticism about whether minimum flow protections will be enforced in practice and whether collaborative approaches to dry-year management will deliver real outcomes for the environment and community.	The plan introduces a collaborative approach to dry-year management, where licence holders are given the opportunity to work together and propose how reductions are shared. If agreement is not reached, the department will make the final decision to ensure timely action. The plan embeds minimum flow requirements for the Katherine River (1.8 cumecs at the Wilden gauge) as a formal trigger for announced allocations, which are legally binding licence conditions. Announced allocations are applied annually each year and have the potential to apply to all water extraction licences. For more information on announced allocations, visit Announced water allocations NT.GOV.AU	The department updated section 11.3 of the background report to improve the explanation of how the Announced Allocations process is applied.
	8b. Licensing and trading	Stakeholders are concerned that increased water trading could lead to higher actual extraction, risking overuse if not carefully managed and monitored.	Water trade does not increase the total volume of water that can be extracted from a water resource. All trades are subject to assessment by the department and decision by the Controller of Water Resources to determine if there will be any adverse impacts to other water users or the environment. The plan clearly states that all water trading must occur within the overall cap of the Estimated Sustainable Yield (ESY), which is set at 39,000 ML per year. To ensure licence holders comply with the Act and regulations the Department undertakes active compliance and enforcement activities. Compliance plans and report cards are published annually online: https://nt.gov.au/environment/water/licensing/rules	The department updated section 4 of the plan document to better explain how trading is applied within the plan area. This section also clarifies that trading will only be permitted where both buyer and seller hold licences and use the same water resources
	8c. Formalising commitments	There are calls for stronger, co-designed governance structures and accountability mechanisms to ensure that commitments made in the plan are actually delivered and that all stakeholders have a meaningful role in ongoing management.	The plan was developed with input from the Daly River Water Advisory Committee, which includes representatives from Aboriginal communities, agriculture, tourism, and other sectors. This committee will continue to advise on implementation and review of the plan. The details and meeting summary of Daly River Water Advisory Committee are available here Daly River Water Advisory Committee meetings Department of Lands, Planning and Environment The plan also commits to publicly report on the plans implementation each year. The department is committed to working with stakeholders to refine governance arrangements and ensure that all voices are meaningfully included in water management decisions and accountability processes.	No change was made to plan documents in response to feedback.
	8d. Risk management	Submissions highlight the need for proactive measures to address cumulative impacts, unlicensed extraction, and the protection of sacred sites, with a focus on precaution and adaptive management.	The plan documents directly address the need for proactive, precautionary, and adaptive management to deal with cumulative impacts, unlicensed extraction, and the protection of sacred sites. For example, the plan implementation proposes targeted monitoring and reporting to detect and respond to cumulative impacts over time. By embedding precaution, adaptive management, and implementation actions the plan ensures that water management remains responsive and protective.	No change was made to plan documents in response to feedback.
9. Perceived risks & future opportunities	9a. Perceived risks	There is widespread concern about the risks of over-allocation, reduced regulation, and long-term water insecurity, particularly if all licences are fully used or if climate variability intensifies. Stakeholders emphasise the need for intergenerational responsibility, caution, and robust safeguards to protect water resources for the future.	The plan recognises the need for robust safeguards to enable long-term water security for current and future generations. This is recognised in objective 4 of the plan. The plans precautionary and adaptive management approach provides an enforceable and robust framework for protection of water resources into the future.	No change was made to plan documents in response to feedback.
	9b. Aspirations and opportunities	Some submissions express hope for improved management, collaboration, and innovation, including community-driven solutions and greater Aboriginal participation in water governance. There is a desire to seize future opportunities for sustainable water use and regional prosperity.	The plan commits to adaptive management, transparent reporting, and the flexibility to incorporate community-driven solutions and new opportunities for sustainable water use as they arise. The department is committed to manage water resources in the NT in a manner which is aligned with national best practice and intergenerational stewardship, and also tailored for the unique conditions of the Northern Territory.	No change was made to plan documents in response to feedback.
10. Other issues	10a. PFAS and human health	Ongoing concern is raised about PFAS contamination and its implications for human health, with calls for continued monitoring and transparent communication.	To protect vital water resources from contamination, the department maintains wellfield protection zones and actively collaborates with other agencies to manage and communicate risks.	No change was made to plan documents in response to feedback.

Theme	Subtheme	Summary of the submission	Response	Resolution
			The Department of Defence operates two groundwater treatment plants at RAAF Base Tindal to remove PFAS from groundwater and reduce its movement off base. Monitoring shows that PFAS concentrations in surface water and aquatic life are stable and remain below recreational guidelines.	
	10b. Community concerns: Social issues and crime	Broader community concerns focus on the potential impacts of the plan on local livelihoods, access to water, and the long-term sustainability of the region. There is a sense of uncertainty and frustration about whether the plan's safeguards are adequate and whether decision-making processes are sufficiently transparent. Some submissions mention that restrictions on rural living and water access could exacerbate social issues, including crime and community wellbeing.	While the plan's primary focus is on sustainable water management and protecting environmental and cultural values, it also recognises the importance of water for supporting liveability, recreation, and amenity in the Katherine region. The plan provides multiple safeguards to protect community interests, and the plan aims to provide transparent decision-making framework. A key objective of the plan is to safeguard long term water security for current and future generations.	No change was made to plan documents in response to feedback.
	10c. Salinity and other jurisdictions	Lessons from other regions, such as salinity problems and costly government intervention in the Pilbara, are cited as cautionary examples for the Katherine region, highlighting the risks of over-extraction.	The department acknowledges the risks of over-extraction and impacts experienced by other regions across Australia and seeks to avoid these circumstances occurring in the Territory. The Katherine plan has been developed to meet the unique and specific needs of the water resources in the Katherine plan area. Although the department considers the lessons learnt in other jurisdictions, the Katherine plan is predominately informed by the local conditions, monitoring and science.	No change was made to plan documents in response to feedback.
	10d. Trust, transparency and stakeholder clarity	Some community members express a lack of trust in the process, feeling that decisions are made without sufficient transparency or that key facts are withheld. Building trust and ensuring transparency in water management processes are seen as critical for public confidence and effective governance.	The department has established several ways in which the stakeholders and community can engage and stay informed. The Department engaged with broad range of stakeholders through in person meetings, virtual meetings, emails, and phone discussions between September and November 2025. These engagements helped improve transparency, clarify technical matters, and ensure the draft plan considered environmental, cultural, community and water use perspectives. The department circulated FAQs, flyers, and postcards during meetings and also made available on online platforms such as on Katherine Times, Have Your Say and Department website. The plan and associated documents were shared publicly for comment. Community members are encouraged to participate in future public comment periods. The department will continue to engage with the Daly River Water Advisory Committee and has committed to publicly publish annual reports on the plan's implementation. Community members can access information about the water planning process, plan resources, specific elements of plans (e.g. Aboriginal water reserves, water data) and data about licensed water take on the department's webpages. The department can also be contacted for information via phone, email, mail or in-person at a Water Resources Division office.	No change was made to plan documents in response to feedback.

Schedule 3. Survey responses

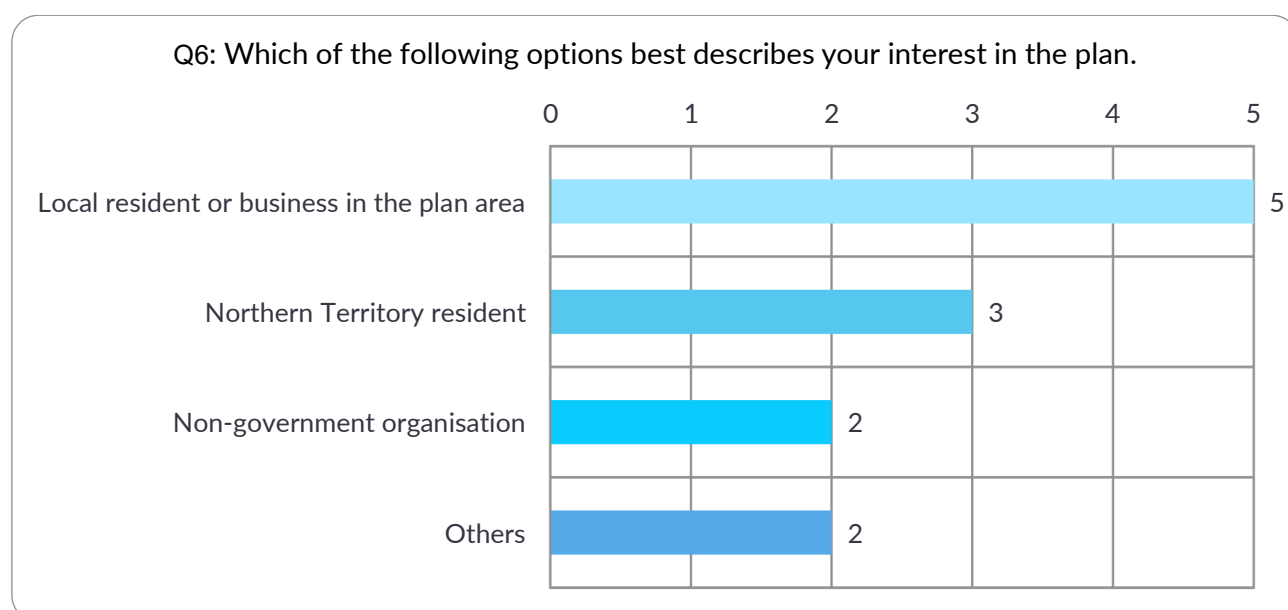
This survey was open to the public during the public comment period via the NT Governments Have Your Say webpage. An overview of the survey submissions received via Have Your Say is provided below. Responses to the survey were also incorporated into the summaries of feedback themes above. Some respondents did not respond to every survey question.

A total of 12 responses were received. Five respondents completed the survey questions only and seven uploaded a written submission (**Question 1**).

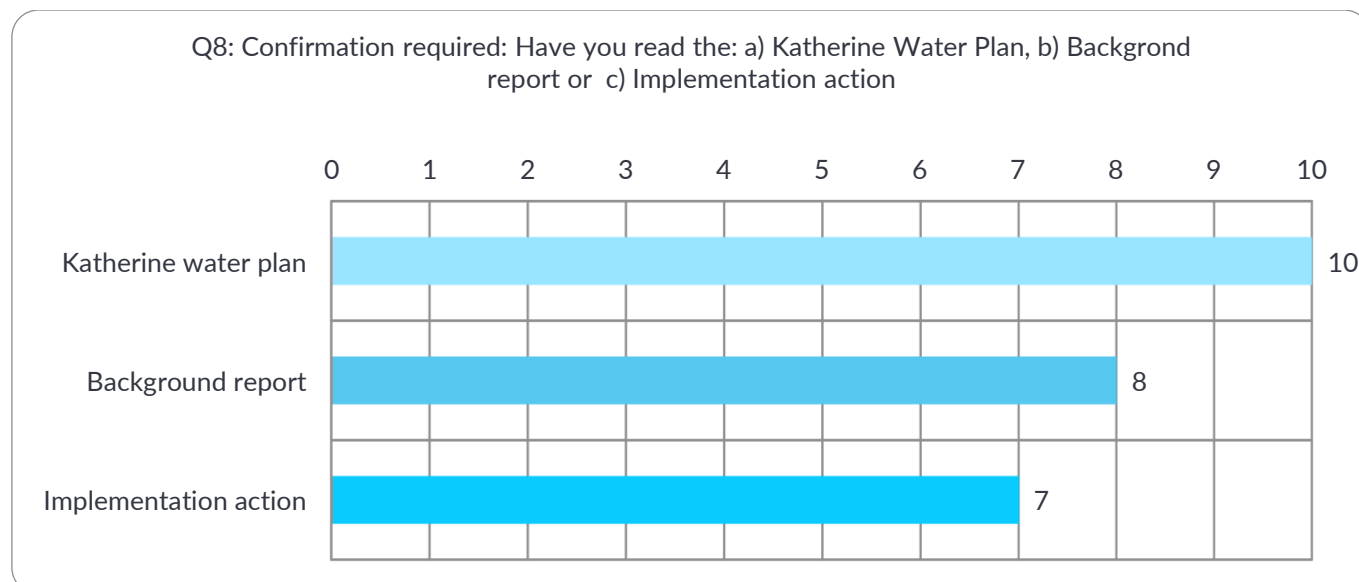


Questions 2 to 5 enabled the upload of written submissions. Written submissions are summarised throughout the remainder of this document.

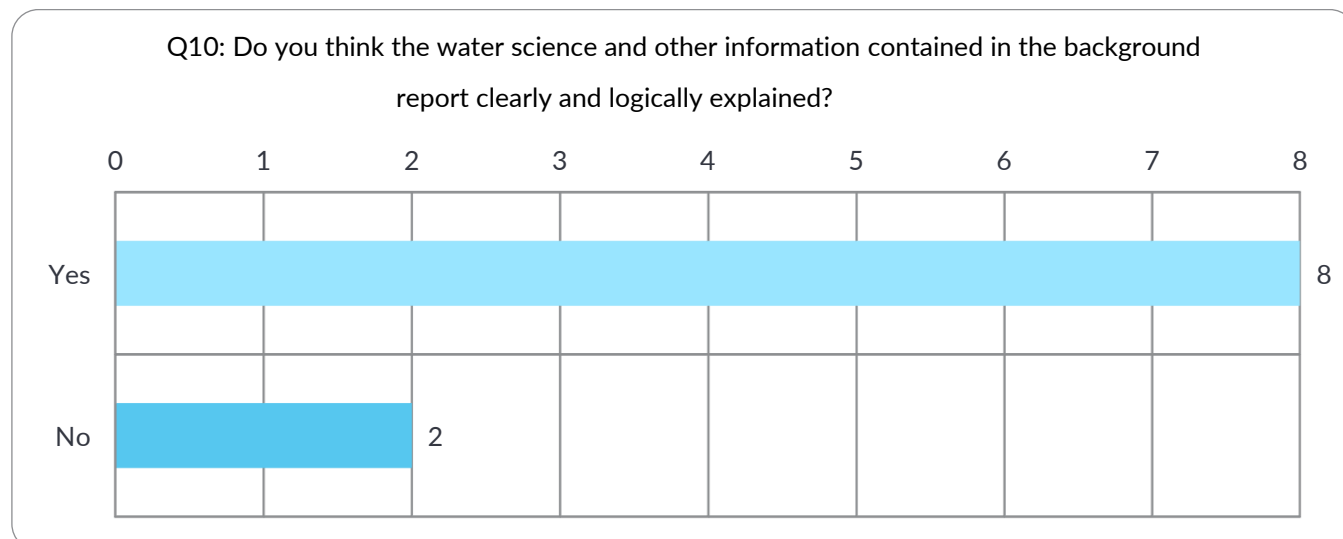
Twelve respondents answered Question 6, which advised what their specific interests in the plan were. Six respondents were residents or businesses in the plan area. Three were interested in the plan because they reside in the NT. Two participants were from non-government organisations, and two stated “other” in the survey and provided an alternative answer (**Question 7**).



Respondents were asked to indicate whether they had read one or more of the key documents relating to the Katherine water plan, including the Katherine water plan, the background report, and the implementation action plan. This question provided crossover, as respondents were familiar with more than one project material. All respondents that participated in the question had read that Katherine water plan, with eight respondents having read the Background Report and seven respondents reading the Implementation Action report. Respondents that had not participated in Question 8 did not answer Question 9 regarding why documents were not read.

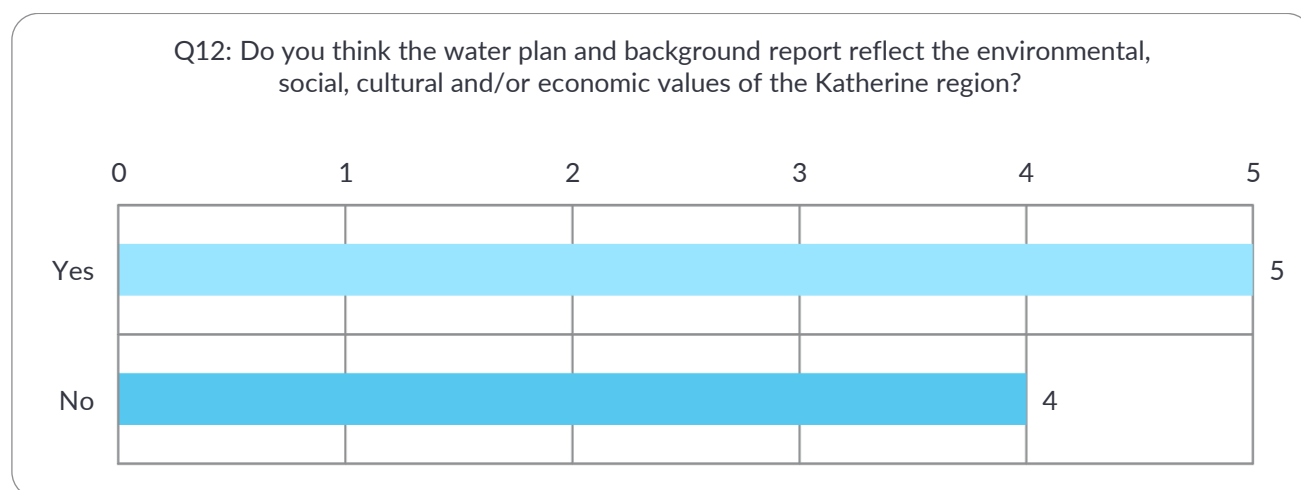


Respondents were asked whether the water science and related information in the Background Report were clearly and logically explained (**Question 10**). Ten respondents answered, eight stated the information was clearly explained, while two respondents felt it was not.



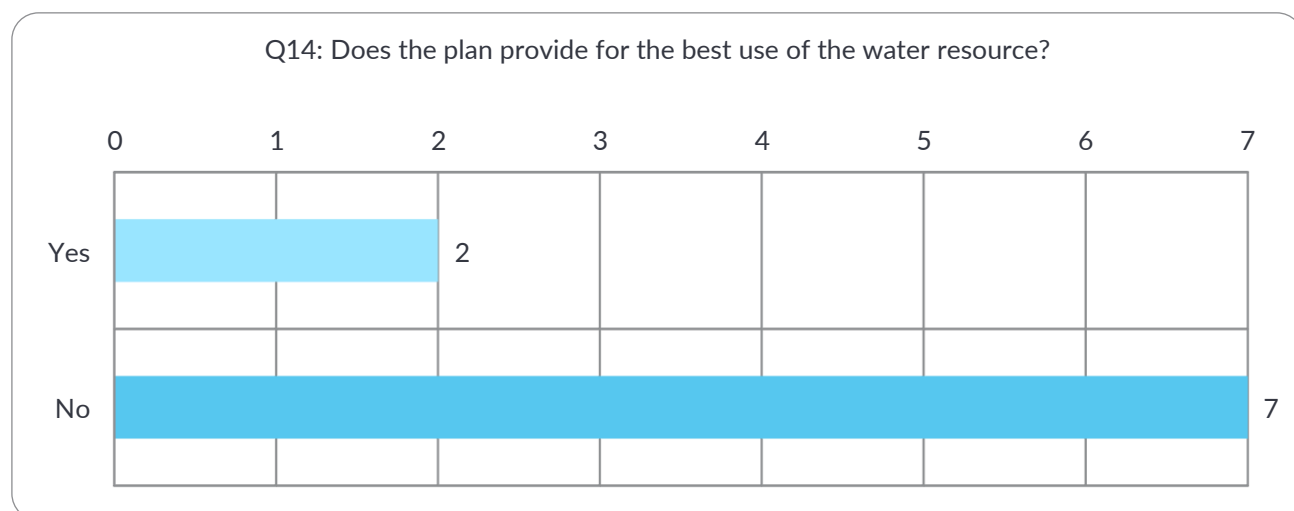
Two respondents provided feedback on what could be improved. One respondent commented that the content in the plan was not truthful and another suggested that the plan needs more relevant data from non-government sources (**Question 11**).

Respondents were asked if they thought the water plan and report reflects environmental, social, cultural and economic values of the Katherine region. Out of nine respondents who answered this question, five felt that the report reflected the regional values, whereas four respondents believe that the plan does not adequately reflect key regional values.

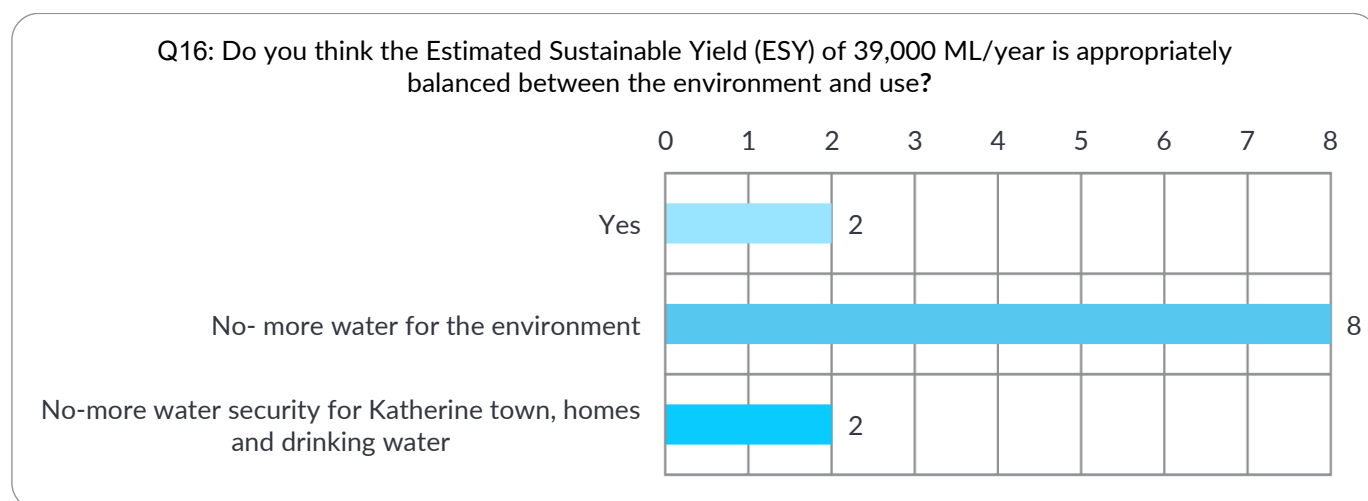


Respondents were asked what values should be included. One respondent commented that environmental and small business values should be considered, another that environmental, Aboriginal farming and population expansion should be considered. Another respondent commented that more research is required to define water requirements (**Question 13**).

When asked if the plan provides for the best use of the water resource, nine respondents answered Question 14, with seven stating they did not believe the plan provides for the best use of the water resource. In the follow-up written submissions, respondents raised issues around water allocations for large-scale agriculture, the need for increased environmental allocations, and concerns about long-term water security for the town and surrounding communities (**Question 15**).

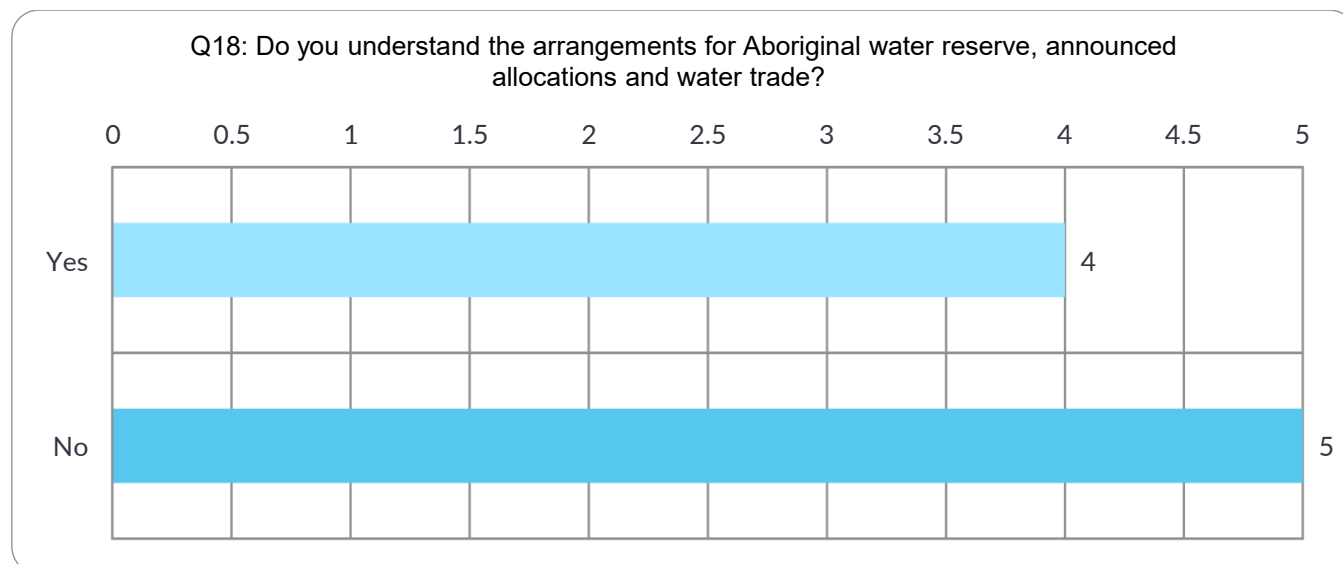


When asked if the respondents thought the ESY is appropriately balanced between the environment and use, two respondents answered that they think the ESY appropriately balanced between environment and use. Eight respondents that selected 'No - more water for the environment' option and two of those also selected 'No - more water security for Katherine town, homes and drinking water'.



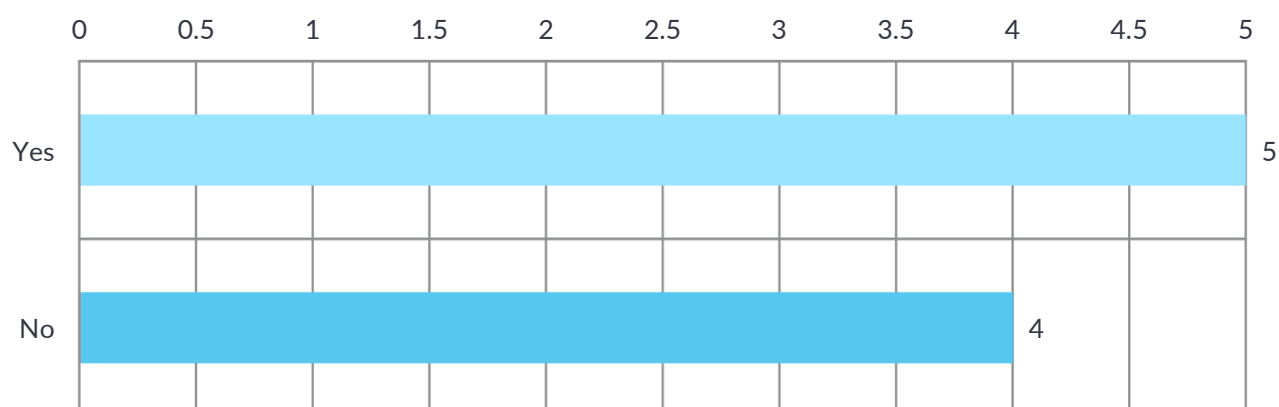
When asked, what would you change about the ESY and allocations, no responses were received (Question 17).

Out of the nine respondents that answered Question 18, four reported clear understanding of the arrangements for Aboriginal water reserve, announced allocations and water trade; while five did not understand the arrangements. When asked what sections need further explanation, respondents commented the Aboriginal water reserve, trade and announced allocations for license holders that are no longer in the plan area and one respondent requested further explanation on all three items (Question 19).



Five respondents agreed that including the Katherine water plan as a part of the larger Daly River plan is the right approach. While four respondents felt Katherine region should be managed separately. Respondents commented that the plan region should be managed separately to ensure local needs and risks are adequately addressed (Question 21). Other respondents commented that the plans should be linked as the resources themselves are linked (Question 22).

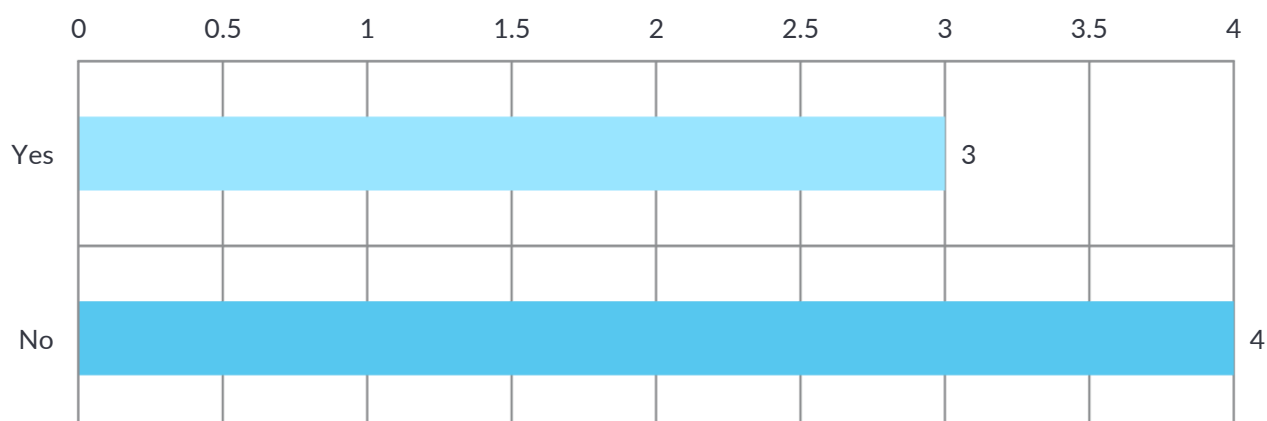
Q20: Do you think including the Katherine water plan as a part of the larger Daly River plan is the right approach?



Out of the seven respondents that answered Question 23, four felt the implementation actions did not adequately address the three major risks, whereas three respondents agreed that the implementation actions did address the risks.

Respondents were then asked which risk or implementation action needs to be included or changed. Three respondents commented that issues of water quality and over extraction and associated impacts should be included (**Question 24**).

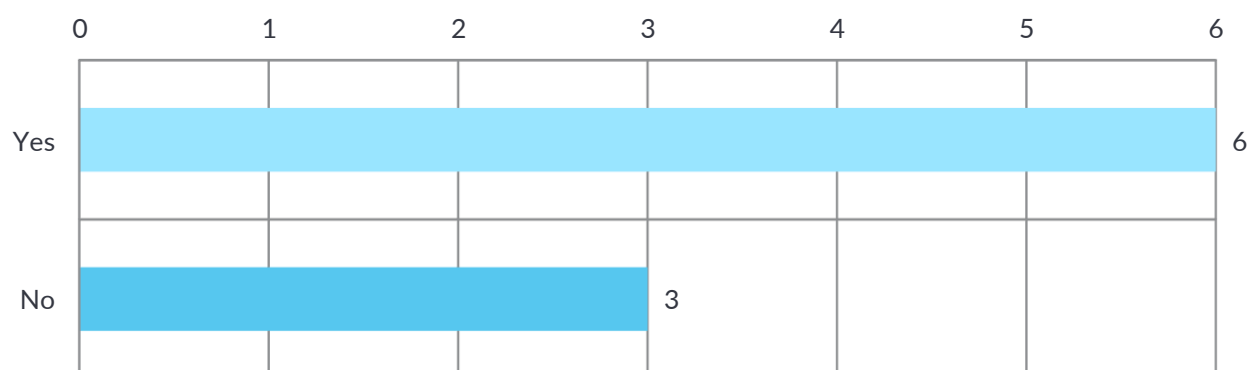
Q23: The water plan identifies three main risks: reduced quantity of water in the region, reduced water quality in the region and the water plan does not share water for the benefit for the Katherine region. Do the implementation actions address these risk



When asked what respondents see as the biggest risk to water security in Katherine over the next 10 years, respondents commented: pollution, drying rivers, loss of fish species, agriculture, hydraulic fracturing, PFAS contamination, water quality and health of springs (**Question 25**).

Question 26 asked respondents if they would like to be added to a register for ongoing involvement in water resource management, six respondents wished to be involved, and three respondents did not.

Q26: Would like to be added to a register for ongoing involvement in the management of this water resource?



When asked what opportunities should the plan support in the future, respondents commented: smaller, community driver innovation, bushwalking and canoeing, world recognition for sites, tourism, lifestyle, environmental protection and Aboriginal industry development (**Question 27**).

Questions 28 to 32 asked if respondents wanted to receive updates on water resource management in Katherine and captured contact details for respondents.

Eight respondents answered Question 33, and seven respondents expressed low confidence that the plan will adequately protect water resources. One respondent was confident that the Katherine plan will protect the water source. When asked why respondents were or were not confident, they explained that they were not confident because of the potential extraction for water (**Question 33**).

Q33: Are you confident the Katherine plan will protect the water resources?

