

Exploration mining management plan user guide



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Acronyms	Full form
AAPA	Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority
ABN and ACN	Australian Business Number and Australian Company Number
AMEC	Association of Mining and Exploration Companies
ASIC-ABR	Australian Securities and Investments Commission – Australian Business Register
DEPWS	Department of Environment, Parks and Water Security
DITT/ The Department	Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade
EL	Exploration Licence
EPBC	<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i>
MCA	Minerals Council of Australia
ML	Mineral Lease
MMA	<i>Mining Management Act 2001</i>
MMP	Mining Management Plan
MTA	<i>Mineral Titles Act 2010</i>
NT	Northern Territory
SOBS	Site of Botanical Significance
SOCS	Site of Conservation Significance
STRIKE	Spatial Territory Resource Information Kit for Exploration

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1. Purpose

This user guide has been developed to provide guidance and support to individuals and companies (the Operator) completing the Application for Authorisation and preparing a Mining Management Plan (MMP), in order to undertake mineral exploration in the Northern Territory (NT). The guide also clarifies the additional information necessary to obtain an Authorisation under the *Mining Management Act 2001* (MMA).

2. Regulatory Requirements

Before undertaking any mining activity (exploration) in the NT, the following documentation must be submitted for assessment to the Department:

- I. Application for Authorisation
- II. Mining Management Plan
- III. Security Calculation

This applies to any exploration activities likely to cause substantial disturbance (e.g. land clearing, drilling, etc. as described in Section 35(3) of the Act and on <https://nt.gov.au/industry/mining-and-petroleum/mining-activities/substantial-disturbance>). An Operator is required to hold a mineral title granted under the *Mineral Titles Act 2010* (MTA), or be appointed Operator by the owner of a mining site under the MMA, prior to submitting an Application for Authorisation, MMP and security calculation to the Department. These documents contain Project information to enable full assessment by the Department against the requirements of the MMA.

The MMP and supporting information must be reviewed and, if necessary, amended by the Operator every 12 months as specified in your Authorisation. If on review the MMP needs amending, the Operator is to submit the amended MMP to be assessed on or before the anniversary of the Authorisation. However, if on review the MMP does not need amending, the Operator is requested to advise the Department in writing on or before the anniversary of the Authorisation.

If changes to an approved MMP are proposed, an updated MMP (amended MMP subject to the MMA) must be submitted and approved prior to the changes to mining activities commencing.

The information requested in the following sections are required under the MMA.

I. Application for Authorisation

The Authorisation provides the Operator with approval to undertake the work detailed in the MMP for the period specified, and subject to the conditions, in the Authorisation.

The Application for Authorisation form submitted to the Department WILL NOT be made public. Please note that the Application for Authorisation form is also used for extractive and mining related activities, however this guide is only applicable to applications for exploration activities.

The Application for Authorisation has to be provided when submitting a MMP for the first time and thereafter only when details on the form need to be updated. Contact details are used by the Department to communicate matter related to the Project with the person included as contact in the form. It is the Operator responsibility to ensure updated details are communicated to the Department at any one stage.

Section 1 – Project Details

The purpose of this section is for providing clear details about what approval is being sought
The applicant must select the appropriate checkboxes in this section:

- ‘New Authorisation’ – for applications under Section 36(1) of the MMA. For instance, where there is a new Project and/or the ACN/ABN related to an existing project changes.
- ‘Variation of Authorisation’ if the applicant holds an existing Authorisation and proposes changes to the approved activities (e.g. exploration), mining interests, Operator’s name and/or project’s name.
- ‘Exploration’ is for mining activities that involve exploratory work, such as drilling and costeans, and fall within an Exploration Licence (EL). Note: exploration activities can occur on a Mineral Lease (ML) on the existing Authorisation.
- The Project name is required to identify which project the Authorisation pertains to and the Authorisation number for existing Authorisations.

Section 2 – Operator Details

This section is required to ensure contact details are kept current in the Department’s database.

- Include name of Operator as shown on the ASIC-ABR register or the applicant’s name in the case where an ACN number does not exist.
- Include ACN and ABN numbers if both available.
- Include the main business street and postal address.
- Include the contact details (name and title position) of the nominated contact in which the Department will deal with for all matters related to the Authorisation/Project.
- Include the nominated contact phone number and email address. More than one contact detail can be added if needed (e.g. security matter, general contact).

II. Mining Management Plan

The MMP is the primary tool for managing compliance with the MMA. The MMP clearly sets out all the environmental and legal obligations that must be met by the Operator.

The MMP template can be adjusted to suit each operation. However, the omission of information requested will impede on the assessment process. Therefore, the applicant is strongly encouraged to provide the information requested to the Department and/or provide justification if information cannot be supplied.

*Note: Your approved MMP, excluding any commercial in confidence material and personal details, **WILL BE** made public. The department considers commercial-in-confidence material and personal information to include:*

- *Security estimates and calculations*
- *Commercial contractual information*
- *Confidential agreements*
- *Staff personal details including signatures*

Following approval of the MMP the Operator is required to make the MMP, with the agreed commercial-in-confidence information removed, available to the public within 14 days of approval. The Operator must provide to the Department the website link to the MMP published on the company website or request that it be published on the DITT website.

Section 1 – Project Details

Some of the information requested in this section has already been provided in the Application for Authorisation. The Application for Authorisation and the MMP are two separate documents, and operator/project identifying information is required to link the two documents. In this section, provide the following information:

- Project name, existing Authorisation number, Operator name and ABN and ACN numbers consistent with the details provided in the Application for Authorisation.
- A brief description of how to access the project site from the nearest town or community.
- The mineral commodity(s) that are being explored for.
- A short explanation of the exploration (mining activities)
- Include the proposed start and finish dates for the activities proposed in the MMP. Include any other date considered relevant to the operations (e.g. Stages). Note: the MMP is not limited to a yearly period. Works can be outlined for a maximum of four years. The stages must be clearly identified the disturbance related to them. *Note: In considering the time period please beware that the security calculation can be considered, in relation to the disturbance as staged in the drilling program and the department can work with you with regards related staged payments.*

Mining Interests, Land Ownership and Organisational Structure

- List the mining interests (titles), the titleholder name/s, the expiry date and the property name/land holder (e.g. pastoralist, Aboriginal land trust, and freehold land) for each title. The titles provided here will be included in the Authorisation document. Should a title be omitted, work will not be authorised on that title. Provide a Land Access Agreement (LAA) for disturbance proposed on Pastoral Properties.
- Include organisational structure/table that provides details of key positions and names of those with responsibility and accountability for the mining activities detailed in this MMP. Delete/add those that may or may not be relevant.

Section 2 – Operator Self-Assessment of Environment

The Operator is responsible for identifying all key environmental risks and ensuring compliance with relevant legislation. Follow the steps outlined in the assessment tables. Evidence of consultation and the resulting management plans, must be provided as an appendix to the MMP.

- Step 1: Check for threatened species. It is likely a threatened species will show up in all reports. Therefore, the Operator must undertake a likelihood analysis, which looks at the likelihood of the species or its habitat occurring at or near the site. If the analysis results in a high likelihood, then a “Significant Impact Assessment” must be undertaken, and results appended to the MMP. A comment describing actions taken as a “Significant Impact Assessment” (e.g. consulted NR MAPS and EPBC Protected Matters Search Tool, outcome from EPBC Protected Matters Search Tool appended to the MMP) can be included in this section. However, this section is NOT intended as a summary of outcomes.
- The Matters of National Environmental Significance - Significant Impact Guidelines 1.1, contain information in relation to undertaking a likelihood analysis and significant impact assessment.

Useful Resources	Web address
STRIKE	http://strike.nt.gov.au/
NR MAPS	http://nrmaps.nt.gov.au/
EPBC Protected Matters Search Tool	http://www.environment.gov.au/epbc/protected-matters-search-tool
Significant Impact Guidelines 1.1	http://www.environment.gov.au/system/files/resources/42f84df4-720b-4dcf-b262-48679a3aba58/files/nes-guidelines_1.pdf

- Step 2: Determine if declared weeds have been reported in the project area. Contact the relevant landholder/s and/ DEPWS – Weeds Management Branch to determine if weeds are present and what management actions are required to control/manage the weeds. It is the responsibility of the owner and occupier of land to eliminate or control declared weeds.

Useful resource	Web address
NR MAPS	http://nrmaps.nt.gov.au/

- Step 3: Water related matters on mining sites are no longer exempt from the *Water Act 1992*. Determine your requirements for a licence and or permit under the *Water Act 1992* should you intend extracting water for your project and or interfering with a water way.

Useful resource	Web address
DEPWS Water Resources	https://nt.gov.au/environment/water
Contact Water Resources	water.regulation@nt.gov.au

- Step 4: Determine if the project is likely to have a significant impact on the environment.

Useful resources	Web address
Environmental Factors and Objectives	https://ntepa.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/546791/guideline_environmental_factors_objectives.pdf
Referring a Proposal to the NTEPA	https://ntepa.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/570872/guideline_referring_proposal_to_ntepa.pdf

- Step 5: Determine if sacred sites exist with the project area. The Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority (AAPA) is responsible for the administration of the Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Site Act 1989. Evidence of an Authority Certificate or Register Search are not required. Relevant Land Councils may also need to be contacted if operating on Aboriginal Land

Useful resource	Web address
Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority	http://www.aapant.org.au/

- Step 6: Determine if there are any sites archaeological and heritage sites within the project area. The Department of Territory Families, Housing and Communities (DTFHC) administers the *Heritage Act*.

Evidence of archaeological and heritage searches are not required; however, locations of sites should be shown on maps appended to the MMP.

Useful resource	Web address
NT Heritage Register	https://nt.gov.au/property/land/heritage-listings/heritage-register-search-for-places-or-objects

Please contact a Mining Officer if assistance is required in completing Section 2 of the MMP.

Section 3 – Amendments

This section should list the changes made since the last MMP submission. Where no new activities are proposed, but completion of prior approved activities are planned, an amended MMP is not required.

Note: All Authorisations require annual review of the approved MMP, by a specific date. If on review the MMP does not need to be amended, please advise the department that no amendments will be submitted as a result of the review.

Section 4 – Activities Proposed

Details of the proposed activities should be outlined in the Table provided. For projects with numerous titles, columns can be added in the existing table or additional table/s included. These details assist Mining Officers in making the assessment of the risk and management of the project and the required security bond.

- Include the proposed activities for the next period. Multiple work programs can be included for up to four years as a staged approach. Only a security bond for the first stage is required until the Operator is ready to commence the next stage.
- Ensure bulk sample pits have been approved under the *Mineral Titles Act*. Contact Mineral Titles (titles.info@nt.gov.au) should bulk sample pits be proposed.
- Proposed activities such as exploration declines, shafts and pits are not authorised activities under an Exploration Licence (EL). These activities may be authorised on a Mineral Lease (ML), however the Mining Management Plan for Mining Activities must be submitted for assessment.
- A table including the list of camp infrastructures and their measurements can be added as an appendix. Measurements may be required in order to complete the security calculation spreadsheet.

Section 5 – Previous Disturbance (for existing Authorisation only)

The information contained in this spreadsheet provides details of previous exploration activities carried out since the commencement of the Project.

The spreadsheet will inform the status of disturbance of the Project and must be completed and submitted as an attachment to the MMP.

The spreadsheet considers:

- Drill holes status
- Drill pads and sumps status

- Tracks, camp, bulk samples and costeans status

Drill holes are required to have an ID. Should the ID not have been assigned, those drill holes will need to have a unique number to be accounted for in the spreadsheet. An explanation can be provided in the comment column, stating holes' ID will change once assigned.

Only the authorised disturbances for which security has been paid must be included. For example, if drill holes disturbance is proposed in stages, only the drill holes included in the stage that has been paid for must be included in the spreadsheet.

Section 6 – Environmental Management

These are the Department's minimum environmental standards for exploration activities. By checking each box, the Operator agrees to adopt these standards while conducting exploration activities on a project area.

Should the Operator choose not to follow the Department's minimum standards, justification and alternative measures must be provided. Omitting information required for assessment will impede the process as further information will be requested.

Section 7 – Rehabilitation and Closure

These are the Department's minimum standards for rehabilitation and closure of the proposed activities. By checking each box, the Operator agrees to adopt these standards following exploration activities on a project area.

Evidence must be provided by the Operator to the Department for infrastructures that are to remain after closure of which the land holder takes on liability and future management.

Should the Operator choose not to adopt the Department's minimum standards, justification and alternative measures must be provided. Omitting information required for assessment will impede the process as further information will be requested.

Completed rehabilitation may require a Departmental site inspection, in addition to the assessment of the rehabilitation report, updated security calculation and updated rehabilitation register, prior to processing a (partial) refund of security.

Before and after photographs of completed works are required to demonstrate successful rehabilitation of the site. Failure to supply these may result in security bond not being returned due to lack of evidence.

Useful resource	Web address
Construction and Rehabilitation of Exploration Drill Sites	https://nt.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0015/203334/aa7-029-construction-and-rehabilitation-of-exploration-drill-sites.pdf

Section 8 – Required Attachments

All the required attachments, if applicable, must be submitted as appendices to the MMP. Should one of the attachments not be included, justification must be provided. Omitting information required for assessment will impede the process as further information will be requested.

Please provide the following:

- A completed Application for Authorisation form including all the necessary contact details for the Department to communicate with the Operator on diverse matters (e.g. security, MMP assessment).
- A completed 'Nomination of Operator form', if the title holder is not the Operator of the site as shown on Section 1 'Mining Interests and Ownership' of the Mining Management Plan. This is only required if this has not previously provided and accepted.
- The completed security calculation spreadsheet, ensuring the information included reflects the disturbance outlined in the MMP. Should any of the information included in the spreadsheet contradict those of the MMP, explanation will be required prior its assessment and acceptance.
- Evidence of Land Access Agreement if operating on an Exploration Licence (EL) on Pastoral Lease. The Operator must seek agreement for land access with the pastoralist and provide evidence of having reached an agreement to the Department. The agreement itself does not have to be provided to the Department. Further information about the need for an agreement for land access is available on the Departmental website <https://nt.gov.au/industry/mining-and-petroleum>.
- A completed up to date Disturbance Tracking spreadsheet providing details of exploration activities (drill holes, drill pads, sumps, tracks, camp, bulk samples and costeans) carried out since the commencement of the Project (for existing Authorisations). This spreadsheet is a valuable tool when assessing security in order to track rehabilitation work. Should evidence of rehabilitation work submitted to the Department be satisfactory, security can be partially refunded before the closure of the project.
- An excel spreadsheet detailing all the proposed hole IDs and coordinates; or, coordinate details of the polygon of the proposed project works area(s).
- Mapping data (kml, shape or track log file) of the camp site and of the existing tracks that will be used to access the site and of those that will be created; ensure a clear distinction between the existing and the proposed tracks.
- A topographic map including the work area/s showing all known current and proposed disturbances, title boundaries, drill holes, tracks, rehabilitated areas, camp sites, and environmental and sacred and/heritage site constraints.
- A Radiation Management Plan, if the target commodity is a radioactive mineral (e.g. uranium or thorium), or exploration activities are proposed in an area known to contain or is likely to intersect radioactive minerals, or exploration activities where elevated levels of naturally occurring radioactive material may result in workers and the public receiving radiation doses exceeding the recommended annual limit of 1mSv/annum.
- The documents related to section 2 must also be included as appendix when required (e.g. threatened species search, current biodiversity management plan if related to proposed work, evidence of consultation with DEPWS in relation to weeds and water and related documents if requested by DEPWS).

III. Security Bond Calculation

The security calculation tool provided on the Department's website must be completed for any new activity proposed. Please check the Department's website regularly for any updates on the security calculation tool prior to completing it.

Resource	Web address
Security and Levy	https://nt.gov.au/industry/mining-and-petroleum/mining-activities/security-and-levy .

The proposed activities as stated in “II. Mining Management Plan” must be included in the calculation.

Security payments can be staged in accordance to the disturbance that is going to be created. Mining Officers can be contacted to discuss staging of security requests.

Should a (partial) security refund be requested, evidence of rehabilitation is required to be submitted as per section 7 and clearly identified in the security calculation. The Department may retain part of the security amount for rehabilitation and monitoring for the purpose of ensuring closure objectives are met before closing the project out and a formal closure certificate can be issued by the Department, subject to the MMA. The security bond will only be fully refunded when all outstanding rehabilitation works are completed by the Operator and where appropriate a Certificate of Closure will be issued.