[Animation video of voiceover and music in background throughout the video]

On-screen text: The Northern Territory Government respectfully acknowledges the First Nations people of this country and recognises their continued connections to their lands, waters and communities.

We pay our respects to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and to their leaders past, present and emerging.

Northern Territory Government

Voiceover:

Since the beginning of time, humankind has understood the value of water as a precious resource.

Many indigenous cultures have recognised the need to protect, share and manage water responsibly.

Handed down through story lines, the life cycle of water is woven into the matrix of culture and traditional peoples’ connection to country.

Although our modern times and government structure has changed the dynamics of how water is managed, the philosophy behind good water management remains.

The government is responsible for managing the water: from rivers, stored in large dams, and under the ground – known as aquifers.

When managing water, the government makes decisions based on science, and makes sure there is water available for the environment and culture.

As the Territory is big, there are some areas with less science and research.

In these cases, water management is guided by the NT Water Allocation Planning Framework.

The framework ensures plants and animals who rely on the water, are prioritised.

The framework splits the Northern Territory into two distinct environments:

Top End and Desert, called the ‘Arid Zone’.

These areas are each managed differently.

The Top End Zone is where it gets big wets and monsoons every year.

The Arid Zone is where it can get big rains, but not very often.

In the Top End Zone 80% of all surface water, and water that seeps into the ground each year, is set aside for environment and culture.

In the Arid Zone 95% of all flowing water each year is set aside for environment and culture.

Groundwater in the Arid Zone is managed differently over 100 years, not one year, like the Top End, as it doesn't rain as often, but when it does rain - it is sometimes very big."

During the 100 years, 80% of the groundwater is allowed to be used and the big rain events top the aquifer back up.

That means when shown over a year, less than 1% of the water of the aquifer is allowed to be used.

So, what happens to the water that can be taken out of the aquifer or the river, each year?

The government shares it around.

There are two main ways this is managed: water plans and water licences.

In areas where there is lots of competition for water, the government makes a water plan.

Water plans are based on science and set the rules for sharing water and identifies the most important areas in the environment that the community wants protecting, and where the best places are to take water from for drinking and business.

Community input is an important part of the process.

You can get involved in a numbers of ways - participating in water committees & commenting through “have your say” forums.

When a person or a business wants to use water, they have to apply for a water licence and state the volume of water they would like to use each year.

Some water is reserved for Indigenous people, who can apply to develop businesses or benefits for their community.

Before a new water licence decision can be made, there are a number of things that must be considered under the Water Act.

These include: Scientific information on water availability and potential impacts on others who use water or land now and into the future.

When an application for a licence is made, a notice is published. Community is able to have a say by responding to the notice.

You have 20 working days to comment on the advertised application.

If your neighbour applies for a water licence government will write to you directly.

Land Councils can help you make a comment for your community.

Ensuring each and every voice will be heard.

Once a decision has been made it is also advertised.

After a water plan or a water licence decision is made, water scientists monitor the resource and check that the water resource is not being harmed.

The government monitors the licences, and licence holders must report their water use each month.

If licence holders don’t do the right thing they could be fined or go to court.

So let's review…

Everyone knows water is a precious resource.

The government is responsible for water management, and works to protect water for the environment and culture, reserve water for drinking, and enable water use.

Water management is based on the best available science.

Community are able to participate in water management processes.

Water is for all of us to use, enjoy and protect.

On-screen text: If you want to be more involved please contact water.regulation@nt.gov.au.

Northern Territory Government, nt.gov.au