



Aboriginal Areas  
Protection Authority  
*protecting sacred sites across the territory*

# AAPA ANNUAL REPORT 2020-21



Image: Custodians Jennifer Doolan, Pauline Allen and Margaret Doolan during fieldwork at Mac Clark, (Acacia peuce) Conservation Reserve, Old Andado Station, NT.

Front cover image: Aerial view of the coastal plain near King Creek, NT

#### Disclaimer

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Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island readers and viewers should be aware that this material may contain images or names of deceased persons.

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#### Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority

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The Hon Chansey Paech MLA  
Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage  
DARWIN NT 0800

30 September 2021

Dear Minister

I have the pleasure to submit to you, in accordance with the provisions of Section 14(1) of the *Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act 1989*, the annual report for the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority for the financial period 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021.

The report refers to the thirty-second year of operation of the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority. To the best of my knowledge and belief as Accountable Officer, pursuant to section 13 of the *Financial Management Act 1995* (Financial Management Act), the system of internal control and audit provides reasonable assurance that:

- a. proper records of all transactions affecting the agency are kept, and employees under my control observe the provisions of the Financial Management Act, the Financial Management Regulations and Treasurer's Directions
- b. procedures within the agency afford proper internal control, and a current description of such procedures is recorded in the accounting and property manual, which has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Financial Management Act
- c. no indication of fraud, malpractice, major breach of legislation or delegation, major error in or omission from the accounts and records exists
- d. in accordance with the requirements of section 15 of the Financial Management Act, the internal audit capacity available to the agency is adequate, and the results of internal audits have been reported to me
- e. the financial statements included in the annual report have been prepared from proper accounts and records and are in accordance with Treasurer's Directions
- f. the Authority is working in compliance with the *Information Act 2002*.



Yours sincerely

Dr Benedict Scambary  
Chief Executive Officer



Image: The Cascades, Litchfield National Park, NT

# INTRODUCTION

“I WANT TO THANK THE BOARD AND STAFF FOR THEIR RESILIENCE AND COMMITMENT TO THE IMPORTANT WORK WE DO OF PROTECTING SACRED SITES.”



Image: Tjaynera Falls area, Litchfield National Park, NT

# PURPOSE OF THE ANNUAL REPORT

**This is an annual report on the administration and operation of the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority (the Authority) for the 2020–21 financial year.**

The report includes the Authority's financial statements and displays compliance with standards of internal control in accordance with the reporting requirements of the Financial Management Act, the Treasurer's Directions and the policies of the Northern Territory Government.

The annual report also provides the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly and the public with an account of the Authority's performance, responsibilities, activities and business direction for the year ahead.

# TARGET AUDIENCE

**This annual report is for our various range of stakeholders:**

the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly, government agencies, Aboriginal custodians, the Northern Territory public and land users across the Northern Territory.



Image: Tjaynera Falls area, Litchfield National Park, NT



# CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

**The destruction of the Juukan Gorge Aboriginal heritage sites in the Pilbara, Western Australia, should never have happened.**

**The board and I were deeply saddened by this tragedy. It represents a significant loss for all Australians.**

We hope the Australian Government's inquiry into the destruction of the caves at Juukan Gorge will shed light into what happened and serve as a catalyst for real change.

In the NT, sacred sites are protected under the *Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act 1989* (Sacred Sites Act). Since 1989, the Sacred Sites Act, administered by the Authority, has successfully protected our sacred places for the benefit of all Territorians in balance with the economic development of the NT.

Most importantly, under the Sacred Sites Act, the Authority cannot and does not authorise the destruction of sacred sites in the NT. We must consult with custodians, provide certainty for custodians and developers alike, and prosecute when people do the wrong thing.

In our written submission to the inquiry of the Joint Standing Committee of Northern Australia on August 2020, we asserted that the Sacred Sites Act is a model worthy of national adoption. We made 8 recommendations, including the need for a strong national legislative framework to protect our heritage that sets guidelines and minimum standards for all jurisdictions. We look forward to future discussions to strengthen heritage laws around the country.

Sadly, from time to time, sacred sites in the NT are damaged, and it is the Authority's job to investigate these incidents and prosecute as required. In September 2020, the board and I instructed the Authority to file a charge against National Parks (Australia) for work on a sacred site under section 34 of the Sacred Sites Act in the World Heritage-listed Kakadu National Park. This matter is unfortunate, and I hope in the future that Parks, traditional owners and the Authority can work closely together so this kind of thing doesn't happen again.

This year we continued to experience challenges due to the global pandemic. Thanks to the Authority's work from home strategy, staff were able to transition quickly from office based to home based arrangements when the NT's first lockdown occurred in June 2021, ensuring business continuity.

In February 2021 the board and I welcomed the news of the NT Government's decision to declare a ban on seabed mining in the NT. Both the Authority and the NT Environment Protection Authority (NT EPA) provided reports to government on the potential impact on sacred sites and the environment, and it is satisfying that our concerns and recommendations were heard and acted upon. The board and I commend the government on this announcement.

In early 2021 we said goodbye to our government representative board members Leah Clifford and Andrew Cowan, who left due their work demands in government. We thank them for their contribution over the years. We will appoint new members to the board in 2021–22.

Finally, I wish to thank for board and staff for their dedicated service and commitment to the important work of the Authority during the year.

**Bobby Nunggumajbarr**  
Chairperson





Image: Overnight camp, north of Kings Canyon, Watarrka National Park, NT

# CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

**In 2020–21, the Authority saw an increased demand for our services, particularly for mining, oil and gas, infrastructure and tourism-related projects. In total, the Authority issued 111 Authority Certificates (up from 80 in 2019–20) and 971 requests for information (up from 625 in 2019–20). This increase in demand reflects the increasing level of economic activity in the NT. COVID-19 affected our workload and timeliness during the year, but we have been agile in our response to these challenges.**

However, the demand for our services has also highlighted the weaknesses of our 2 main business operating systems: the sacred sites and research database (Administration, Research and Management System /ARMS) and our online application portal, AAPA Online.

ARMS is foundational to the work of the Authority but is now more than 25 years old. Over the years, it has become increasingly unstable and affects the ability of staff to work effectively. In 2016, the Authority launched AAPA Online, which was intended to replace paper forms and allow the public to manage their applications online. After 5 years of using this system, stakeholders have made it clear to us that AAPA Online is not the most user-friendly system.

In recognition of these issues, the Authority commissioned an independent review of our business systems in early 2020, which resulted in the 'AAPA Systems Health Check – Final Report 20 March 2020' (the review). The review identified significant issues with the operation of ARMS and AAPA Online, which are negatively affecting service delivery and the operational effectiveness of the organisation.

Based on the review's findings, the Authority has decided to replace ARMS and AAPA Online. As such, a priority for the Authority in 2020–21 has been developing a business case to identify and examine options for a new integrated business solution to replace both systems. This will allow us to deliver better services to the public and improve our operational efficiency. We hope to secure funding for that project in 2021–22.

The NT Government recognises that a new Authority database will support economic development and cutting red tape. As a result, the development of a new database is a recommendation under the Territory Economic Reconstruction Commission Progress Report (TERC Progress Report).

In 2020–21, we began developing a new 3-year strategic plan. Some of the challenges it will address are:

- the need for the Authority to improve our IT processes
- ensuring the Sacred Sites Act remains fit for purpose
- improving our profile in the NT
- growing our mapping capacity.

We will finalise and launch the strategic plan in 2021–22.

Looking ahead, we anticipate that the demand for the Authority's services will continue to grow as the NT's plan for economic recovery progresses. We have started doing what we need to do to make sure we are ready and responsive to our stakeholders and can protect sacred sites in balance with economic development.

**Dr Benedict Scambary**  
Chief Executive Officer





Image: Tempe Downs Station area, NT



# DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

**The issues regarding water resource management and land clearing in the NT have dominated much of the board's discussions this year. It is clear to the board and I that the speed and scale of these activities in the NT is changing.**

The priority for the board and I in the coming months will be to make sure the Authority has the information we need and processes in place to understand the potential impact of water resource management and land clearing on sacred sites so we can adequately protect these sites.

This year while we experienced an increase in demand for the Authority's services, we also made sure that we continued to support small business, organisations and community activities by provide full or partial waivers for their project. In total we provided 7 waivers to applicants to support government's township development initiatives in Aboriginal communities and to support government and private initiatives for tourism-related projects in national parks.

The registering of sacred sites is a topic the board and I put great importance on. Simply put, registering sacred sites is the best way we can most strongly protect them. In 2020–21, we registered 20 sites across the NT, taking the Authority's total number of registered sacred sites to 2,163.

We still need to register thousands more sacred sites in the NT. In 2021–22, the board and I will be looking at ways we can increase the number of sacred sites registrations, such as through partnerships with other custodians and rangers groups.

In 2020-21, Covid-19 continued to create challenges for us and our stakeholders. As we look ahead, please remember to take care, stay safe and look out for each other.

**Valerie Martin**  
Deputy Chairperson



# OUR ORGANISATION

“WE STILL NEED TO REGISTER THOUSANDS MORE SACRED SITES IN THE NT. IN 2021-22, THE BOARD AND I WILL BE LOOKING AT WAYS WE CAN INCREASE THE NUMBER OF SACRED SITES REGISTRATIONS, SUCH AS THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS WITH OTHER CUSTODIANS AND RANGERS GROUPS.”



Image: Aerial view of the Lee Point area, NT

## ROLE AND FUNCTION

**The Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority (the Authority) is a statutory authority that was established under the Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act 1989 (Sacred Sites Act). It is responsible for overseeing the protection of sacred sites in the Northern Territory.**

The Authority's functions are set out in section 10 of the Sacred Sites Act. The Northern Territory Government and the broader community recognises protecting Aboriginal sacred sites as an important element in preserving the NT's cultural heritage for the benefit of all Territorians. The Authority seeks to strike a balance between the protection of sacred sites and development in the Northern Territory.

## OUR HISTORY

**While its form has changed over time, the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority has existed for 43 years. Our history is entwined with the *Aboriginal Land Rights (NT) Act 1976 (Land Rights Act)* – the legislation that gives the Northern Territory the power to pass laws for the protection of sacred sites. That Act provided a foundation for the Sacred Sites Act.**

The Act's predecessor, the *Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act 1978 (NT)*, was one of the first pieces of legislation the Northern Territory Government passed after self-government was granted in 1978. The new law was significant in its recognition of Aboriginal culture by empowering Aboriginal people to protect their sites of cultural significance and allowing their sites to be recorded, registered and protected in the context of development.

Under the new law, it became an offence to enter, remain on, carry out works on or desecrate sacred sites anywhere in the Northern Territory. Other parts of today's legal protection were also established at that point, including a board largely made up of Aboriginal custodians of equal genders who are nominated by land councils, and a clear definition of what a sacred site is.

The early years brought some controversy between the Authority, the government and developers. The general public had little understanding of sacred sites and their meaning and importance to Aboriginal people. However, under the strong leadership of senior Aboriginal chairmen, including Mr Raphael Apuatimi OAM and Mr Wenten Rubuntja AM, the Authority worked hard to bridge this gap by engaging with government and developers to negotiate workable solutions.

Throughout the 1980s, there were numerous proposals to amend the *Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act 1978 (NT)*. In 1988, due to concerns around the Act, the NT Government introduced the Aboriginal Areas Protection Bill (NT) in an attempt to strike a more effective balance between protecting sacred sites and development in the NT.

The government continued negotiations with the Authority and land councils over amendments to the sacred sites legislation, which led to the current Sacred Sites Act and the establishment of the current Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority.

Since 1989, the Sacred Sites Act has established a framework for sacred site protection based on voluntary engagement. The main way that we protect sacred sites is by issuing Authority Certificates for proposed activities. Authority Certificates are based on consultations with custodians and provide clear conditions about what can and can't be done in and around sacred sites, and provide a defence against prosecution under the Sacred Sites Act, provided conditions are complied with. While Authority Certificates are not mandatory, they give developers, businesses and individuals certainty about where sacred sites are and what can and cannot be done around them.



In recognition of the importance of sacred sites and their protection, the Northern Territory Government obtains Authority Certificates for many of its public works. Key agencies such as the Department of Planning, Infrastructure and Logistics use certificates to guide their many projects because they provide clear instructions about what can and cannot be done in and around sacred sites. Through the Authority Certificate process, the Authority has delivered certainty for thousands of government projects across the Northern Territory while protecting sacred sites.

Following the acceptance of all 135 recommendations of the Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracturing in the Northern Territory, the Petroleum (Environment) Regulations 2016 (Petroleum Regulations) were amended so that Authority Certificates must be obtained as part of all environmental management plans (EMPs) for hydraulic fracturing projects. Additionally, the Authority must be given a copy of any hydraulic fracturing applications and the opportunity to consult with custodians and provide comments to the relevant decision maker. These changes have placed the Authority into the regulatory regime and approvals process for all onshore petroleum activities in the NT. The benefit for proponents and stakeholders alike is that the streamlined process reduces the risk of delays and duplication of work and ensures sacred sites are adequately considered for all hydraulic fracturing projects.

## OUR SERVICES

The Authority manages the protection of Aboriginal sacred sites through:

- sacred site avoidance surveys and issuing Authority Certificates for any proposed development
- providing the public with information about existing sacred sites through abstracts of Authority records and access to the register we maintain
- registering Aboriginal sacred sites.

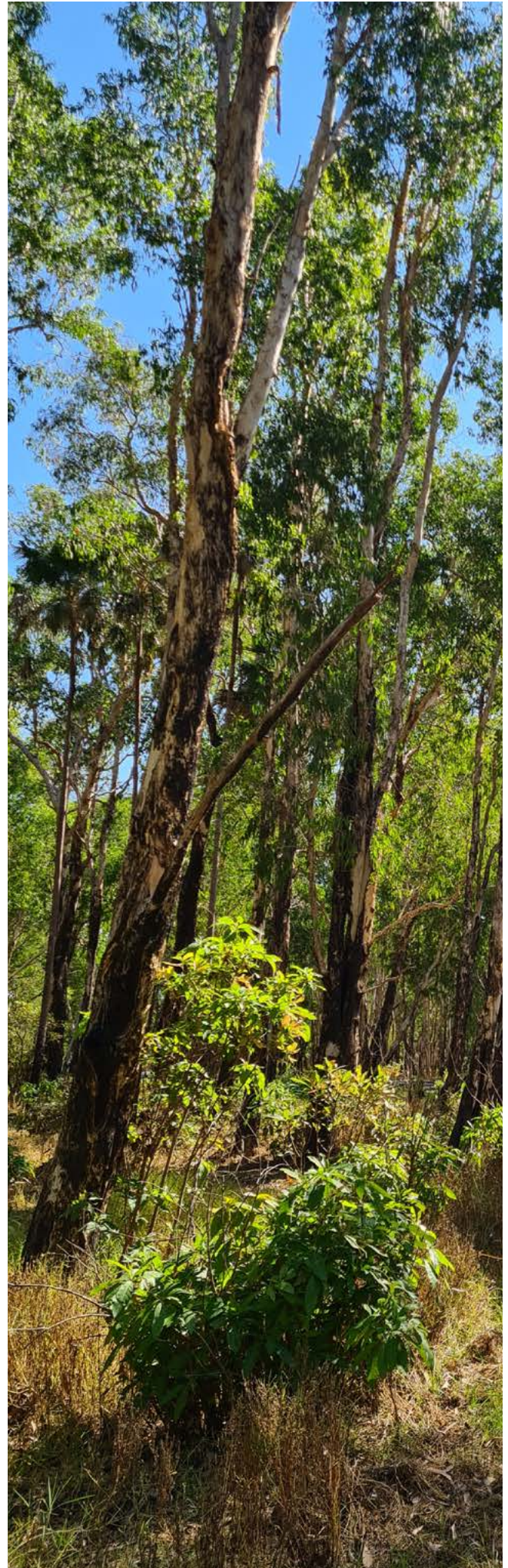


Image: Paperbark trees along the Arnhem Highway road on the way to Gunbalanya, NT





Image: Bilkbilkmi area, Kakadu National Park, NT

## AUTHORITY CERTIFICATES

Anyone proposing to use or work on land in the Northern Territory may apply to the Authority for an Authority Certificate to cover their proposed activities.

We issue these certificates based on consultations with custodians, and the certificates include clear conditions on what can and cannot be done in and around sacred sites.

An Authority Certificate provides a defence against prosecution in relation to the works or uses covered by the Authority Certificate, as long as the applicant complies with any conditions imposed to protect sacred sites.

While Authority Certificates are voluntary, they are an effective risk management tool for developers because they indicate where sacred sites are and how to work in and around them. This helps prevent risk of damage to the site, which can lead to project delays and extra cost.

## REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

Members of the public can seek advice on registered sacred sites by requesting access to the register of sacred sites. We provide abstracts of records on where sacred sites are known to exist so they are not inadvertently damaged.

These abstracts give information on the sacred sites that are likely to be at risk if works are carried out without seeking more detailed information first. We might advise that works should not be carried out on these sacred sites without an Authority Certificate and that any development proposals take into account the sacred site's existence.

### The registration of Aboriginal sacred sites

Custodians of Aboriginal sacred sites may apply to have their sites registered under Part III, Division 2 of the Sacred Sites Act.

The Authority then conducts anthropological research, including consulting with Aboriginal custodians and reviewing the register for any historical information that may be available on the proposed sacred site to determine the site's location, boundaries and significance in accordance with Aboriginal tradition. Landowners are given an opportunity to comment on the proposed registration before it's presented to the board.

In accordance with the Sacred Sites Act, staff present a report on that information to the Authority board for registration approval. At recent meetings, custodians have been invited to speak to the board directly about the sites they have proposed for registration.

# MISSION STATEMENT

To protect sacred sites in the Northern Territory.

## VALUES

### CUSTODIAN VALUES

Traditional law  
Knowledge

### AUTHORITY GUIDING VALUES

Two laws  
*Northern Territory Aboriginal  
Sacred Sites Act 1989*  
Independence  
Integrity

### CLIENT VALUES

Legal certainty  
Advice



# Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority

*protecting sacred sites across the territory*

## STRATEGIC PLAN

### CUSTODIAN VALUES

- Traditional Law
- Knowledge

### AUTHORITY GUIDING VALUES

- Two Laws
- Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act
- Independence
- Integrity

### CLIENT VALUES

- Legal Certainty
- Advice

#### Strategies to Protect Sacred Sites in the NT

Promote the Value of Sacred Sites in the Northern Territory by:

1. Ensure Compliance with the *Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act*
2. Adopt a Risk Management Approach to Corporate Governance
3. Advance Technology and Information Management
4. Advance High Quality Research and Land Information
5. Staff Committed to the Values of a High Performing Organisation
6. Streamlined Financial Management Systems

#### MISSION STATEMENT:

To protect Sacred Sites in the Northern Territory



Image: Custodian Maurice Doolan about to board a helicopter at Old Andado Station, NT

# OUR STAKEHOLDERS

The Authority serves a diverse range of stakeholders:

- Aboriginal custodians and traditional owners
- Northern Territory and Australian Government agencies
- industry groups (including the oil industry, gas and mining industry and pastoral industry)
- the Defence Force
- land councils
- local governments and shires
- communication network companies
- food producers
- tourism operators
- environmental managers (including Indigenous rangers)
- home owners
- real estate agents
- private and non-government organisations who use land across the NT.

The Authority strives to meet the needs of all stakeholders in protecting sacred sites.

# ORGANISATION HIGHLIGHTS

- The Authority registered 20 sacred sites during Authority board meetings.
- The Authority completed 971 requests for information from our records.
- The Authority issued 111 Authority Certificates for projects across the Northern Territory, including for tourism, infrastructure and mining.
- The Authority issued Authority Certificates for key projects including the Rum Jungle mine rehabilitation works and the Stokes Hill environmental sampling application from the Department of Defence.
- 74% of Authority Certificates were issued within 6 months.
- The Authority provided 7 full or partial waivers to support a range of projects across the NT. This included waivers to support Aboriginal organisations for community initiatives, waivers to support government's township development initiatives in Aboriginal communities and waivers to support government and private initiatives for tourism-related projects in national parks. Providing these projects with full or partial waivers also supported economic development in the NT. The total value of waivers was \$120,950.



# GOVERNANCE

“THE ADMINISTRATOR ALSO APPOINTS ABORIGINAL MEMBERS AS THE CHAIRPERSON AND DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON OF THE BOARD, WHO MUST BE OF OPPOSITE GENDER, BASED ON NOMINATIONS FROM THE AUTHORITY.”

## GOVERNANCE

### The Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority board comprises 12 members.

Ten of those members are custodians nominated by Northern Territory land councils in equal numbers: 5 males and 5 females. The other 2 members are nominated by the Northern Territory Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage.

To fill vacancies for Aboriginal custodian members of the board, the land councils are requested to nominate a panel of twice the number of custodians of the relevant gender.

The Administrator of the Northern Territory appoints members by notice in the Northern Territory Government Gazette.

The Administrator also appoints Aboriginal members as the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson of the board, who must be of opposite gender, based on nominations from the Authority.

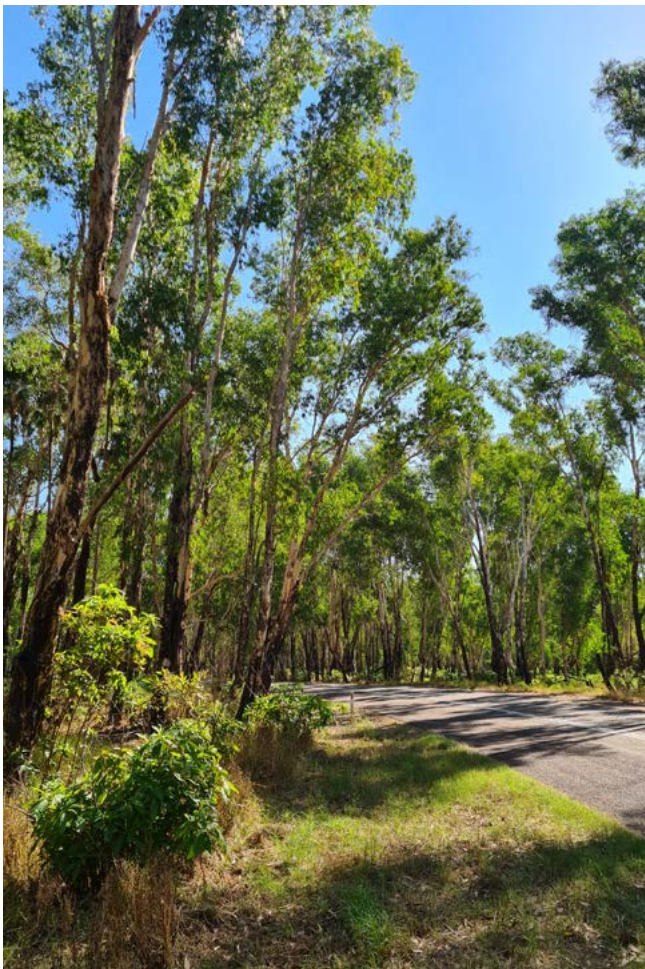


Image: Paperbark tress along the Arnhem Highway road on the way to Gunbalanya, NT

## AUTHORITY BOARD MEETINGS

Under the Sacred Sites Act, the Authority meets 4 times each calendar year.

In 2020–21, the Chairperson called the following meetings:

124th board meeting  
13 August 2020, Darwin/Alice Springs

125th board meeting  
14 August 2020, Darwin/Alice Springs

126th board meeting  
18 November 2020, Darwin/Alice Springs

127th board meeting  
19 November 2020, Darwin/Alice Springs

128th board meeting  
30–31 March 2021, Darwin/Alice Springs

Board meetings were held via videolink between the Darwin and Alice Springs offices.

## APPOINTMENTS

On 28 May 2021, Ms Elaine Watts' membership expired, and after 3 years of dedicated service, she retired from the board.

In early 2021, the board's 2 government representatives, Mr Andrew Cowan and Ms Leah Clifford, resigned from the board due to their work commitments.

The Authority is grateful for Ms Watts' Mr Cowan's and Ms Clifford's commitment and contribution to the Authority over the years.

In accordance with the Sacred Sites Act, the Authority was in the process of appointing new members to the Authority to fill these 3 vacancies at year end.

# ABORIGINAL AREAS PROTECTION AUTHORITY BOARD

## Mr Bobby Nunggumajbarr – Chairperson



**Region:** Roper Basin  
**First appointed:** 29 September 2015  
**Date re-appointed:** 31 October 2018

Mr Bobby Nunggumajbarr is a senior Nunggubuyu man from Numbulwar in south-eastern Arnhem Land. He has had a long and distinguished career in public administration and has held various positions on the Yugul Mangi Community Government Council in Ngukurr and the Roper Gulf Shire. Until recently, he was the Senior Project Officer in charge of the Northern Land Council's Ngukurr office, a role he held for more than 15 years. Mr Nunggumajbarr is widely respected for his knowledge and authority in Ngukurr and is highly regarded as a community facilitator.

## Ms Jenny Inmulugulu



**Region:** Arnhem Land West  
**First appointed:** 26 April 2006  
**Date re-appointed:** 31 October 2018

Ms Jenny Inmulugulu is a traditional owner of Warruwi community on South Goulburn Island. She has been a member of the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority since 2006 and served as Deputy Chairperson from 2008 to 2012. Ms Inmulugulu is a member of the Northern Land Council. As a senior woman for her clan, she is a strong advocate for her community, with a focus on youth engagement and business enterprises.

## Mr Walter Kerinaia Junior



**Region:** Tiwi Islands  
**First appointed:** 31 August 2015  
**Date re-appointed:** 22 August 2018

Mr Walter Kerinaia Junior is from the Mantiyupwi clan group and is one of the senior 'culture men' on the Tiwi Islands. He is a past member of the Tiwi Islands Regional Council/Tiwi Islands Land Council and past Director of Mantiyupwi Pty Ltd. Mr Kerinaia Junior has been the long-time Trustee of the Mantiyupwi land-owning group, which takes in southern parts of both Bathurst and Melville islands.

## Ms Valerie Martin – Deputy Chairperson



**Region:** Yuendumu Hinterland  
**First appointed:** 2 August 2016  
**Date re-appointed:** 8 January 2020

Ms Valerie Martin is a senior Warlpiri woman from Yuendumu. Ms Martin is a member of the board of the Warlpiri Youth Development Aboriginal Corporation and a previous member of the Central Land Council and the Aboriginal Benefit Account Advisory Committee. Ms Martin has served as Deputy Chairperson Since 2016.

## Ms Leah Clifford



**Region:** Darwin Hinterland  
**First appointed:** 1 August 2015  
**Date re-appointed:** 3 October 2018

Ms Leah Clifford is the Deputy Chief Executive of the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics. Ms Clifford has previously held senior positions in the Northern Territory Government, including in the Department of Lands, Planning and the Environment and the Department of Housing. She brings specialist professional skills in the area of land policy and administration to the Authority board membership. Ms Clifford resigned from the Authority in January 2021 due to work commitments.

## Ms Lynette Granites



**Region:** Yuendumu Hinterland  
**First appointed:** 18 May 2005  
**Date re-appointed:** 22 August 2018

Ms Lynette Granites is a highly respected senior Warlpiri woman from Yuendumu. She has been a member of the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority Board since 2005. Ms Granites is well known for her knowledge in women's law and culture and has worked closely with the Authority on many sacred site registrations and Authority Certificate consultations. She worked as a health worker for many years and is a renowned artist in her community.



## Mr Jack Green



**Region:** Borroloola and Gulf  
**First appointed:** 29 September 2015  
**Date re-appointed:** 31 October 2018

Mr Jack Green is a Garrawa man from Borroloola. He is a Senior Cultural Advisor to the Garawa and Waanyi/Garawa ranger programs in the Gulf region of the Northern Territory. He is both employed by and a member of the Northern Land Council. Mr Green has contributed significantly to Aboriginal community-based development programs in remote regions of Australia. He is also a well-known artist. Mr Green is a strong supporter of maintaining Aboriginal connection to the land.

## Mr Andrew Cowan



**Region:** Darwin Hinterland  
**Date appointed:** 5 July 2017  
**Date re-appointed:** 5 August 2020

Mr Andrew Cowan is the Deputy Chief Executive of the Department of the Chief Minister and has held various senior positions within the Northern Territory Government. Mr Cowan is in charge of the Northern Territory Government's Indigenous Development Strategy and has a strong understanding of the government's Aboriginal affairs and development priorities. Mr Cowan resigned from the Authority in March 2021 due to work commitments.

## Ms Barbara Shaw



**Region:** Alice Springs Hinterland  
**Date appointed:** 27 March 2019

Ms Barbara Shaw is from the Alice Springs Hinterland region and is the current Deputy Chair of the Central Land Council. She is the Central Land Council delegate for Tangentyere Council, where she coordinates the family safety group, targeting domestic violent in town camps. She is a well-known advocate for education, women's issues and housing. Ms Shaw is also heavily involved in a range of community organisations and initiatives that support these areas, including acting as the co-chair of Aboriginal Housing Northern Territory, being a member of the Aboriginal Benefit Account, and being a former engagement officer under the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory.

## Mr Phillip Mamarika



**Region:** Arnhem Land East  
**First appointed:** 31 August 2015  
**Date re-appointed:** 22 August 2018

Mr Phillip Mamarika is a respected elder of the Mamarika clan of Umbakumba on Groote Eylandt. He works as a senior ranger with the Anindilyakwa Land and Sea Rangers, providing on-the-ground leadership and mentoring to 10 staff about traditional land and sea country. Mr Mamarika represents the Anindilyakwa Land and Sea Rangers at the Anindilyakwa Indigenous Protected Area Advisory Committee and the Learning on Country Steering Committee. His role also extends to community liaison, and he is a strong conduit between the land and sea rangers and the Anindilyakwa Land Council head office.

## Ms Elaine Watts



**Region:** Katherine Hinterland  
**Date appointed:** 23 May 2018  
**Date of retirement:** 23 May 2021

Ms Elaine Watts is a traditional owner from the Katherine region and a long-serving member of the Northern Land Council, standing as a full council member from 2013 to 2016. Ms Watts has extensive knowledge of land and management practices, having worked in various Aboriginal land and sea management positions, including as a Sea Ranger Northern Land Council Facilitator and Timber Creek Ranger Group Facilitator. Ms Watts has also served as the Timber Creek/Victoria River representative on the Katherine Regional Advisory Committee, where she helped look after sacred sites and improved management of the country by increasing skills and work opportunities through training and work experience.

## Mr Neville Petrick



**Region:** Plenty River Basin  
**Date appointed:** 27 March 2019

Mr Neville Petrick is from McDonald Downs in the Northern Territory and is the Executive Council representative on the Central Land Council for the Eastern Plenty region. In that role, Mr Petrick represents his region at the land council meetings and informs the community about the discussions and outcomes of these meetings.

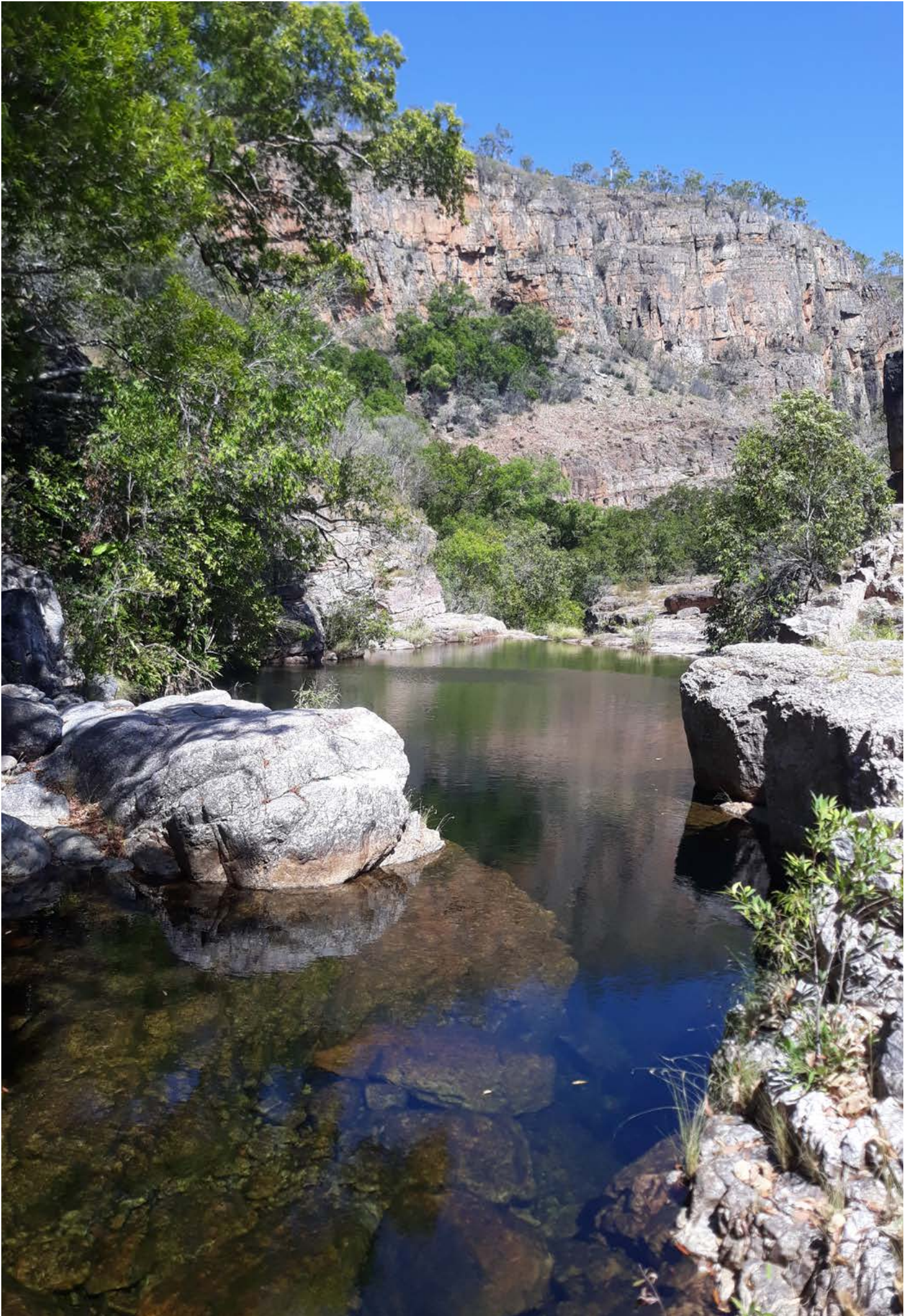


Image: Bilkbilkmi area, Kakadu National Park, NT

# AUTHORITY OPERATIONS

## PRINCIPLES OF GOVERNANCE

The Authority's governance framework aims to ensure the Authority carries out its functions effectively, efficiently and in line with its responsibilities under the Sacred Sites Act.

This includes:

- effective human resources management practices
- quality control for data and outputs
- developing risk management strategies
- planning and developing a strategic plan.

## HOW THE AUTHORITY IS MANAGED

The CEO maintains overall responsibility for the Authority's day-to-day operation.

To ensure the smooth functioning of the office, the CEO chairs weekly Executive Management Group meetings and fortnightly staff meetings. Each operational group also meets regularly to ensure the effective flow of information.

The Authority's operational groups are Research and Land Information, Corporate Services, and Policy and Governance.

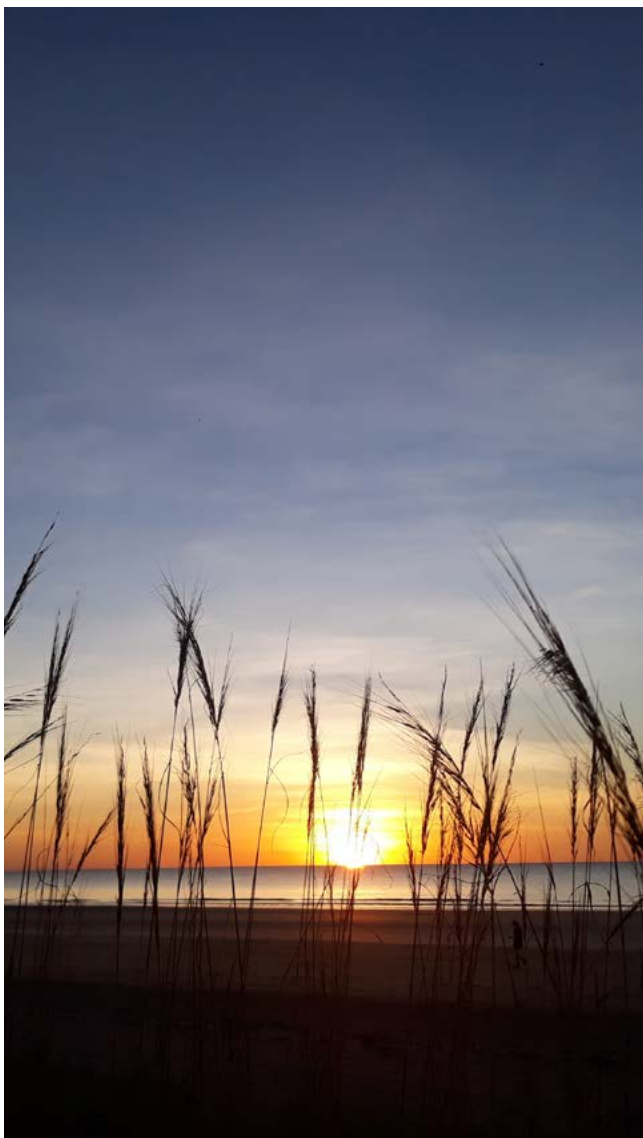


Image: Scenery - Mandy/Casuarina beach.jpg

## HOW THE AUTHORITY IS GOVERNED

The primary policy and decision-making body is the Authority (the board), established under section 5 of the Sacred Sites Act. It requires that 'The Administrator shall appoint a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Authority who shall be charged with carrying out the decisions of the Authority.'

All other Authority staff are employed directly by the Authority, under section 17 of the Sacred Sites Act.

Section 19 provides for the Authority to delegate certain powers or functions. The CEO holds some of these delegations and is responsible for the Authority's overall operation. The CEO also exercises responsibilities under the Financial Management Act and complies with the terms and conditions of employment under the *Public Sector Employment and Management Act*.

# ORGANISATIONAL CHART

**AUTHORITY BOARD**

**MINISTER**

**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

**Research and Land Information**

**Corporate Services**

**Policy and Governance**

**Key responsibilities:**

- Authority Certificate research
- Anthropological research
- Requests for information
- Site registrations
- Mapping
- Public register
- Stakeholder management
- Library

**Key responsibilities:**

- Human resources
- Procurement and contracts
- Property and vehicle management
- Finance, budget and accounting
- Records management
- Information Technology

**Key responsibilities:**

- Organisational performance
- Strategic planning
- Policy development
- Legal and compliance
- Ministerial liaison
- Secretariat to the Board, Audit Committee and Executive Management Group

# LEGISLATION AND POLICY

## ABORIGINAL SACRED SITE PROTECTION IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

Aboriginal sacred sites are recognised and protected as an integral part of Northern Territory and Australian cultural heritage under both the Commonwealth's Land Rights Act and the Northern Territory Sacred Sites Act.

Both Acts define a sacred site as:

*'...a site that is sacred to Aboriginals or is otherwise of significance according to Aboriginal tradition...'*

## COMMONWEALTH AND NORTHERN TERRITORY LAWS

The establishment of the Sacred Sites Act by the Northern Territory Government was enabled by section 73 of the Land Rights Act, which gives the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly power to enact laws:

*'...providing for the protection of, and the prevention of the desecration of, sacred sites in the Northern Territory, including sacred sites on Aboriginal land, and, in particular, laws regulating or authorising the entry of persons on those sites, but so that any such laws shall provide for the right of Aboriginals to have access to those sites in accordance with Aboriginal tradition and shall take into account the wishes of Aboriginals relating to the extent to which those sites should be protected.'*

The Sacred Sites Act was passed under this power to establish procedures for the protection and registration of sacred sites and the avoidance of sacred sites in the development and use of land.

The protection of sacred sites in the NT is furthermore aided by section 69 of the Land Rights Act, which broadly prohibits entry and remaining on any land in the Northern Territory that is a sacred site, unless a law of the Northern Territory specifies otherwise.

## LANDOWNERS AND DEVELOPERS

The Authority strives to achieve practical outcomes in its operations by balancing the interests of sacred site custodians, landowners and developers.

Occasionally, custodians, landowners and developers will have divergent interests in land, but there is usually overlap between these interests. In most cases, the Authority's challenge is to accommodate new uses and development of land with the need to protect sacred sites, which preserves and enhances Aboriginal tradition in changing social, economic and cultural environments.

Landowners and developers have certain rights under the Sacred Sites Act:

- Section 28 provides the opportunity for landowners to make representations on the prospective registration of a sacred site.
- Section 44 explicitly deals with landowners' rights to use land comprised in a sacred site consistent with the protection of sacred sites. Authority Certificates provide a legal instrument to accommodate such land use.
- Under section 48A, if the application of the Sacred Sites Act in a particular case would result in an acquisition of property other than on just terms, then the person affected is entitled to such compensation as a court may decide.

As well as protecting the fabric of sacred sites in the context of land ownership and development, the Sacred Sites Act provides for Aboriginal people to have access to sacred sites 'in accordance with Aboriginal tradition.'

In accordance with the Sacred Sites Act, all sacred sites are protected regardless of underlying land title, registration status or whether or not they are known to the Authority.

The specific sections of the Sacred Sites Act relevant to the protection of sacred sites are sections 33 (unauthorised entry), 34 (unauthorised works or uses) and 35 (desecration), which set out the various offences in relation to sacred sites.

# RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER NORTHERN TERRITORY HERITAGE LEGISLATION

Section 128 (2)(b) of the *Heritage Act 2011* states that the Authority must have a representative on the Heritage Advisory Council. Allison Bitar, Anthropologist/Sacred Site Data Integrity Officer served as the Authority's representative until October 2020 and Robert Pocock, Acting Director Policy and Governance served as the Authority's representative from October 2020 onwards.

## EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT GROUP (EMG)

The Authority's Executive Management Group comprises senior managers from the organisation's operational areas and is chaired by the CEO.

The purpose of the EMG is to provide the CEO with advice and support about a range of strategic and operational matters. The group's key functions include monitoring the organisation's performance, setting the Authority's strategic direction and priorities, implementing the strategic plan and addressing critical issues facing the organisation.

At year end, the EMG members were:

- Dr Ben Scambary, Chief Executive Officer
- Dr Sophie Creighton, Director, Research and Land Information
- Mr Che Walsh, Director, Policy and Governance (until September 2020)
- Mr Robert Pocock, Acting Director, Policy and Governance (from September 2020).





Image: Custodians at Mereenie, NT

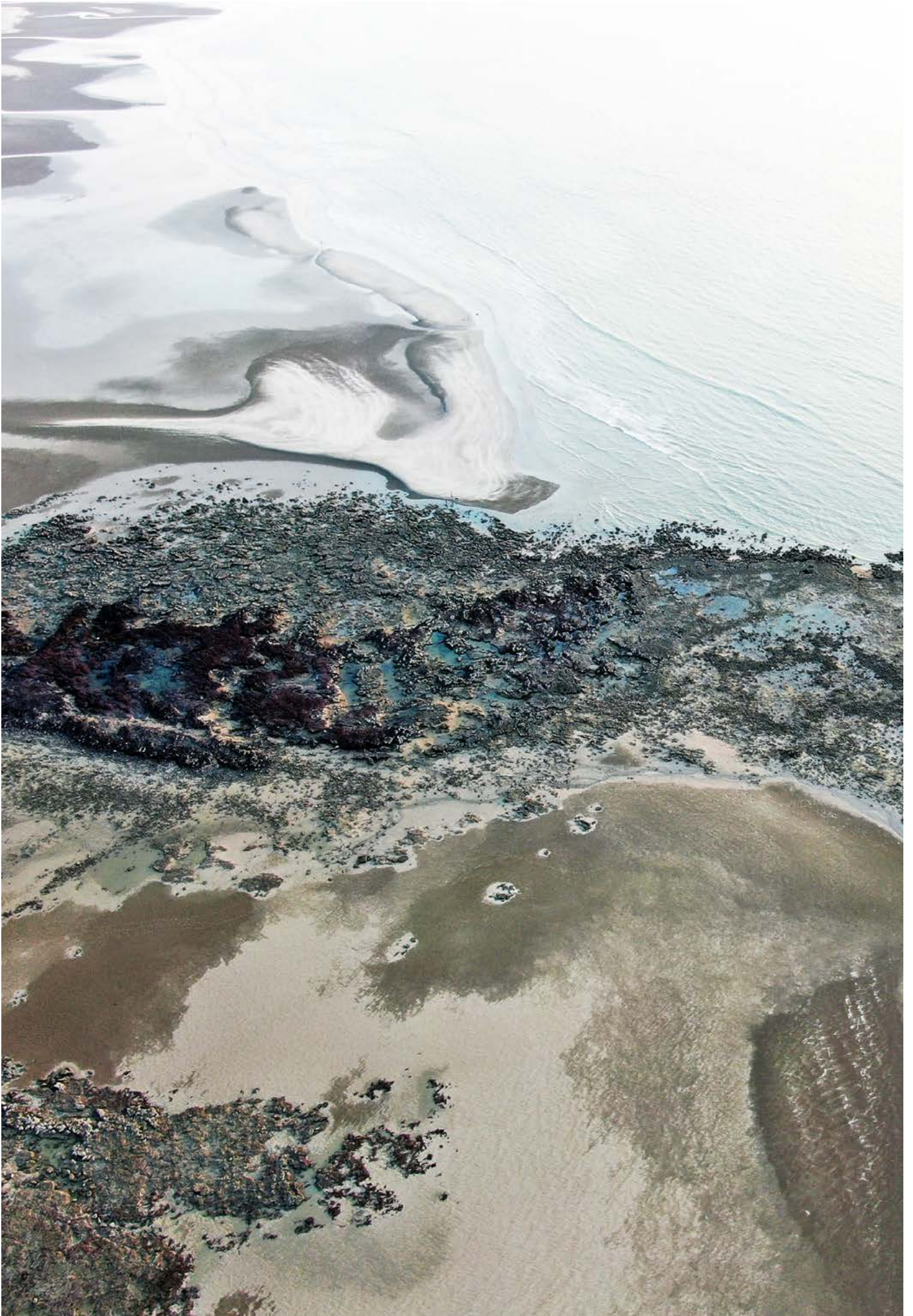


Image: Aerial view of Lee Point area, NT



# COMMITTEES

## RISK MANAGEMENT AND AUDIT COMMITTEE

In accordance with section 13(2) of the Financial Management Act 1995, the CEO must ensure appropriate internal control procedures are in place. As such, the Authority's Risk Management and Audit Committee exists to provide advice to the CEO on matters associated with risk management, internal controls, reviews and audits within the Authority, including:

- endorse and monitor the Risk Management Plan for the Authority
- review and maintain the Authority's risk register
- monitor external audit program outcomes and the implementation of recommendations
- monitor the development of internal review programs and audits
- review progress and findings of process reviews and monitor the implementation of findings
- consider the adequacy of the internal control environment, including the effectiveness of internal controls on key risks, such as fraud, information and communications technology, governance and systems to ensure compliance with legal and regulatory requirements
- consider financial reports of the Authority, particularly the narrative summaries and statements included in the annual report, with respect to risk management and internal controls
- within the context of the committee's primary purpose, undertake other functions and activities as determined from time to time by the CEO.

At year end, the members of the Risk Management and Audit Committee were the Executive Management Group members and the Business Manager.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY GROUP

The Research Methodology Group (RMG) was established to develop strategic solutions to improve the Authority's internal processes and its service to clients and custodians. The RMG was wound down after a number of internal projects were completed. In 2021–22, organisational projects will be overseen by project leaders reporting to the relevant director.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT) CHANGE ADVISORY BOARD

The role of this committee is to oversee the Authority's information management and information and communications technology practices to ensure our priorities are met. The committee's responsibilities include:

- review of business cases and project plans for ICT initiatives and investment decisions and submissions to EMG for review and approval
- delivery of ICT initiatives and performance reviews of project delivery
- software upgrades, system changes and managing the impact on Authority users
- report and discuss NTG ICT initiatives and possible impacts on the Authority and its operations.

## LIBRARIES COMMITTEE

The purpose of this committee is to maintain a collection of materials relevant to the protection of the cultural heritage of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory.

At year end, the committee was focussed on amalgamating the Alice Springs and Darwin collections, cataloguing new acquisitions and bequests, and digitising some records to make them more readily available to Authority staff and our stakeholders. The digitisation of specific records is a long-term project.



# INITIATIVES AND PROJECTS

“THE AUTHORITY SUPPORTED GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE SECTOR TOURISM PROJECTS BY ISSUING AUTHORITY CERTIFICATES THAT PROTECTED MULTIPLE SACRED SITES WHILE ALLOWING FOR WORKS TO IMPROVE VISITOR EXPERIENCES FOR LOCALS AND TOURISTS.”

# PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES

One of the Authority's functions is to facilitate discussions between custodians of sacred sites and proponents to oversee the protection of sacred sites. As such, the Authority is involved in the planning stages of many major projects in the Northern Territory. Our aim is to balance the interests of custodians, landowners and developers.

## NOTABLE AUTHORITY CERTIFICATES IN 2020-21

### TOURISM AND VISITOR EXPERIENCE PROJECTS

The Authority supported government and private sector tourism projects by issuing Authority Certificates that protected multiple sacred sites while allowing for works to improve visitor experiences for locals and tourists, including:

- Alice Springs revitalisation project covering Bath Street, Hartley Street, Todd Street and Gregory Terrace
- Yulara future headworks plan
- Jabiru township development
- upgrade of the Cahills Crossing viewing area
- upgrade to the Jim Jim Creek crossing
- Gunlom walking track.

### INFRASTRUCTURE

The Authority supported the Northern Territory and federal governments' infrastructure and investment priorities by issuing certificates for:

- Solar Array Manufacturing Facility and the Livingstone Solar Farm
- works associated with the redevelopment of Jabiru as a tourist hub
- planning and township development of Wadeye
- Kalkarindji township
- Beswick road upgrades
- Tanami road upgrades
- upgrade to the Paru and Milikapiti road on Melville Island.

### MINING, OIL AND GAS

The Authority issued numerous Authority Certificates to provide certainty around the location and extent of sacred sites for mining, oil and gas works, including mineral exploration, geographical mapping, seismic surveys and drilling throughout the Northern Territory.

The Authority issued 33 Authority Certificates for works associated with the mining, oil and gas sector. Twelve of these certificates were in response to applications for regulated activities under the Petroleum Regulations, including hydraulic fracturing and exploration. Details of these certificates are available in the Performance Report chapter.



Image: View of a dry season burn-off from the Carpentaria Highway, near Borroloola, NT



# WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

## SREBA – STRATEGIC REGIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL AND BASELINE ASSESSMENT

The SREBA is a set of studies to address knowledge gaps and establish appropriate baselines against which the potential impacts of proposed onshore gas activities, specifically hydraulic fracturing, may be assessed. The SREBA consists of 6 study domains, 5 of which are coordinated by the Department of Environment, Parks and Water Security. The DEPWS applied for 8 Authority Certificates to conduct some aspects of the SREBA work, including for water monitoring bores and environmental surveys. The DEPWS accessed the Authority’s public register for information over the Beetaloo study area.

## ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY PROJECTS AND ENTERPRISES

The Authority supported Aboriginal community projects and enterprises by issuing certificates for various initiatives, including for the NPY Women’s Council in Alice Springs in October 2020. This certificate allows for the construction of a proposed multi-purpose facility to operate as the council’s headquarters.

## LHERE MPARNTWE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

In 2020–21, the Authority’s Alice Springs Research Manager, Janelle White, and Senior Mparntwe custodian, John Stuart-Newchurch, continued their involvement in the Lhere Mparntwe Management Strategy Group (LMMSG). Their attendance at quarterly meetings resulted in a list of works relating to long-term sustainable biocultural management of the Todd and Charles rivers, with a formal application for a combined Authority Certificate (to be owned by DEPWS) imminent.

Janelle and John provided critical input into plans affecting cultural water flows throughout the town, and the LMMSG agreed that a Certificate condition should focus on ongoing education of agency members about the Authority and site protection, cultural matters and cross-cultural understanding. Long-term management activities directly related to site protection include fire hazard reduction, weed management, erosion mitigation and emergency response communication protocols.



# COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH

## PRESENTATIONS TO AUTHORITY STAKEHOLDERS

In 2020–21, Dr Sophie Creighton, Director of Research and Land Information, and Mandy Trueman, Assessment and Regulations Officer, delivered presentations to various industry stakeholders including Parks Australia, the petroleum industry and to the North Australia Infrastructure round table. The purpose of the information sessions was to explain the operation of regulatory requirements for the protection of sacred sites in the Northern Territory.

The information sessions covered the roles and functions of the Authority and sacred site protection in the context of extractive industries and mine management planning. The questions, feedback and follow-up engagement in Authority processes suggests the sessions improved industry's understanding of the Authority's role in the Northern Territory regulatory framework

## SPECIAL PROJECTS

### JUUKAN GORGE PUBLIC HEARING

In response to the destruction of the Juukan Gorge sacred sites, the federal government initiated an inquiry to investigate the effectiveness and adequacy of state and federal laws in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage. In August 2020, the Authority lodged a submission with the inquiry, making 8 recommendations.

The recommendations centred on the need for strong national legislation to protect Aboriginal cultural heritage. On 2 March 2021, the Authority's Chairperson and Chief Executive Officer participated in a public hearing for this inquiry. The issues they discussed included the strengths and weaknesses of the Sacred Sites Act and its interaction with other cultural heritage protection regimes.

### COLLABORATION WITH THE MIMAL RANGERS

During the year, the Authority worked collaboratively with Mimal Land Management, a ranger group in the Bulman Weemol area of south central Arnhem Land, on site protection and prosecution matters, and research to inform the Mimal Indigenous Protected Area.

The Authority's working relationship with the Mimal Rangers led to positive protective measures for custodians in the region, with the rangers working with custodians to put up sacred site signs provided by the Authority. This complements the important work the rangers have already been doing to protect sacred sites.





Image: Bilkbilkmi area, Kakadu National Park, NT

# BUSINESS SOLUTION PROJECT

In January 2020, the Authority commissioned an independent review of its business systems through the Department of Corporate and Digital Development (DCDD). The review's purpose was to determine the health of the information technology systems and its fit for purpose in supporting the Authority's core business processes.

The 2 systems reviewed were:

1. Administration, Research and Management Systems (ARMS): an in-house oracle business system that records information related to Aboriginal sacred sites, custodians, fieldwork by research officers and internal processes relating to the issuance of Authority Certificates, registration of sacred sites, requests for information and reported sacred site concerns.
2. AAPA Online: a public-facing online system with the ability to lodge requests for information and Authority Certificates, make payments, track the progress of their applications and download the requested documentation.

In March 2020, the review concluded that there were significant issues with both systems. Specifically, ARMS was affecting the ability of staff to work effectively on a daily basis, and the AAPA Online system was making it hard for our clients to request services from the Authority, leading to lengthy processing delays due to the amount of 'rework' required to validate client requests.

The review recommended a remediation project to address the reliability and usability issues of both systems, mitigate the potential reputational risk and develop a road map to the future system requirements.

In 2019–20, the remediation project commenced to determine if any enhancements could be made to address issues with existing systems. It determined remediation was not a practical option, and the Authority decided to instead develop a business case to deliver an integrated business solution. It will enable the Authority to deliver better services to the public and improve the operational efficiency of the organisation:

The NT Government's May 2021 TERC Progress Report recognised developing a new Authority database an important initiative that would support economic activity and reduce red tape. As such, the NT Government committed to collaborating with the Authority to create a streamlined and user-friendly database under the TERC Project Report recommendation L3: Invest in land capability assessment as part of ensuring access to good precompetitive data (see below extract from the TERC Progress Report).

Progress Update	Progress Update
<p><b>Invest in land capability assessment as part of ensuring access to good precompetitive data (L3)</b></p>	<p>In order to provide proponents and potential investors with precompetitive data, the Territory Government is undertaking a range of actions, including, but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Partnering with all relevant Territory Government agencies and the NT Farmers Association to review land capability information in the Douglas Daly</li> <li>▪ Finalising mapping for the areas Western Davenport, Larrimah, Wadeye, Deep Well and Katherine</li> <li>▪ Partnering with the CSIRO to develop broad scale mapping - allowing investors and proponents to have a better understanding of investment opportunities, expected to be completed by the third quarter of 2021</li> <li>▪ Finalising the upgrade of 160 land resource datasets and produce new mapping products to allow proponents and potential investors access to more up to date data</li> <li>▪ Collaborating with the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority to create a streamlined, user friendly data management system, providing proponents investors with a better experience when making investment decisions, by fourth quarter of 2021.</li> </ul>

# PERFORMANCE REPORT 2021-20

“THIS YEAR WE CONTINUED TO EXPERIENCE CHALLENGES DUE TO THE GLOBAL PANDEMIC. THANKS TO THE AUTHORITY’S WORK FROM HOME STRATEGY, STAFF WERE ABLE TO TRANSITION QUICKLY FROM OFFICE BASED TO HOME BASED ARRANGEMENTS.”





Image: Custodians during fieldwork at Phillip Creek Station, NT

The Authority's overall performance in a financial year is quantified by the requests for information (of registers and other archives) and the number, size and complexity of Authority Certificate applications issued.

Timeliness is assessed by the average number of days between acceptance of costs for Authority Certificate applications or requests for information and the issuing of those requests.

Quality is reflected in the number of statutory appeals on Authority decisions under part III, division 3 of the Sacred Sites Act or section 9 of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984 (Cth)*.

The Authority reports against agreed performance measures as part of its output performance. These performance measures provide an indication of the Authority's current workload and performance.

## PROTECTION OF SACRED SITES

### Output group:

Provide statutory services for the protection and registration of sacred sites and the avoidance of sacred sites in the economic development and use of land.

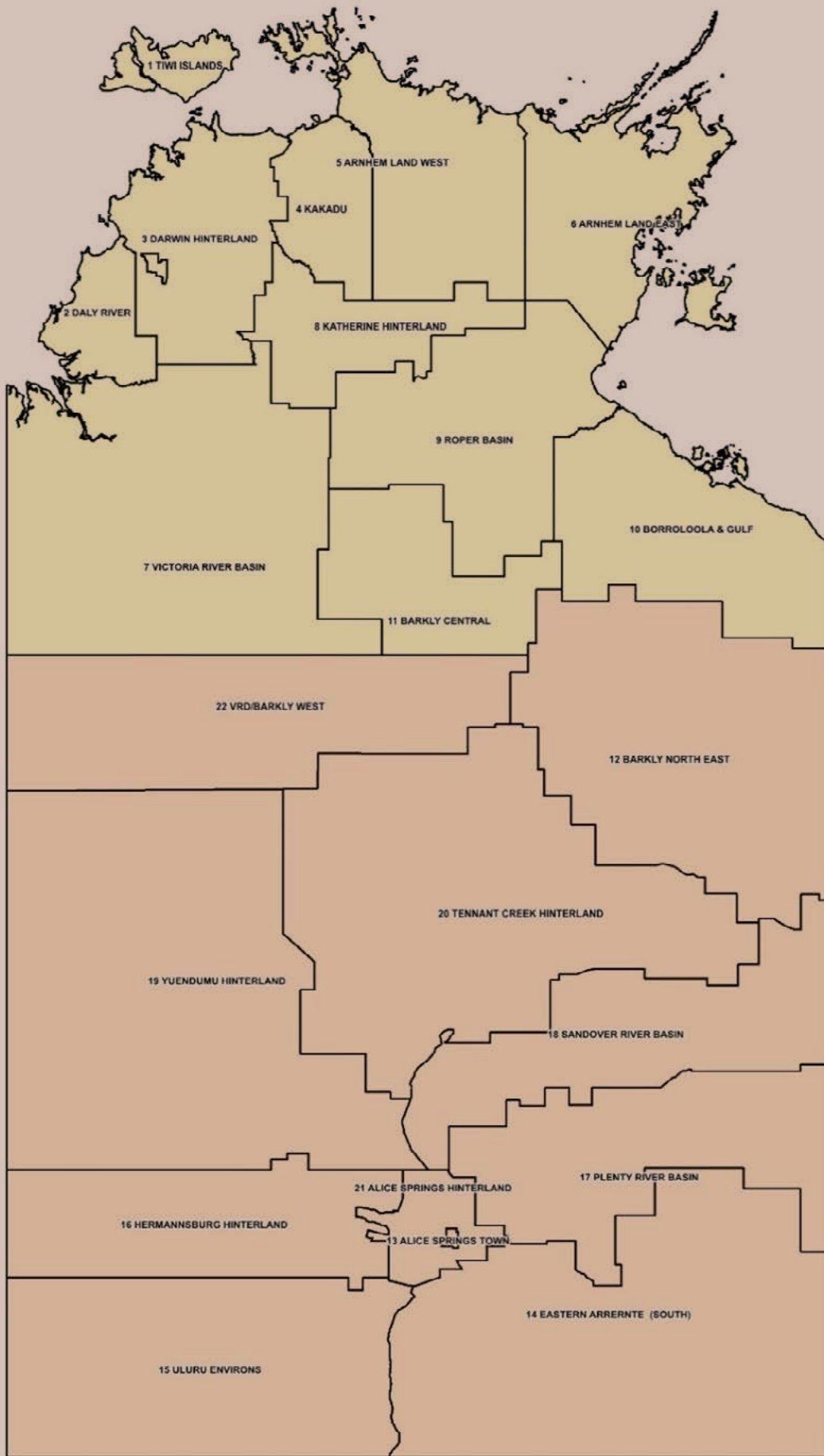
### Outcome:

Enhanced relations between Aboriginal custodians and the wider Territory community by increasing the level of certainty when identifying constraints, if any, on land and sea use proposals from the existence of sacred sites.

Key performance indicators	Actual 2016-17	Actual 2017-18	Actual 2018-19	Actual 2019-20	Target 2020-21	Actual 2020-21
Authority Certificates issued	157	107	107	80	100	111
Requests for information completed	579	789	511	625	700	971
Average time between receiving Authority Certificate application and completing service*	90 days	93 days	109 days	106 days	120 days	130 days
Average time between receiving request for information and completing service	1.1 days	1.5 days	2.2 days	2.91 days	7 days	2.53 days
Statutory appeals	0	0	1 appeal	1 appeal (ongoing from 2018-19)	<1%	1 appeal (ongoing from 2018-19)

\* For Authority Certificate applications, the average time is assessed by the average number of days between acceptance of costs for Authority Certificate applications and the issuing of those requests.

The Authority also reports on the Corporate and Governance output group. Read Corporate Services information at note 3 of the financial report, and read Governance information at page 80.



For administrative purposes, the Authority divides the Northern Territory into 22 regions.  
 Figure 1: Map of the Authority's regions



Image: Custodian Hughie Isaac near Ryans Bend, NT

# AUTHORITY CERTIFICATES

## QUANTITY

In 2020–21, the Authority received 177 Authority Certificates applications. Of those, 111 Authority Certificates were issued for projects across the NT, and 59 applications were withdrawn.

## ISSUED AUTHORITY CERTIFICATES

The 111 Authority Certificates issued by the Authority in 2020–21 is a marked increase from last year’s total of 80.

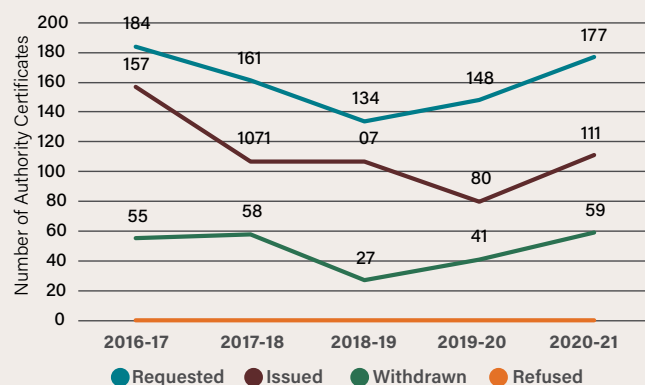
This increase is partly due to the Authority completing applications that were delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2019–20 and partly due to the increased demand for the Authority’s services from improved economic activity in the NT.

## WITHDRAWN AUTHORITY CERTIFICATES

The 59 applications withdrawn by applicants in 2020–21 is an increase from the 41 applications withdrawn in 2019–20.

Of the 59 withdrawn applications this reporting period, 20 were withdrawn by the NT Government. The other main user groups that withdrew their applications included the mining, oil and gas sector (13) and the Australian Government (5). In this reporting period, the Authority refused no Authority Certificate applications.

**Figure 2: Authority Certificates requested, issued, withdrawn and refused between 1 July 2016 and 30 June 2021**



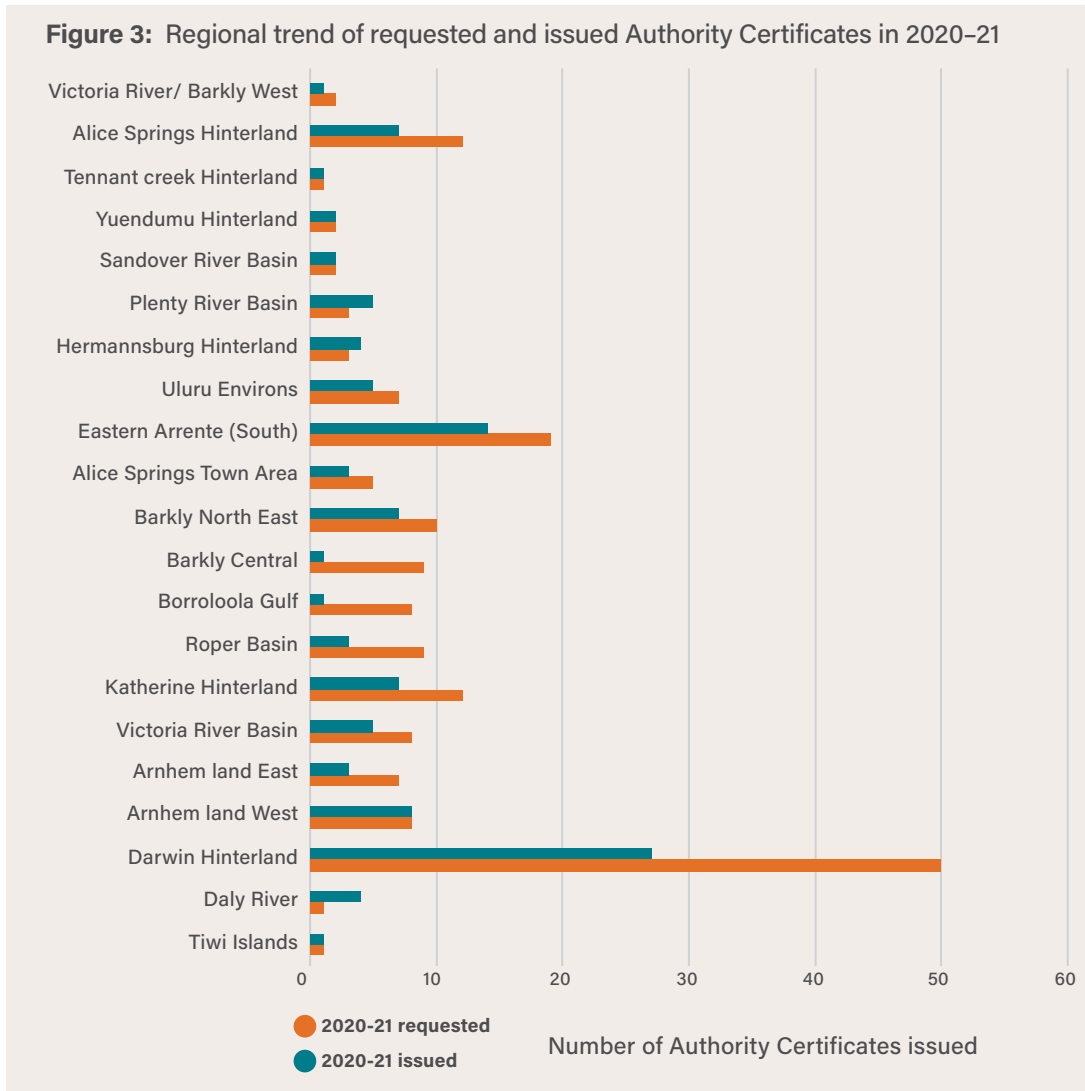
# REGIONAL PICTURE

In 2020–21, the highest demand for Authority Certificates was in the major population centres of Darwin (27) and the Alice Springs town area (14) (see Figure 3). The third-highest demand was in the Kakadu region (8). The increased demand in Kakadu National Park is positive news for the Authority because we have worked closely with Parks Australia

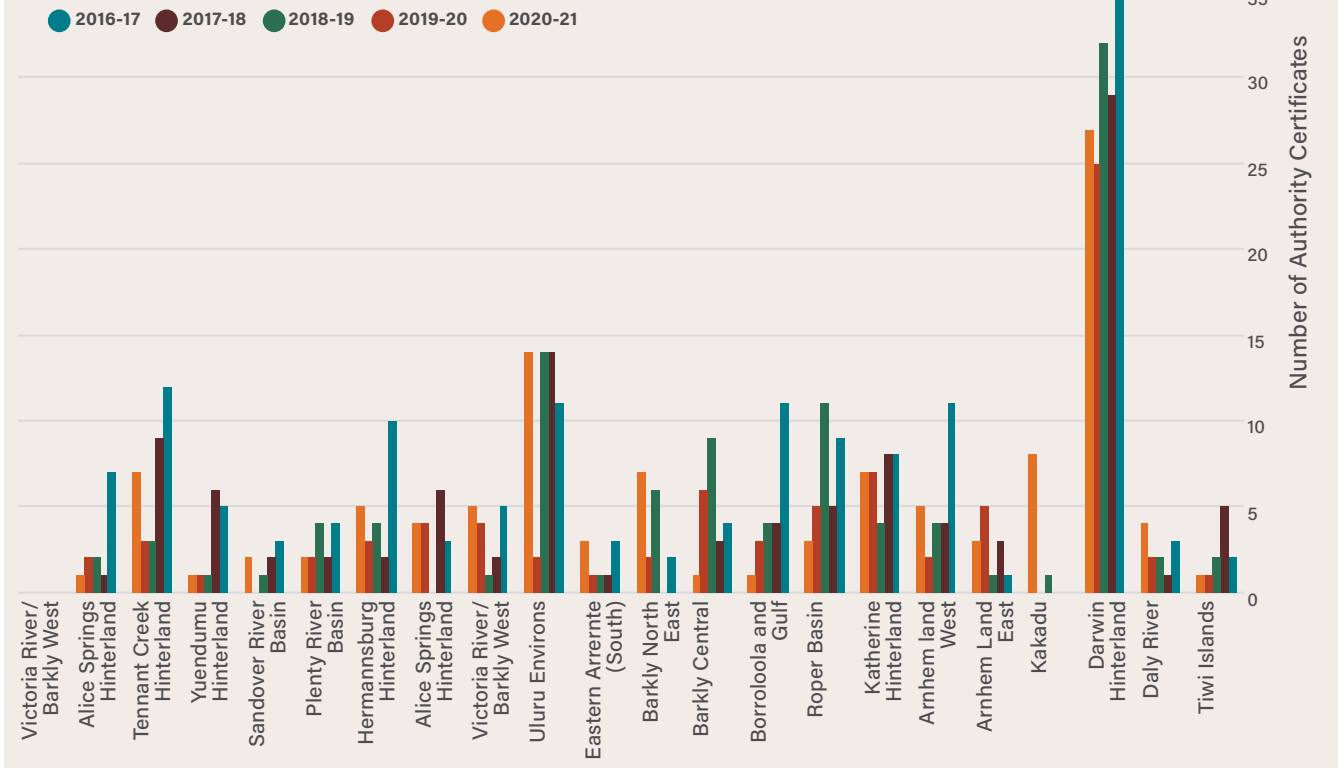
to ensure existing and future projects in Kakadu are covered by Authority Certificates.

Other areas of demand are Tennant Creek (7), Barkly North East (7) and Victoria River Basin (7) for a mix of mining, infrastructure, pastoral and tourism-related projects.

**Figure 3: Regional trend of requested and issued Authority Certificates in 2020–21**



**Figure 4: Regional trend for issued Authority Certificates between 1 July 2016 and 30 June 2021**



## SERVICE USERS AND PROJECT TYPES

The NT Government remains the largest group of Authority Certificate users at 47% (42). The government’s public works include infrastructure and planning, tourism-related activities, roadworks and natural resource management in both urban and regional areas across the NT.

The second largest user group is the mining, oil and gas sector at 23% (25). Since 2018, the range of works undertaken by this sector has expanded from exploration and extraction to also hydraulic fracturing.

In 2020-21, mining and gas was the largest industry sector that the Authority issued certificates for, with 33 Authority certificates issued. These projects are mainly driven by the NT Government and the mining and petroleum sectors.

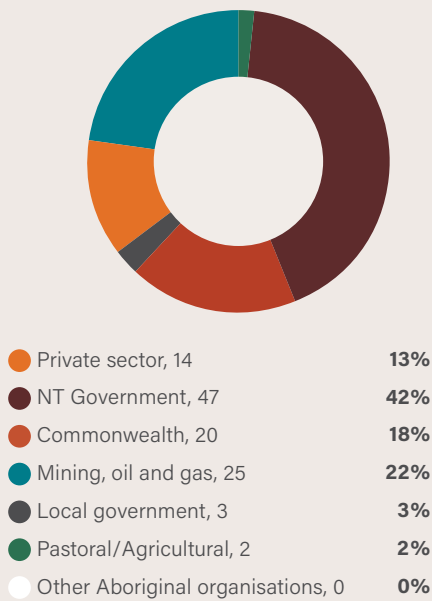
Twelve of these certificates were for petroleum-related activities, including hydraulic fracturing, for which an Authority Certificate is mandated under Regulation 9(1) (d) of the *Petroleum (Environment) Regulations 2016* (NT) (Petroleum Regulations). These certificates were:

- Central Petroleum Limited
  - Mamlambo exploration well
- Central Petroleum Limited – Palm Valley 12

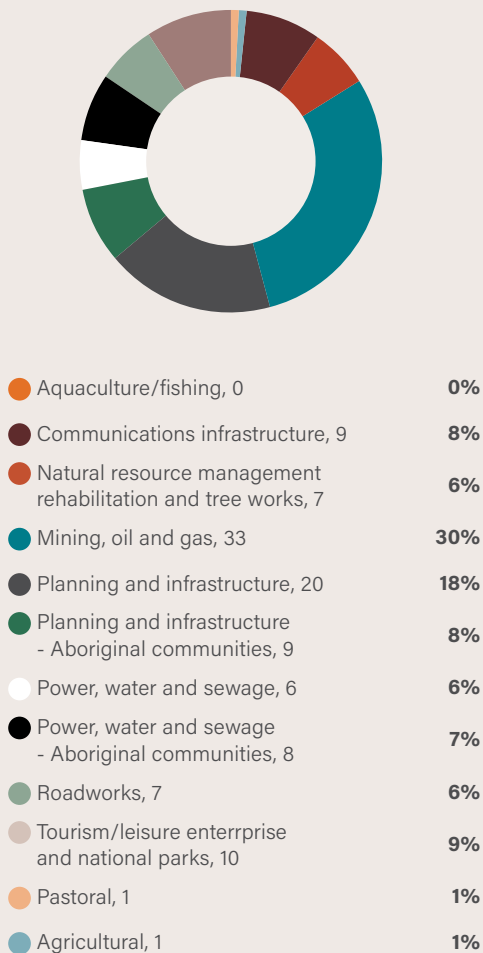
- Blue Energy – EP205 exploration program
- Minerals Australia
  - 2019–20 exploration program EP144
- Blue Energy – EP207 exploration program
- Minerals Australia
  - 2019–20 exploration program EP153
- Imperial Oil & Gas Pty Ltd – EP187 – Carpentaria completion and production test
- Sweetpea Petroleum exploration areas within EP136, EP76, EP161, EP(A)354
- Central Petroleum Ltd
  - West Mereenie development wells
- BR Simpson Pty Ltd – EP93 exploration program
- BR Simpson Pty Ltd – EP97 exploration program
- BR Simpson Pty Ltd – EP107 exploration program.

The certificates issued to Central Petroleum Limited, Imperial Oil & Gas Pty Ltd and Sweetpea Petroleum were for activities that were also subject to the approval of environmental management plans (EMPs) in 2020–21. The Authority issued all these certificates in sufficient time for the EMPs to be approved within the statutory timeframe under the Petroleum Regulations.

**Figure 5:**  
Uses of Authority Certificates in 2020-21



**Figure 6:**  
Types of projects Authority Certificates were issued for 2020-21



## TIMELINESS

Timeliness is an important performance measure for the Authority. Timeframes for issuing Authority Certificates were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Other factors that affect timeframes include:

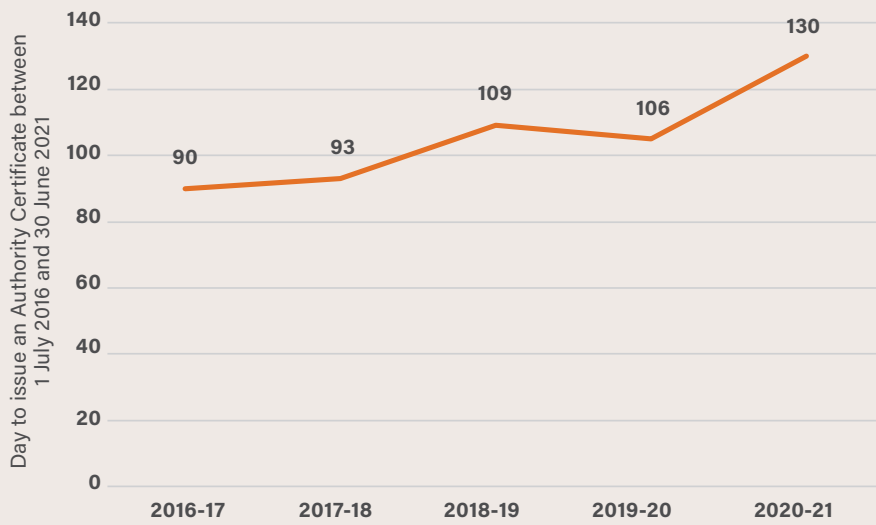
- the increased complexity of project proposals
- changes to traditional land tenure due to cultural transitions that result from the generational changes of custodians
- the increased mobility of Aboriginal custodians
- the remoteness of application areas
- access limitations due to the weather.

In 2020-21, the average time taken to complete an Authority Certificate application was 130 days. This is 10 days above the Authority's KPI target of 120 days and is an increase from 106 days in 2019-20. Closer examination shows that 55% (61) of Authority Certificates were issued within 120 days, and 45% (50) were issued after 120 days.

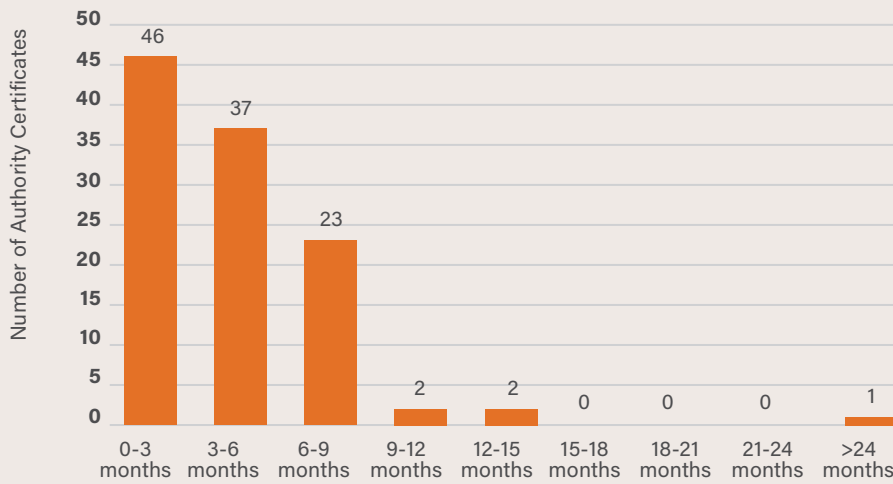
The main factors that have affected timeliness are delays due to the pandemic, complex consultations, changes to research staff working on particular applications and late amendments to applications by clients.

In this reporting period, 74% of Authority Certificates were issued within 6 months, which is comparable with the averages of the previous 5 years (87% in 2019-20, 85% in 2018-19, 93%, 2017-18 and 82% in 2016-17). In 2020-21, only 26% (28) took more than 9 months to complete.

**Figure 7:**  
Average days to issue Authority Certificates between 1 July 2016 and 30 June 2021



**Figure 8:**  
Timeframes to issue Authority Certificates in 2020-21



**Figure 9:**  
Timeframes to issue Authority Certificates by project types in 2020-21

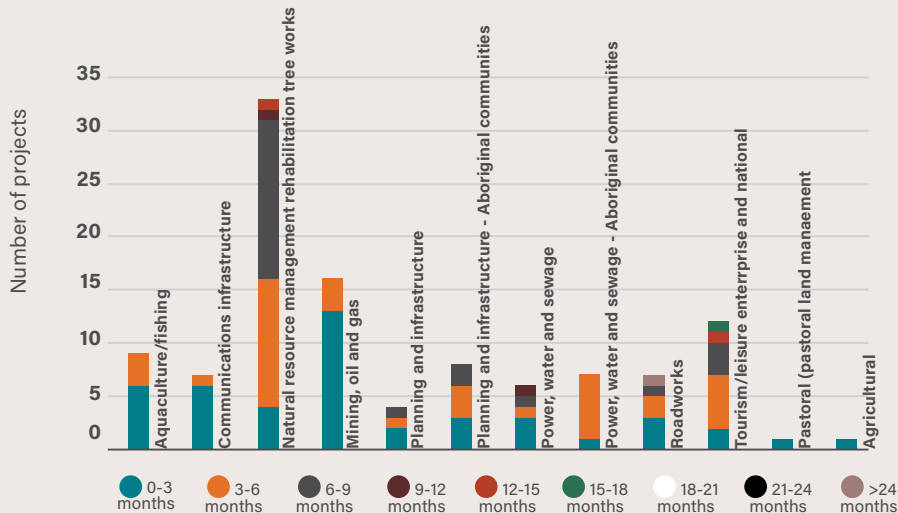


Image: Custodian Alfred Nayinggul at Red Lilly Billabong, Kakadu National Park, NT



Image: Robinson Road, Borroloola, NT



# REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION

## QUANTITY

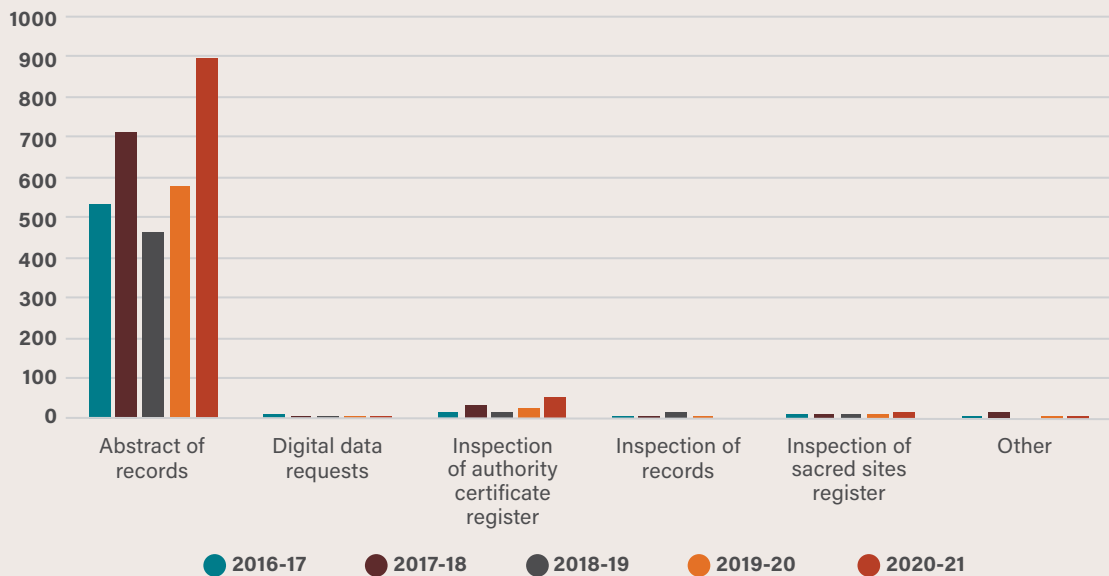
In 2020–21, the Authority received and responded to 971 requests for information from the Register of Sacred Sites.

Most requests (895) were for the Authority’s abstract of records. Other requests were for digital data requests (4), inspections of the Authority Certificate Register (54) and inspections of the Register of Sacred Sites (15) (see Figure 10).

Historically, the Authority has issued an annual average of between 500 and 700 requests for information. This year’s total of 971 is a significant increase compared to the previous 5 years.

The sharp increase in demand is a positive sign that proponents value this service as a way of providing preliminary information about sacred sites on areas of land. However, the Authority is concerned that a proportion of proponents may be relying on requests for information (and in particular, abstracts of records) to plan their projects rather than obtaining Authority Certificates. The practice of relying on an abstract of records for works increases the risk of damage to sacred sites.

**Figure 10:** Types and numbers of requests for information between 1 July 2016 and 30 June 2021

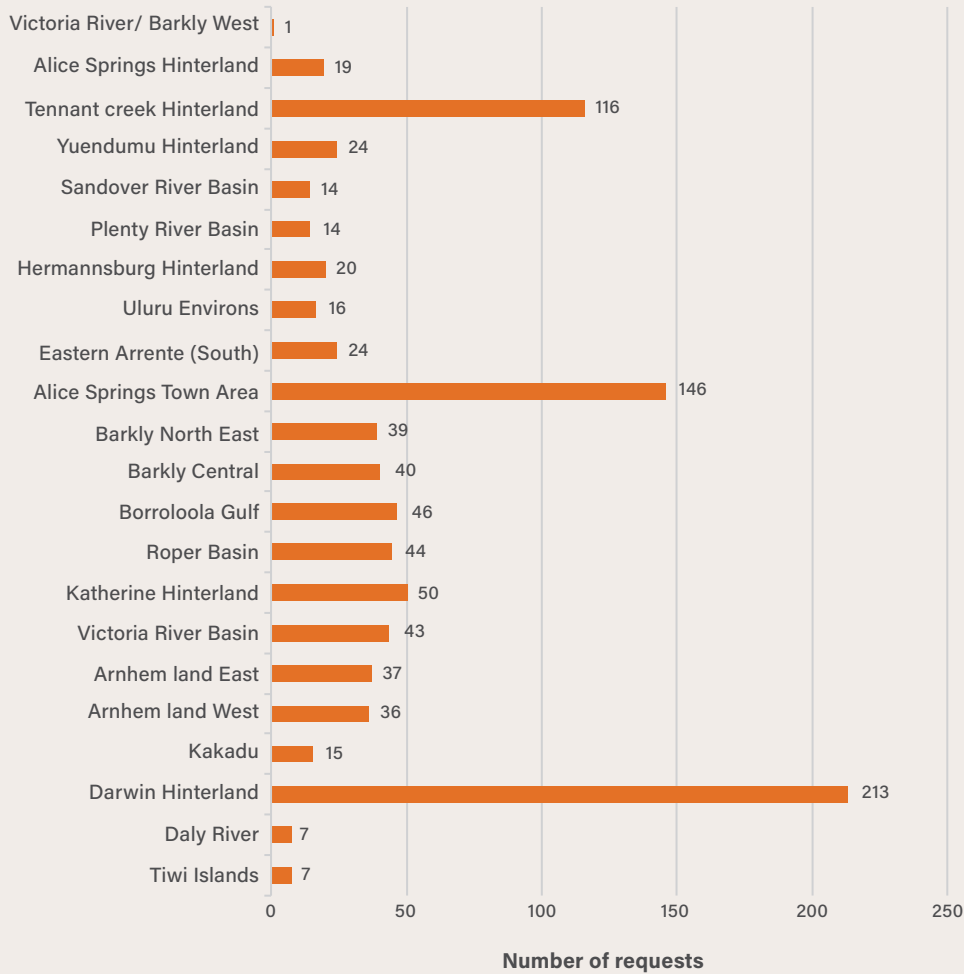


## REGIONAL PICTURE

Requests for information were the highest in the Darwin Hinterland region (213), followed by Alice Springs town area (146). For the second consecutive year, there was strong demand for requests for information in the Tennant Creek Hinterland by the mining, oil and gas sector, which also requested information for the nearby regions of Borroloola and Gulf, Roper Basin, Barkly Central and Barkly North East.

For the first time, there was a marked increase in requests for information over the Katherine Hinterland area (up from 27 in 2019–20 to 50 in 2020–21), generally by the private sector for conveyancing and administrative and regulatory approval processes (such as land clearing).

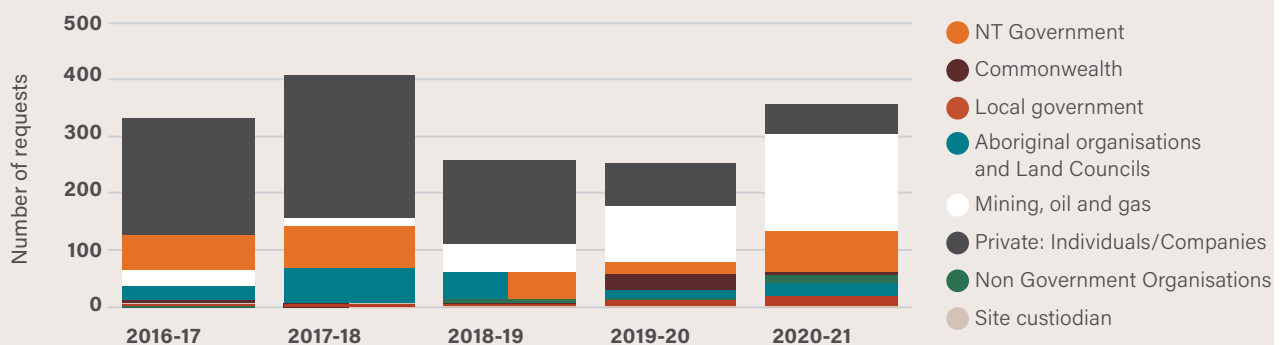
**Figure 11: Requests for information by region in 2020-21**



## SERVICE USERS AND PROJECT TYPES

The 3 main groups requesting information are the private sector (356); mining, oil and gas (305); and the NT Government (135) (see Figure 12). Most private sector requests came from conveyancing work, particularly in the Darwin area.

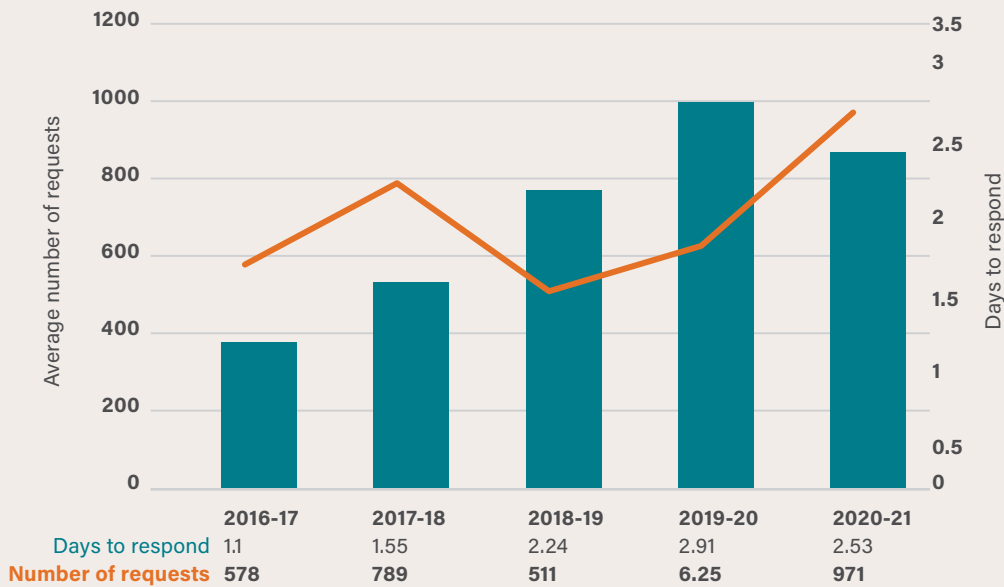
**Figure 12: Requests for information by user groups between 1 July 2016 and 30 June 2021**



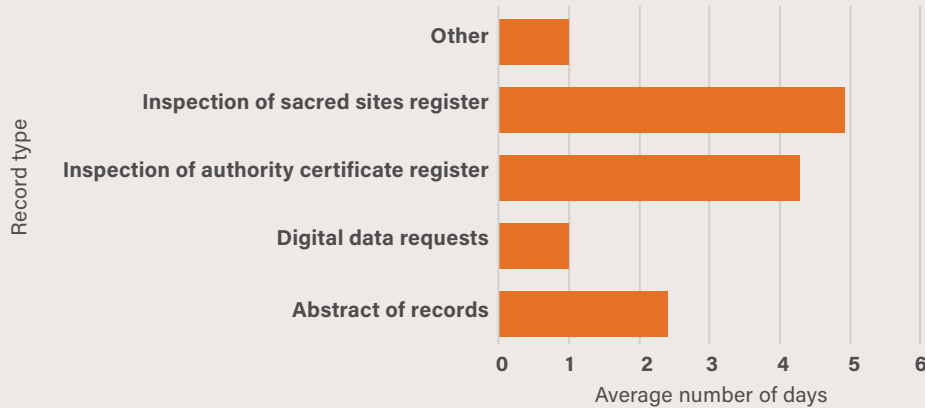
# TIMELINESS

While the Authority had higher-than-usual demand for requests for information in 2020–21, our timeframe to deliver this service improved from 2.91 days in 2019–20 to 2.53 days in 2020–21.

**Figure 13:** Number of requests for information between 1 July 2016 and 30 June 2021 and the average number of days to respond



**Figure 14:** Average number of days to complete each type of request for information in 2020-21



The average completion time for each type of request for information varied in 2020–21. Abstract of records took on average 2.41 days to complete, while digital data (4) took one day. Inspection of the Authority Certificate register (54) took 4.29 days, inspections of the sacred sites register (15) took 4.93 days and other requests (3) were all completed on the same day they were received.



# REGISTRATION OF SACRED SITES

Registered sacred sites are sites that Aboriginal custodians have asked the Authority to protect, and the Authority has comprehensively documented and evaluated information about the sites. The Authority's board makes the decision to enter sites into the register of sacred sites. The register makes information about the location, boundaries and custodians of a sacred site publicly available through a request for information process.

Registering a sacred site offers the highest level of protection under the Sacred Sites Act. Registration of a sacred site by the Authority board is also taken as prima facie evidence that a place is a sacred site. The Authority maintains records of all sacred sites it has identified in the Northern Territory.

Recorded sacred sites are sites that have been made known to the Authority from a variety of sources. In many cases, the Authority has not been able to assess the accuracy of its information about recorded sacred sites. These sacred sites usually have not been fully mapped, nor have they gone through the formal process of being registered by the board. These sacred sites are still protected by the Sacred Sites Act.

## QUANTITY

The Authority registered 20 sacred sites in 2020–21, which is consistent with last year's 19 registrations. Sacred sites can only be registered at Authority board meetings, and there are 4 meetings each calendar year.

The Authority recorded 145 new sacred sites through fieldwork in 2021, which is again consistent with sites recorded in 2019–20 (146).

In total, the Authority has 2,163 registered sacred sites and 11,590 recorded sacred sites in its database, bringing the total number of documented sacred sites in the Northern Territory to 13,753 in 2020–21.

## TIMELINESS

There remains a backlog of registration requests for sacred sites. Generally, this registration research work is addressed on an ad-hoc basis when fieldwork is being carried out near a sacred site requested for registration. The Authority has established priorities for addressing registration requests based on threats of desecration.

To help reduce the backlog of outstanding registration requests, the Authority has engaged interns to help identify and address gaps in current registration requests.



Image: Swags strapped on top of an Authority work vehicle

## COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT

The Authority investigates sacred site damage concerns and enforces a number of offence provisions under the Sacred Sites Act. It is an offence to enter onto a sacred site, carry out work on a sacred site, desecrate a sacred site or contravene the conditions of an Authority Certificate. The Authority's Compliance Unit has the capacity to audit Authority Certificates and ensure that applicants are complying with the conditions of their Authority Certificates. The Compliance Unit is also responsible for enforcing custodians' right of access to sacred sites, reviewing requests for information under the Sacred Sites Act and assisting with legal and compliance matters that arise.

In 2020–21, the Authority:

- received 43 new alleged site damage reports
- resolved 34 cases
- undertook 4 audits.

At year end, 9 cases remained under investigation.

## PROSECUTIONS

The Authority has one active prosecution, which began in September 2020. The Authority charged the Commonwealth Director of National Parks (DNP) with a breach of section 34 of the Sacred Sites Act, work on a sacred site. This prosecution is ongoing.

In early 2019, Parks Australia realigned and upgraded the walking tracks to the pools located at the top of Gunlom Falls, which form part of the broader Gunlom sacred site. Following an investigation, the Authority determined that the track realignment had been constructed within the Gunlom site boundary, without an Authority Certificate or Minister's Certificate.

In March 2021, the DNP advised the Darwin Local Court that constitutional issues arise in respect of the Charge and would need to be dealt with in accordance with the *Judiciary Act 1903 (Cth)*.

This prosecution is ongoing and as part of the negotiated pathway for resolution of the constitutional issues, the Local Court will consider referral of certain questions of law to the Supreme Court of the Northern Territory.

## PROVIDING SACRED SITE ADVICE TO NORTHERN TERRITORY GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

In 2020–21, the Authority provided sacred site advice to NT Government agencies about development proposals and management plans, including:

- Department of Environment, Planning and Water Security – sacred site advice about environmental management plans, environmental impact assessment proposals, and land development applications (including pastoral matters and native vegetation land clearing). And advice for the protection of sacred sites in the context of the Strategic Regional Environmental Baseline Assessment (SREBA). The baseline studies were recommended by the Independent Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracturing in the Northern Territory.
- Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics – sacred site advice through:
  - Development Assessment Services, for proposals including development permits, subdivision and rezoning applications
  - Crown Land Estate (for occupation licences over vacant Crown land)
  - Northern Territory Planning Commission – sacred site advice about proposed land use plans.
- Department of the Chief Minister and Cabinet – sacred site advice about the implementation of the Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracturing in the Northern Territory.

## STATUTORY APPEALS

One application by McArthur River Mine (MRM) for a ministerial review was received in 2018–19 and accepted by the Minister in accordance with section 30 of the Sacred Sites Act.

The Minister is reviewing decisions by the Authority in relation to an application to vary an Authority Certificate obtained by MRM. The basis of that application is that MRM had reached an agreement with Custodians to increase the height of an Overburden Emplacement Facility and mine pit. The Authority has determined that the agreement does not satisfy the requirements of the Sacred Sites Act.

As at the end of 2020–21, this review remained ongoing.

# OUR PEOPLE

“AT 30 JUNE 2021, 32.5% OF THE WORKFORCE WAS AGED BETWEEN 25 AND 34. FEMALE EMPLOYEES ARE STILL MOSTLY IN THE 25 TO 54 AGE RANGE.”

# 2020-21 SNAPSHOT

## Our full-time

32.35 ( 32.54 in 2019-20)

## Our headcount

of staff was 35 (38 in 2019-20)

## 65%

of the workforce were female  
(62% in 2019-20)

## The average age

of staff was 38 (same in 2019-20)

## 22.9%

of our staff were aged 50 or over  
(25.8% in 2019-20)

## 72%

of our staff were ongoing permanent  
employees (76.5% in 2019-20)

## 58%

of our staff are employed by The  
Research and Land Information  
unit, it is our largest unit.

## 20%

of our staff identified as Indigenous  
(16% in 2019-20)

## 14%

of our staff identified as being from  
a non-English-speaking background  
(12% in 2019-20)

## No staff

identified as having a disability  
(same as 2019-20)

## 56%

of the workforce had worked for  
the Authority fewer than 5 years

## 40%

had worked for the Authority  
for more than 5 years

## 3%

had worked for the Authority  
for more than 30 years

## 47%

were employed in the professional  
(44%) or technical (3%) streams

## 33%

of our staff had flexible work  
agreements in place

## 22%

worked part time

## 3%

were employed on a casual basis

## One new position

was established and recruited to  
support the Authority's responsibilities  
as an outcome of the Independent  
Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic  
Fracturing in the Northern Territory,  
bringing the total to 4 positions.

## \$25,894

was spent on training and  
development for our staff.

## \$2,532

was spent on providing 13  
individual support services.

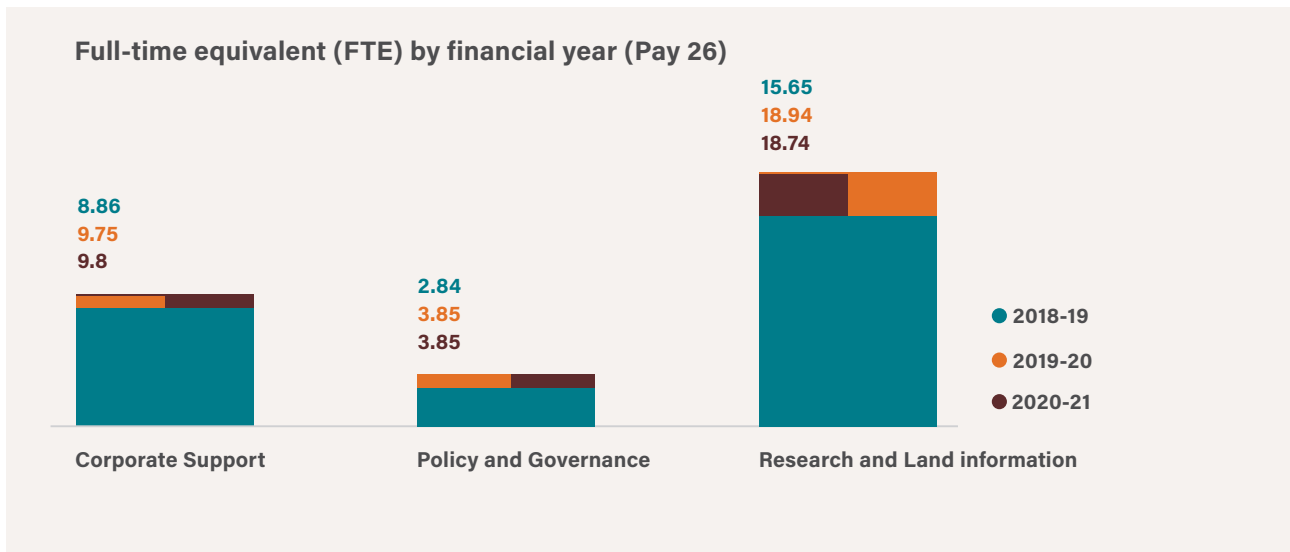


Image: Balbarini Aboriginal Land Trust along the Carpentaria Highway, NT.



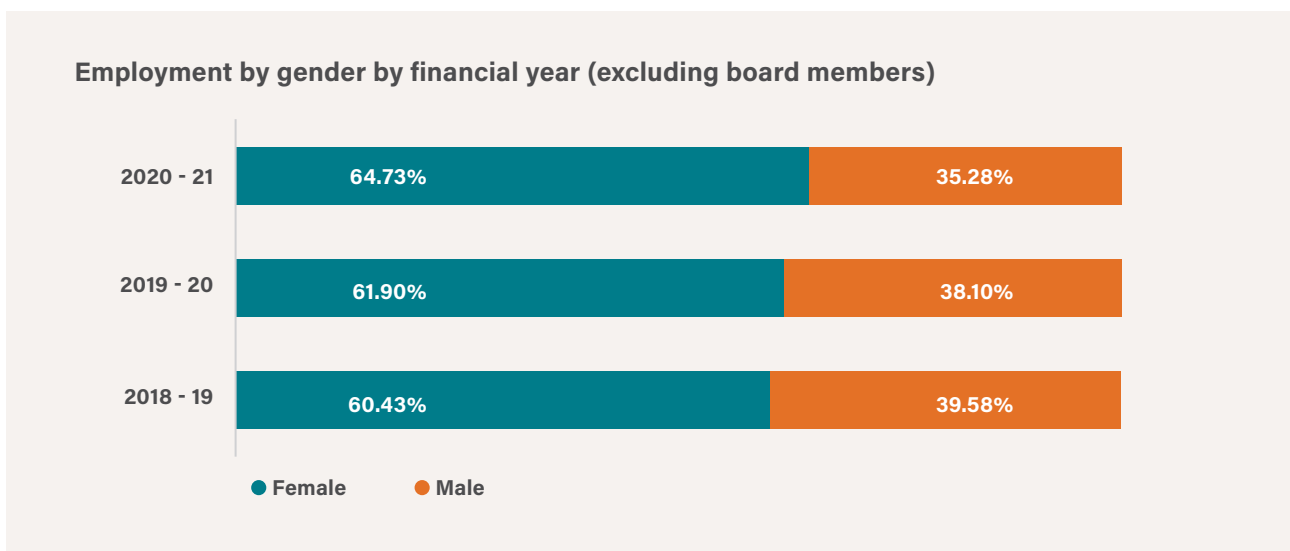
# WORKFORCE PROFILE

The Authority's workforce in 2020–21 decreased slightly by 0.19 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff to 32.35, compared to 32.54 in 2019–20. This slight decrease is due to staff transitioning from a full-time position to a part-time position and vice versa. The decrease is negligible and demonstrates a stable workforce for the last 2 years in terms of FTE numbers.



## GENDER COMPARISON

There was a slight rise in the number of female employees in 2020–21 to 65%, compared to 62% in 2019–20. Over the last 3 years, males have made up 35% to 40% of staff, but there was a slight reduction from 40% in 2019–20 to 35% in 2020–21.



# EMPLOYEES BY AGE AND GENDER

At 30 June 2021, 32.5% of the workforce was aged between 25 and 34. Female employees are still mostly in the 25 to 54 age range. Male employees are largely in the 25 to 44 age range, and this is consistent with the previous year. In 2020–21, there was a slight decrease of the number of staff over the age of 50 to 22.9% compared to 25.85% in 2019–20.

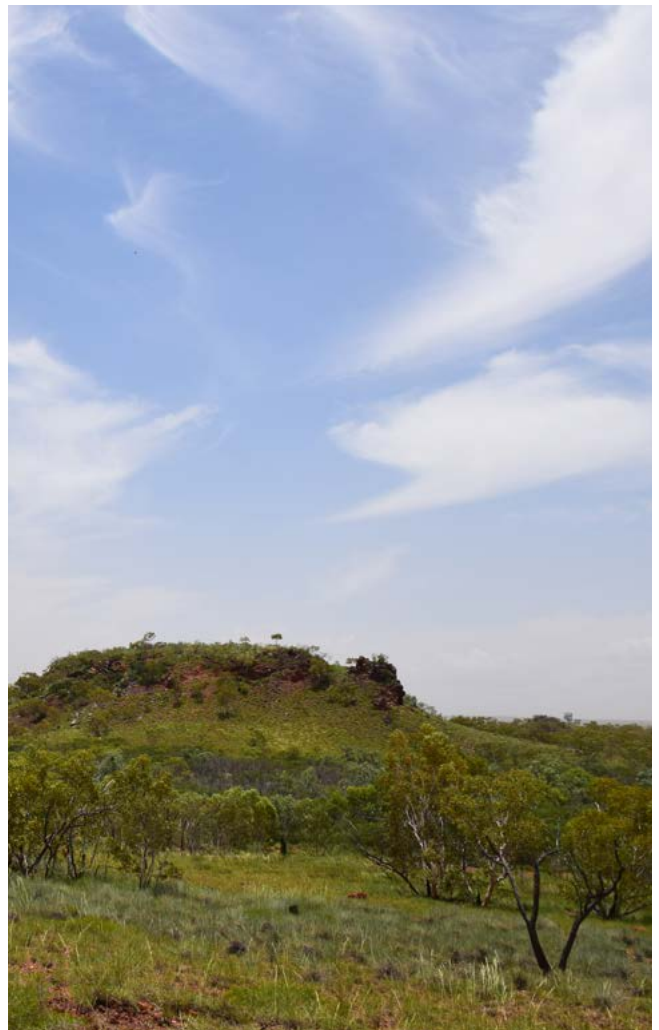
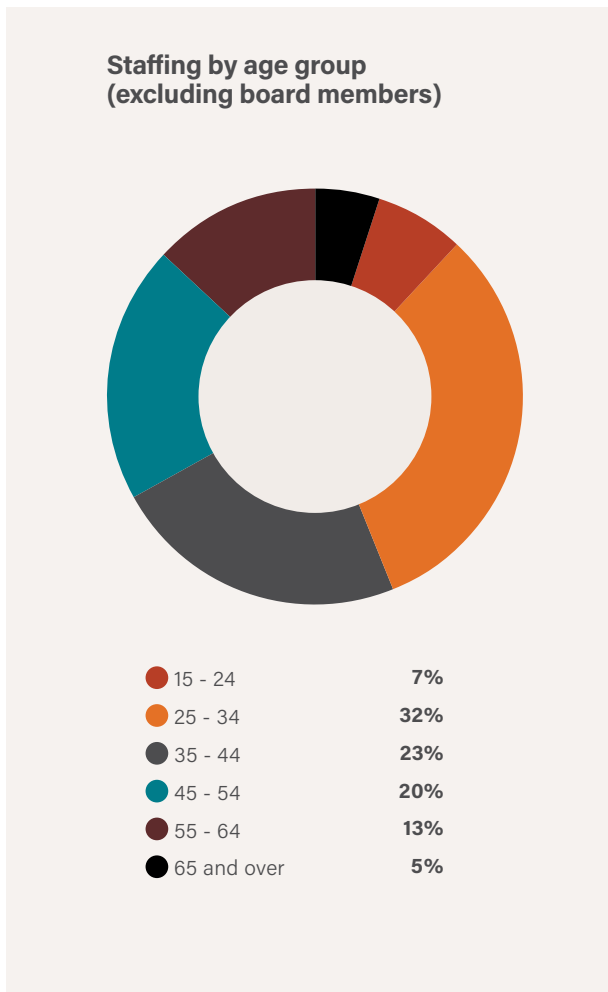
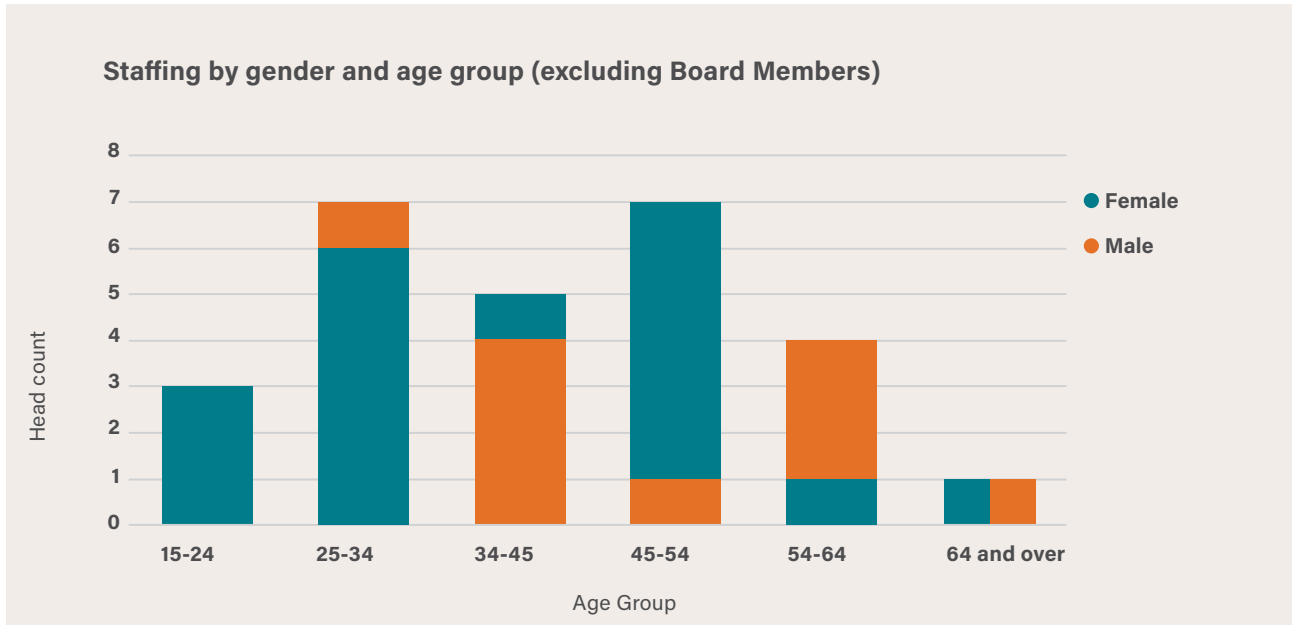


Image: Phillip Creek Station area, NT

## EMPLOYEES BY UNIT

In 2020–21, the Research and Land Information unit, which undertakes the Authority’s anthropological and technical services, continued to be the largest unit, employing 58% of our staff. Of those, 70% were employed in the professional stream. Policy and Governance unit also increased in size due to the establishment of the third hydraulic fracturing-funded position. However, this is still the Authority’s smallest unit, with 14% of the workforce: an increase from 11% the previous year.

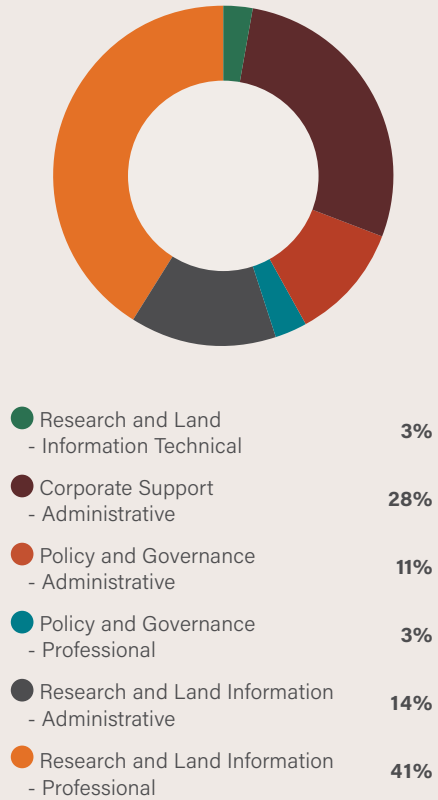
The Corporate Support unit was the second-largest unit in 2020–21, with 28% of the workforce (29% in 2019–20). The Corporate Support function includes the Office of the Chief Executive Officer, Business Operations unit and the Information Systems unit.

## EMPLOYEES BY STREAM

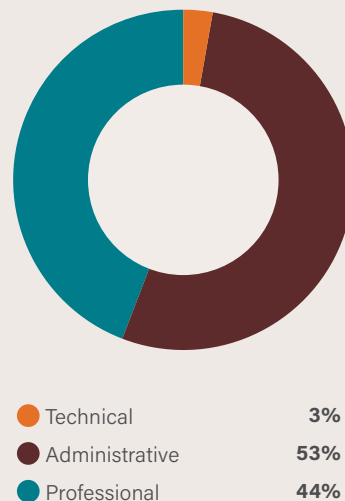
In 2020–21, the administrative stream employed 53% of the workforce, a slight increase of 3% from the previous year. The professional stream decreased by 1% to 44% in 2020–21. Of staff in the professional stream, 73% were anthropologists in research-based positions. This is a 15% reduction; however, the professional stream also saw the introduction of an environmental scientist as well as an archaeologist.

The technical stream reduced to 3% due to the casual GIS mapping officer moving interstate. There has been no major increase in professional positions but an overall increase in staff. Overall, the split between employment streams in 2020–21 was consistent with 2019–20.

Employee by work unit and by stream



Employment by Stream



# RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

In 2020–21, there were 10 commencements and 10 separations, including 3 resignations and 4 contracts ceasing, 2 retirements and one redundancy. Of the 10 commencements, 8 identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Three of those were casual field work support drivers, 3 were corporate support and technical officers and 2 were lawyers.

There was significant transition in the Policy and Governance unit in 2020–21, with 4 new staff in a team of 5.

## Recruitment and retention

	2018-19	2018-19	2018-19
Separations	11	4	9
Commencements	11	11	7
Transfers in	2	1	3
Transfers out	2	0	1
<i>Summary in</i>	13	12	10
<i>Summary out</i>	13	4	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>20</b>

# EMPLOYMENT TYPES

In 2020–21, the Authority continued to maintain a stable workforce, with a slight increase to 72% of staff employed on a permanent basis. There was a slight increase in temporary contract arrangements, largely due to the temporary positions created through the hydraulic fracturing funding and backfilling positions for parental leave. The Authority maintains its commitment to creating a stable workforce through opportunities for ongoing employment.

## Employment type by year

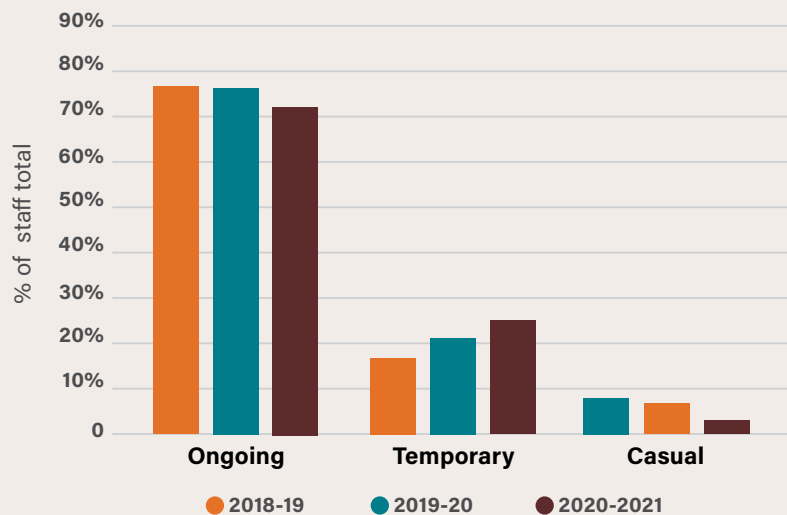
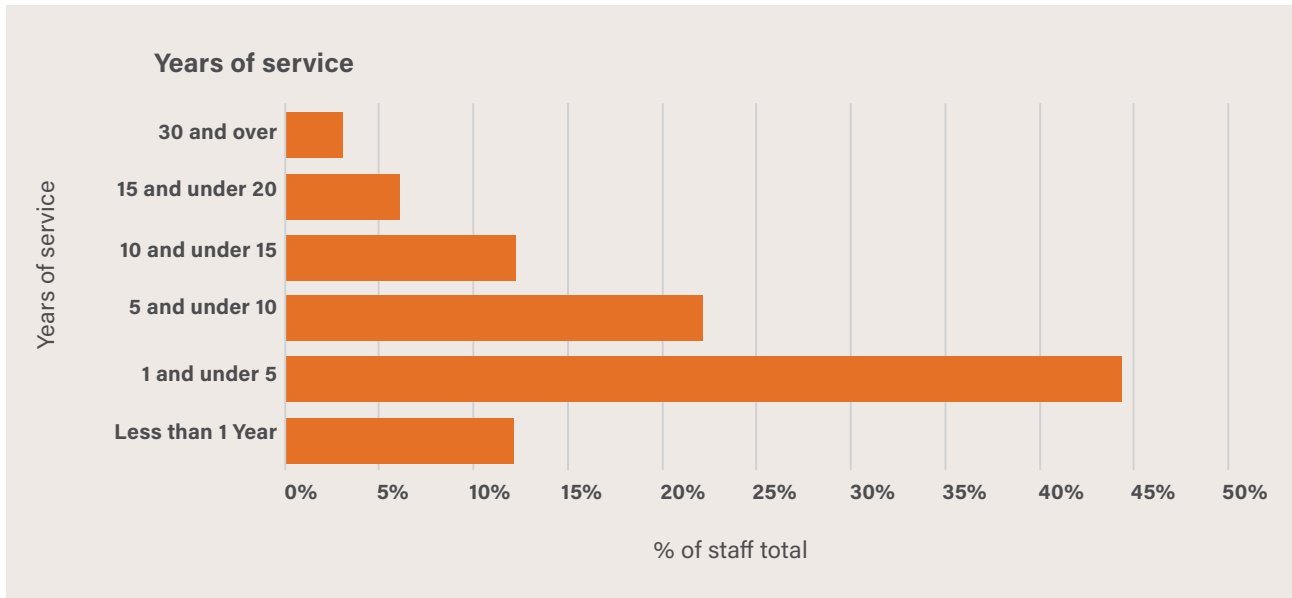


Image: Tempe Downs Station area, NT

# RETENTION

In 2020–21, 56% of the workforce had been employed by the Authority for fewer than 5 years. This is consistent with previous years; however, the length of service from one year to 5 years increased by 15%, demonstrating a strong retention rate. This year, 21% of the workforce had been employed by the Authority for 10 years or more: a slight decrease from the previous year, with two long-term staff retiring.



# DIVERSITY

The Authority is committed to the principles of inclusion, equity and diversity. Overall in 2020–21, the percentage of staff identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander increased by 4% to 20%. The percentage of staff identifying as being from a non-English-speaking background also increased by 2% to 14%. The percentage of staff that identified as having a disability remained at 0% for the third year in a row.

In 2020–21, the Authority mandated to increase and promote Aboriginal employment. During each recruitment opportunity, we not only encouraged Aboriginal applicants to apply for positions, but we also prioritised Aboriginal applicants as the preferred applicant for employment assessment. In 2020–21, we formalised the practice and saw the increase in Aboriginal applicants, which is reflected in the increased percentage of staff identifying at Aboriginal. The Authority will continue to prioritise Aboriginal employment across all sections.



# TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

In 2020–21, investment in training and development decreased by 52% on previous years, with \$25,894 of funding for a range of programs. The reduction is due to conference attendance being restricted due to pandemic travel restrictions and staff being able to participate virtually and the one-off training package in complex decision making which ran in 2019–20. The Authority focussed investment on the study assistance program for 3 staff to undertake tertiary qualifications. Funding was also provided for a one-day staff workshop on appropriate workplace behaviours. Further support was provided for staff to attend policy, legal, language, management and project management courses running locally.

We invest nearly \$8,000 in work health and safety training in areas such as remote first aid and four-wheel-drive defensive driving for research officers and other staff who travel remotely.

All staff that undertake remote fieldwork or travel regularly are encouraged to attend refresher training every year prior to the peak travel season.

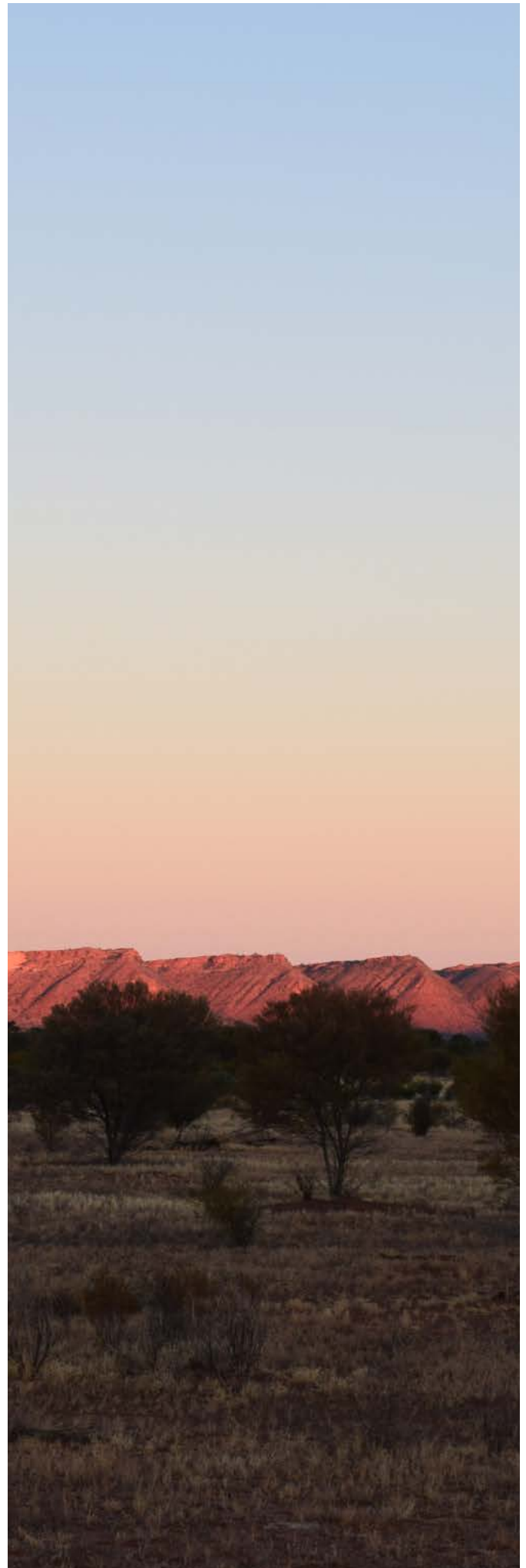
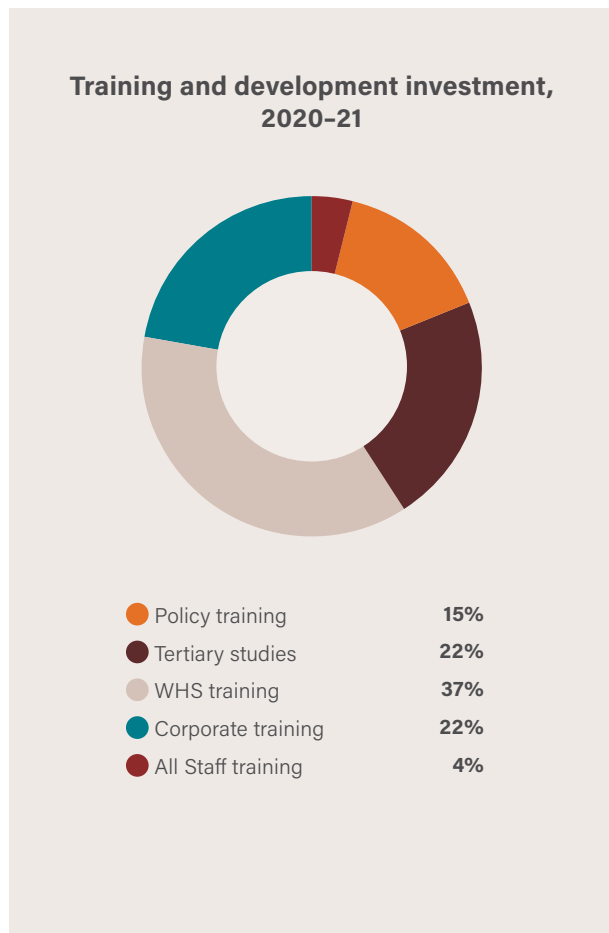


Image: Carmichael Crag, Kings Canyon, NT

## AURORA PROJECT INTERNSHIPS

In 2020–21, the Authority hosted 6 interns through the Aurora Project: a PhD anthropology student, who assisted in sacred site information in the Blue Mud Bay region; a final year anthropology/psychology student who assisted in the sacred site registration project and genealogy project; and 3 environmental science students, who assisted in the Jeff Stead collection cataloguing and library digitalisation project.

## STUDY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM ACHIEVEMENTS

We supported 3 requests from Authority employees for study assistance in 2020–21. Two staff members continued their studies for a Bachelor of Business and a Certificate IV in Accounting and Bookkeeping. One new application was received and supported for a Masters in Information Technology – Cyber Security.

# WELLBEING AND SUPPORT PROGRAMS

## WORK-LIFE BALANCE

The Authority has always maintained a commitment to flexible work arrangements for staff and recognises the benefits of providing a balanced working environment that supports family and other responsibilities. The benefits not only support our productivity but promote a supportive work environment.

In 2020–21, 8 staff were employed on a part-time basis due to family and lifestyle commitments. A further 12 staff, although working full time, had flexible workplace arrangements to vary their standard working hours. This means that 56% of our workforce were employed under flexible working arrangements, a 17% increase from the previous year.

## EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Authority continued to promote the Employee Assistance Program in 2020–21 and encouraged staff and family members to access the free and confidential counselling service through the whole-of-government contract. In 2020–21, staff and family members participated in 13 confidential counselling sessions, down from 20 in the previous year.

## FLU VACCINATION PROGRAM

As in previous years, the Authority provided a flu vaccination program in the Darwin office in 2020–21, and Alice Springs-based staff accessed the whole-of-government flu vaccination program. This was the first year of the whole-of-government flu vaccination hubs, and staff were able to book their appointments online.

## CHRISTMAS CLOSEDOWN

In 2020–21, the Authority closed its doors over the Christmas period, enabling staff to have a break between Christmas and New Year. Staff accessed recreation leave during this period.

## COVID-19 RESPONSE

2020–21 saw the challenges from the global pandemic in 2019–20 continue as it reached Australia and affected the Northern Territory. When the Northern Territory had its first lockdown in June 2021, the Authority's work-from-home strategy that had been in place since 2019–20 enabled a smooth transition from office-based to home-based work arrangements, which ensured business continuity.



# WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY

**The Authority is committed to ensuring the safety of all our staff, whether they are in the office or travelling remotely. In 2020-21, remote travel and staff welfare was again recognised as the highest organisational risk.**

To mitigate this risk, a rigorous call-in process was in place as well as regular remote first aid and four-wheel-drive defensive driving training for all new and ongoing staff who travel remotely. In addition, all new research officers are inducted through a number of joint fieldwork trips to ensure they are confident with remote travel and safety processes.

## WORKPLACE INCIDENTS

There were no workers compensation claims in 2020-21.

## 2020-21 SUMMARY

This year was a challenging one for our staff. An increased workload across the board due to the impacts of COVID-19 saw innovative solutions to transforming work processes to accommodate travel restrictions. We also focussed on ensuring all recruitment actions were in line with the new special measures policy, which prioritises the employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander applicants, and providing whole-of-Authority training and awareness about appropriate workplace behaviours. Ongoing training and development for our staff in remote anthropological fieldwork methods and other research and technical skills continued.

## STAFF MILESTONES

### Ross Champion

**Ross joined the Authority as our temporary IT Manager on 1 May 1998 and officially retired on 30 June 2021 after 23 years of service.**

Ross has been instrumental in the innovation and technological advancement of the Authority. In his time at the Authority he developed the oracle database of the Authority into a sophisticated research and administrative tool that stores all of the Authority's sacred sites data and interfaces with a spatial database and the Authority's records management system. This system is the engine room of the Authority and it's testament to Ross' expertise, innovation, vision and creativity. Sadly support for the software of the ARMs platform that Ross developed will be discontinued necessitating a new era in the IT framework of the Authority.

Ross always said 'anything can be done,' and he often proved it with many of the CEOs challenging him to think outside the box and develop new technology or a new way of capturing information. He rose to the challenge every time.

We wish Ross the very best in his retirement, and we thank him for his dedication and commitment to the Authority and its work.

### Barry Renshaw

**Barry started with the Authority on 17 May 1982 and retired on 7 August 2020.**

Barry was the local guru, ensurer of data integrity and living reference encyclopaedia to all things related to the Authority and the Northern Territory history and landscape. Barry has undertaken a variety of roles during his time with the Authority, including as Registrar and later on as the manager of all requests for sacred site registration, including reviewing research and ensuring all requirements under the Sacred Sites Act were adhered to.

In Barry's final year with us, he wanted to ensure the history of the Authority and the imagery, recordings and videography was catalogued and digitised. He created an archive of the Authority's history as only someone of Barry's calibre could do. Barry has an incredible memory for places, faces and names and was able to document and catalogue an amazing amount of history.

Best wishes to Barry on his retirement. We thank you for your commitment and dedication over many years.



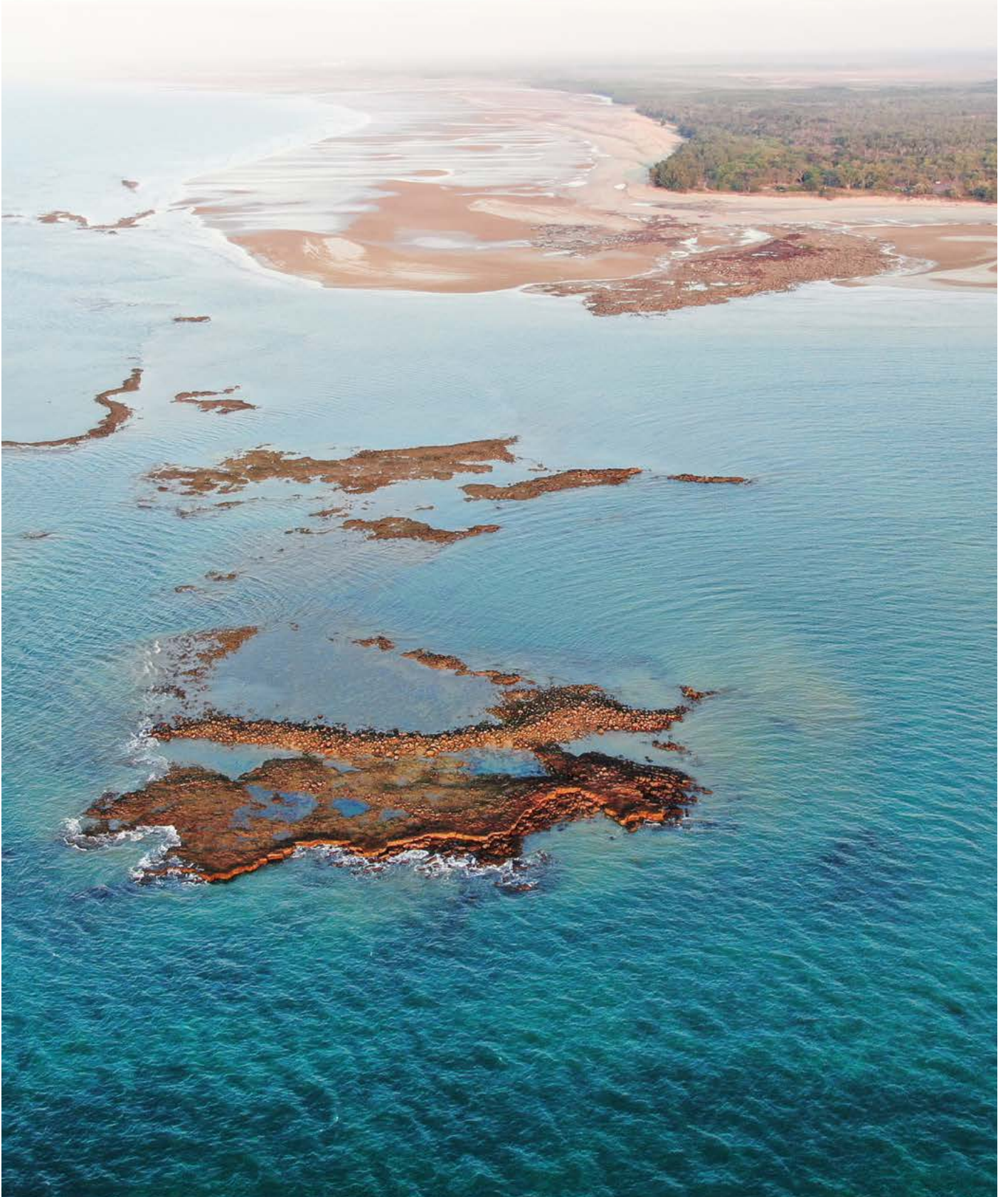


Image: Aerial view of the Lee Point area, NT

# SUSTAINABILITY

“IN OUR ROLE TO PROTECT SACRED SITES, THE AUTHORITY HELPS DELIVER POSITIVE SOCIAL OUTCOMES THROUGH OUR KEY SERVICES.”

## SUSTAINABILITY

Sacred sites are important to the cultural fabric and heritage of the Northern Territory. They are an intrinsic part of a continuing body of practices, beliefs and Aboriginal laws and traditions. Sacred sites give meaning to the natural landscape and anchor cultural values and spiritual and kin-based relationships in the land. Protecting sacred sites is critical in sustaining Aboriginal culture.

In our role to protect sacred sites, the Authority helps deliver positive social outcomes through our key services: Authority Certificates, requests for information, registering sacred sites and prosecuting for the desecration of sacred sites where required.

Through providing these services, we enhance relationships between Aboriginal custodians and the wider Territory community by increasing the level of certainty when identifying the constraints, if any, on land use proposals arising from the existence of sacred sites.

- In 2020–21, the Authority conducted sacred site surveys and issued 111 Authority Certificates to protect sacred sites across the Northern Territory. The Authority Certificates provided protection to many sacred sites while facilitating development projects.
- The Authority responded to 971 requests for information from its register of sacred sites, providing the public with information about sacred sites known to us and helping minimise the risk of inadvertent damage to the identified sites. We also identified where sacred sites are likely to be at risk if works were to be carried out.
- The Authority registered 20 sacred sites in 2020–21, providing the sites with maximum protection under the Sacred Sites Act.

## THE AUTHORITY IN THE COMMUNITY

The Authority values the importance of giving back to the community by supporting small businesses, organisations and community activities. In 2020–21, we supported 7 applicants (including local government, small business, NGOs and cultural organisations) by providing full or partial Authority Certificate waivers for projects.

The total actual costs of those 7 waivers was \$120,950. This included one waiver to support an Aboriginal organisations for community development, one government remediation works and one to support research fieldwork in Kakadu National Park. With support from the Authority, these organisations were able to receive certificates for their respective projects. Providing these projects with full or partial waivers also supported economic development in the NT. The total value of waivers was 4.6% of the Authority's self-generated income for 2020–21 (\$2.611 million).

## RESPONDING TO CLIMATE CHANGE

The Authority reports on the work undertaken that contribute to the delivery of the Northern Territory's Climate Change Response. The Authority's work for 2020-21 are below:

- The Authority nominated a senior staff member as its point of contact between the Authority and Office of Climate Change (OCC) on climate change matters.
- The Authority provided its emissions and energy consumption data to the OCC. The information provided by the Authority will contribute to the Government's annual progress statement on climate change.

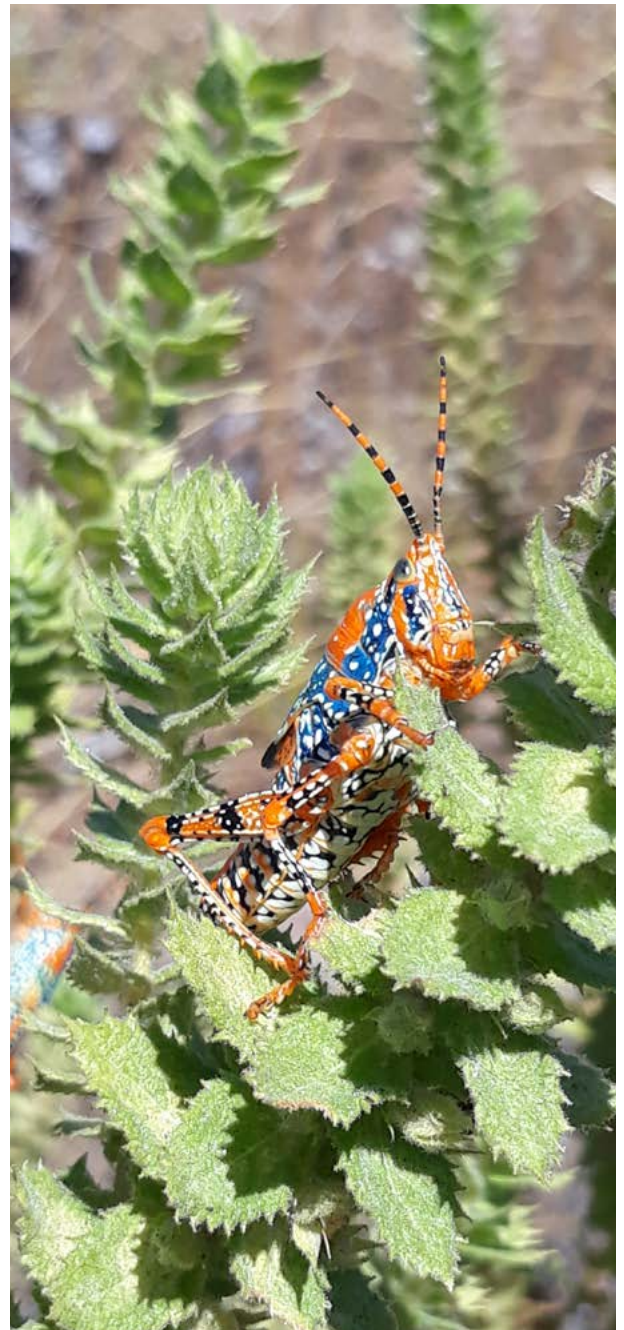


Image: Leichhardt's grasshopper, Kakadu National Park, NT

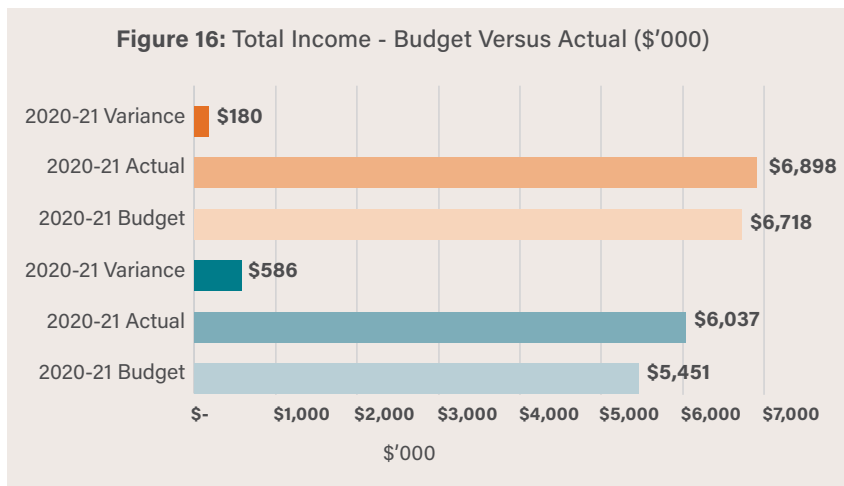
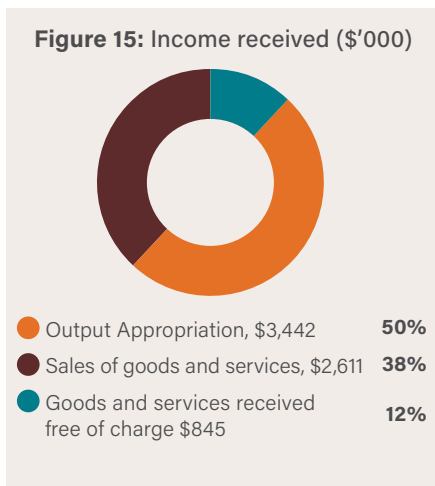
# FINANCIAL REPORT 2020-21

“THE AUTHORITY  
ISSUED 111 AUTHORITY  
CERTIFICATES FOR  
PROJECTS ACROSS  
THE NORTHERN  
TERRITORY, INCLUDING  
FOR TOURISM,  
INFRASTRUCTURE  
AND MINING.”

# FINANCIAL REPORT 2020-21

## INCOME

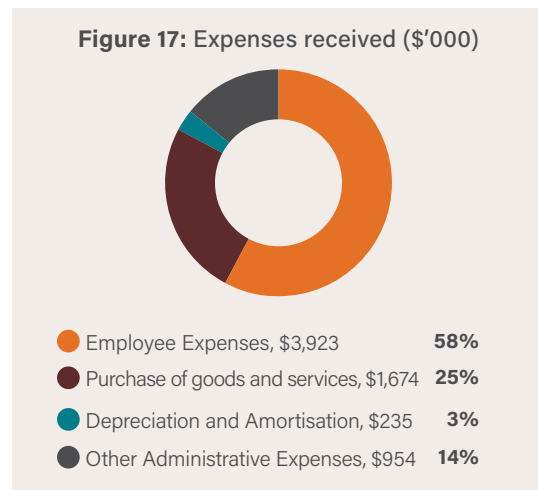
The Authority is funded by a combination of Northern Territory Government appropriation, goods and services income, and services provided free of charge by the Department of Corporate and Digital Development (DCDD). The chart below illustrates the relative value of each income category. The income for 2020-21 was \$180,000 above budget. Income generated through the issuing of Authority Certificates equates to 38% of the Authority's income for 2020-21. These figures are exclusive of Central Holding Authority revenue generated through the application fees for requests for information and requests for Authority Certificates.



## EXPENDITURE

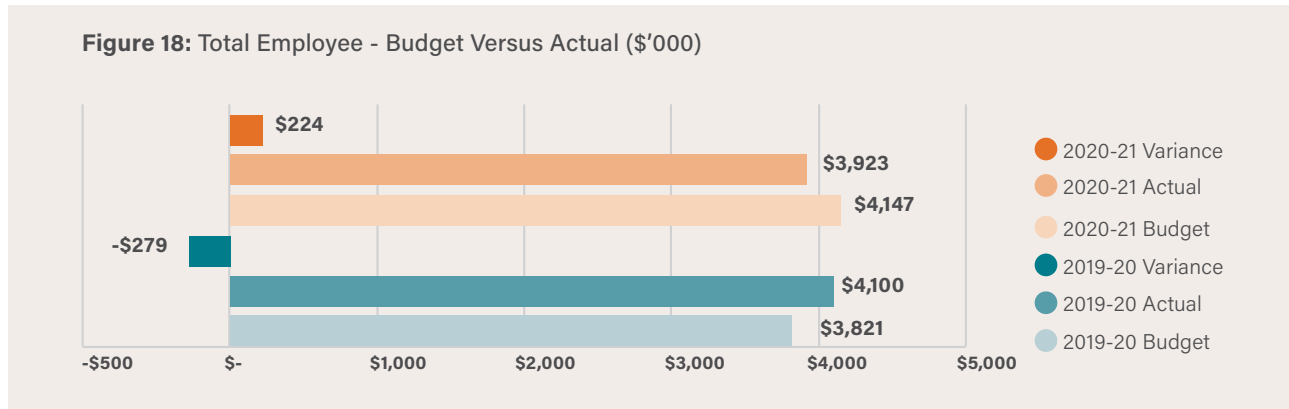
Total expenditure is made up of 4 categories: employees, purchase of goods and services, depreciation and other administrative expenses (DCDD charges). In 2020-21, although personnel continued to be the largest expense for the Authority at \$4.1 million, it was below budget by \$279,000 due to vacancies throughout the year.

The purchases of goods and services was \$275,000 over budget, and this reflects the large complex Authority Certificate clearances in remote and regional locations that at times required helicopters, digitising sacred site records and an ongoing scoping project for an integrated IT solution.



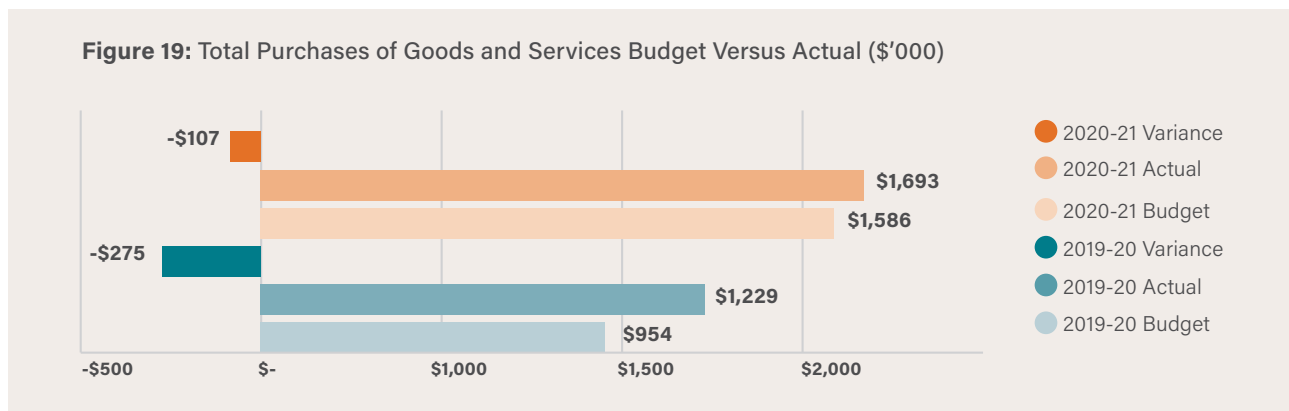
# EMPLOYEE EXPENDITURE

During 2020–21, there were a number of vacancies throughout the year and staff on reduced working hours under flexible workplace arrangements, which resulted in savings of employee costs of \$279,000. Additional funding of \$138,000 was also provided through output appropriation in 2020–21 to support the employee increase required to implement the recommendations of the Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracturing in the Northern Territory. This increase in the employee budget supported the costs associated with additional position created in 2020–21 to support the compliance requirements.



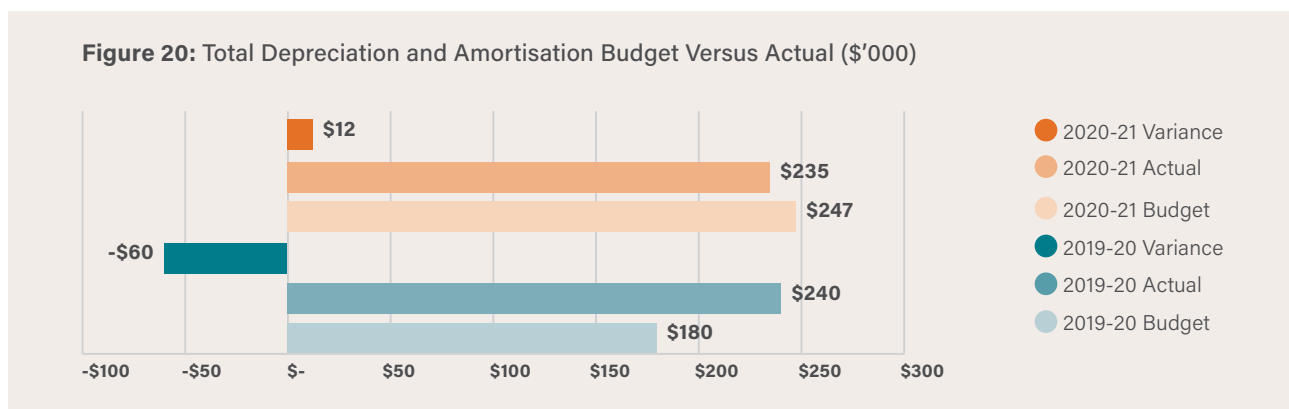
# GOODS AND SERVICES EXPENDITURE

Goods and services costs were over budget by \$107,059 due to large complex Authority Certificates clearances. \$270,000 was expended in travel and custodian consultations. Additionally, digitising the sacred sites records was completed at a cost of \$70,000 in 2020–21, and the ongoing IT project transitioned to a scoping project at a cost of \$291,000.



# DEPRECIATION

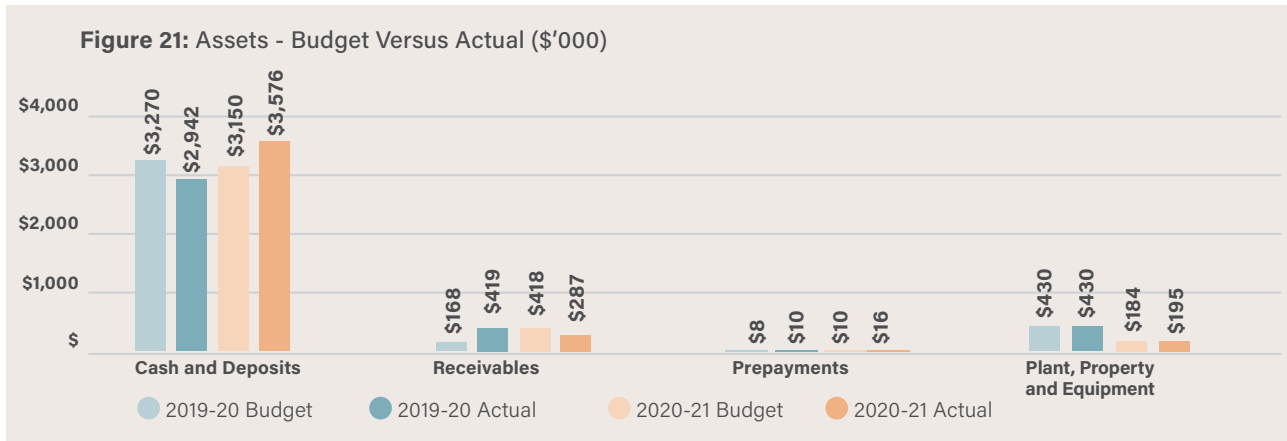
There was a slight saving of \$12,000 in depreciation costs due to the fitout of the RCG Centre office fully depreciating in 2020–21.



# BALANCE SHEET

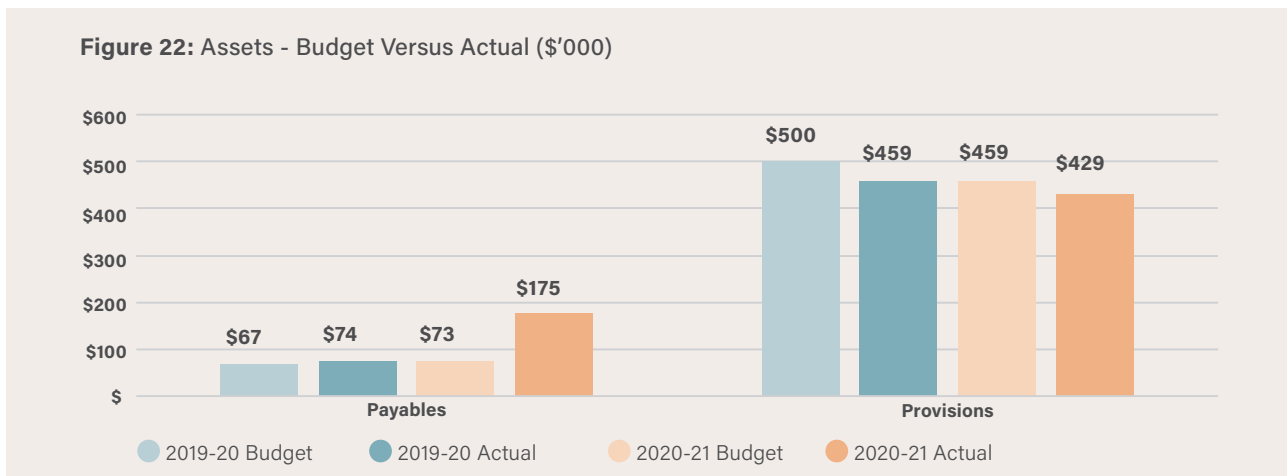
## ASSETS

Total assets are made up of 4 categories: cash and deposits; receivables; pre-paid expenses; and plant, property and equipment. Total assets increased by \$312,000 in 2020–21 due to a \$426,000 increase in cash, a \$131,000 decrease in receivables, a \$6,000 increase in prepayments and a minor increase of \$11,000 in fixed assets due to depreciation.



## LIABILITIES

Liabilities are made up of payables and employee provisions. Total liabilities of \$604,000 are influenced by provisions for employee entitlements (leave provisions) of \$429,000. Total liabilities increased by \$71,000 from 2019–20 predominantly due to travel and helicopter requirements at the end of 2020–21.



## EQUITY

Equity increased by \$212,000 in 2020–21 due to increased demand for services from the mining and development sectors. The impact of COVID-19 on Authority Certificate clearances that were postponed in 2019–20 due to internal border closures were also fast tracked in 2020–21 to meet client requirements and assisted in a positive position at the end of the year.

## CASH FLOW STATEMENT

The cash flow statement details how changes in income and balance sheet movements affect the Authority's cash situation. It demonstrates that it was an extremely busy and productive year with large-scale Authority Certificate clearances and investment in large internal IT projects to modernise the Authority. The Authority is in a respectable financial position, with an increase of \$634,000 in cash held for 2020–21.

## ABORIGINAL AREAS PROTECTION AUTHORITY

For the year ended 30 June 2021

The Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority (the Authority) is a statutory authority established under the Sacred Sites Act to administer sacred site protection in the Northern Territory. The Authority experienced an increase in demand for services in 2020–21 that resulted \$2.611 million in self-generated revenue.

This was a culmination of works that were postponed in 2019–20 in response to the internal border restrictions during March to June 2020 as a result of COVID-19 that were then fast tracked in 2020–21 and an increased confidence in mining exploration and development across the Northern Territory. The increase in demand for services saw a surplus position of \$202,000.

Employee expenses were underspent by \$224,000 due to a number of vacancies throughout the year, primarily in the Policy and Governance unit.

Purchases of goods and services grew by \$548,000 and is reflective of the continued investment in the information technology project that saw \$291,000 invested to finalise the remediation assessment that commenced in 2019–20 and transitioned to a scoping project for a future integrated business solution to support to Authority's current and future business and client needs.

In 2020–21, \$70,000 was invested to digitise sacred site records, which commenced in 2019–20. The digitalisation of all sacred sites records held by the Authority over the 2-year period has cost \$107,000.

Travel and custodian consultation (\$270,000) expenses also contributed to the over expenditure in purchases of goods and services and is reflective of the increased self-generated revenue. The large complex Authority Certificate clearances in remote and regional locations at times required helicopters, costing \$115,000 due to the accessibility and remoteness of the land. Additionally, due to the complexity of some Authority Certificate applications and the size of the subject land, large custodian groups of sacred sites were consulted that were likely to be affected by the proposed use or work that the proponent was seeking an Authority Certificate.

### Certification of the financial statements

We certify that the attached financial statements for the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority have been prepared based on proper accounts and records in accordance with the prescribed format, the Financial Management Act 1995 and Treasurer's Directions.

We further state that the information set out in the comprehensive operating statement, balance sheet, statement of changes in equity, cash flow statement, and notes to and forming part of the financial statements presents fairly the financial performance and cash flows for the year ended 30 June 2021 and the financial position on that date.

At the time of signing, we are not aware of any circumstances that would render the particulars included in the financial statements misleading or inaccurate.



Dr Benedict Scambary

Chief Executive Officer

30 August 2021



Nicola Jackson

Business Manager

30 August 2021



ABORIGINAL AREAS PROTECTION AUTHORITY

Comprehensive operating statement

For the year ended 30 June 2021

	Notes	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
<b>INCOME</b>			
Appropriation	4a		
Output		3,442	3,181
Sales of goods and services	4b	2,611	2,039
Goods and services received free of charge	5	845	817
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	3	<b>6,898</b>	<b>6,037</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>			
Employee expenses		3,923	4,100
Administrative expenses			
Property management		40	45
Purchases of goods and services	7	1,634	1,184
Depreciation and amortisation	11, 12	235	240
Other administrative expenses <sup>1,2</sup>		863	817
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	0	<b>6,696</b>	<b>6,385</b>
<b>NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)</b>		<b>202</b>	<b>(348)</b>
<b>COMPREHENSIVE RESULT</b>		<b>202</b>	<b>(348)</b>

<sup>1</sup> Includes DCDD service charges and DIPL repairs and maintenance service charges.

<sup>2</sup> Includes prior years correction to bad debt and doubtful debt expenses that had not been expensed in previous years and adjustment of the expected credit loss in line with historical data.

<sup>2</sup> Includes 2017-18 database Compliance module that was recognised in the Clearing Account as a future asset and not capitalised due to database system instability and an independent recommendation to freeze any further enhancements that may impact the in house database system that houses all sacred site information. The potential asset was written off to the value of \$22,000.

The comprehensive operating statement is to be read in conjunction with the notes to the financial statements.

ABORIGINAL AREAS PROTECTION AUTHORITY

Balance sheet

As at 30 June 2021

	Notes	2021 \$'000	2020 \$'000
<b>ASSETS</b>			
<b>Current assets</b>			
Cash and deposits	8	3,576	2,942
Receivables	10	303	419
Prepayments		16	10
<b>Total current assets</b>		<b>3,880</b>	<b>3,371</b>
<b>Non-current assets</b>			
Property, plant and equipment	11	51	178
Intangibles	12	144	252
<b>Total non-current assets</b>		<b>195</b>	<b>430</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>		<b>4,075</b>	<b>3,801</b>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>			
<b>Current liabilities</b>			
Payables	13	175	74
Provisions	15	863	459
<b>Total current liabilities</b>		<b>604</b>	<b>533</b>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>		<b>604</b>	<b>533</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		<b>3,471</b>	<b>3,268</b>
<b>EQUITY</b>			
Capital		1,621	1,621
Accumulated funds		1,850	1,648
<b>TOTAL EQUITY</b>		<b>3,471</b>	<b>3,268</b>

The balance sheet is to be read in conjunction with the notes to the financial statements.

ABORIGINAL AREAS PROTECTION AUTHORITY

Statement of changes in equity

For the year ended 30 June 2021

	Notes	Equity at 1 July	Comprehensive result	Transactions with owners in their capacity as owners	Equity at 30 June
<b>2020-21</b>					
<b>Accumulated funds</b>		(1,643)	(202)	0	(1,845)
Transfers from reserves		(5)	0	0	(5)
		<b>(1,648)</b>	<b>(202)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(1,850)</b>
<b>Capital - transactions with owners</b>					
Equity injections					
Capital appropriation		(564)	0	0	(564)
Equity transfers in	11	(1,195)	0	0	(1,195)
Other equity injections	12	(57)	0	0	(57)
Equity withdrawals					
Capital withdrawal		195	0	0	195
		<b>(1,621)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(1,621)</b>
<b>Total equity at end of financial year</b>		<b>(3,268)</b>	<b>(202)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(3,471)</b>
<b>2019-20</b>					
<b>Accumulated funds</b>		(1,991)	348	0	(1,643)
Transfers from reserves		(5)	0	0	(5)
		<b>(1,996)</b>	<b>348</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(1,648)</b>
<b>Capital - transactions with owners</b>					
Equity injections					
Capital appropriation		(564)	0	0	(564)
Equity transfers in		(1,195)	0	0	(1,195)
Other equity injections		(57)	0	0	(57)
Equity withdrawals					
Capital withdrawal		195	0	0	195
		<b>(1,621)</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(1,621)</b>
<b>Total equity at end of financial year</b>		<b>(3,617)</b>	<b>348</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>(3,268)</b>

The statement of changes in equity is to be read in conjunction with the notes to the financial statements.

ABORIGINAL AREAS PROTECTION AUTHORITY

Cash flow statement

For the year ended 30 June 2021

	Notes	2021 \$'000	2021 \$'000
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES</b>			
<b>Operating receipts</b>			
Appropriation			
Output		3,442	3,181
Receipts from sales of goods and services		2,822	1,860
<b>Total operating receipts</b>		<b>6,264</b>	<b>5,041</b>
<b>Total operating receipts</b>			
Payments to employees		(3,943)	(4,112)
Payments for goods and services		(1,666)	(1,324)
<b>Total operating payments</b>		<b>(5,609)</b>	<b>(5,436)</b>
<b>Net cash from/(used in) operating activities</b>	9	<b>655</b>	<b>(395)</b>
<b>Investing payments</b>			
Purchases of assets		(21)	(26)
<b>Total investing payments</b>		<b>(21)</b>	<b>(26)</b>
<b>Net cash from/(used in) investing activities</b>		<b>(21)</b>	<b>(26)</b>
Net increase/(decrease) in cash held		634	(420)
Cash at beginning of financial year		2,942	3,362
<b>Cash at end of financial year</b>	8	<b>3,576</b>	<b>2,942</b>

The comprehensive operating statement is to be read in conjunction with the notes to the financial statements.

ABORIGINAL AREAS PROTECTION AUTHORITY  
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Image: Bilkbilmi area, Kakadu National Park, NT

## 1. Objectives and funding

The Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority (the Authority) is an independent statutory authority established under the Sacred Sites Act. The Authority is responsible for overseeing the protection of Aboriginal sacred sites on land and sea across the Northern Territory and recognising and respecting the interests of Custodians of sacred sites, landowners and developers for the benefit of all Territorians.

Additional information in relation to the Authority and its principal activities may be found in the introduction of the annual report.

The Authority receives a level of appropriation from the Northern Territory Government and also generates goods and services income derived from providing Authority Certificates to clients in order to maintain its operations. Employee expenses of \$3,923 million continued to be the major expense accounting for 59% of total expenditure.

The Authority achieved a surplus of \$202,328 this year. The effect of the COVID-19 pandemic travel restrictions in 2019–20 that postponed a large portion of Authority Certificate work from March to June 2020 was fast tracked in 2020–21. An increased confidence in mining exploration and development across the Northern Territory contributed to the surplus achieved and is demonstrated by the goods and services income generated of \$2.611 million in 2020–21.

Two large projects continued in 2020–21. The completion of the digitalisation of all sacred site records that saw a further investment of \$69,785. The Authority has now digitalised all its sacred sites records in Alice Springs and Darwin that is now accessible to all staff across the Northern Territory. This completes a significant amount of work that is part of the Authority Digital Workplace Strategy.

2019–20 saw the initiation of an information technology health check project that was used to evaluate and potentially stabilise the current 2 systems used to document sacred sites across the Northern Territory. Following the health check, the Authority commenced a remediation project on the Administration, Research and Management System (ARMS) and the client interface used to lodge, track and access requests for information and Authority Certificates (AAPA Online). In 2020–21, the remediation project transitioned into a business case for the Authority to investigate a future acquisition of a comprehensive integrated business solution that will support the future Authority requirements and meet the client expectations. In 2020–21, \$291,071 was invested to undertake the system remediation project and commence the business case development. The project will continue in 2021–22.

For reporting purposes, outputs delivered by the

Authority are summarised into 2 output groups. Note 3 provides summarised financial information in the form of a comprehensive operating statement by the output group.

## 2. Statement of significant accounting policies

### a) Statement of compliance

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Financial Management Act 1995 and related Treasurer's Directions. The Financial Management Act 1995 requires the Authority to prepare financial statements for the year ended 30 June based on the form determined by the Treasurer. The form of the Authority financial statements should include:

1. a certification of the financial statements
2. a comprehensive operating statement
3. a balance sheet
4. a statement of changes in equity
5. a cash flow statement
6. applicable explanatory notes to the financial statements.

### a) Basis of accounting

The financial statements have been prepared using the accrual basis of accounting, which recognises the effect of financial transactions and events when they occur, rather than when cash is paid out or received. As part of the preparation of the financial statements, all intra agency transactions and balances have been eliminated.

Except where stated, the financial statements have also been prepared in accordance with the historical cost convention.

The form of the Authority financial statements is also consistent with the requirements of Australian accounting standards. The effects of all relevant new and revised standards and interpretations issued by the Australian Accounting Standards Board (AASB) that are effective for the current annual reporting period have been evaluated.

### Standards and interpretations effective from 2020–21

Several amending standards and AASB interpretations have been issued that apply to the current reporting periods, but are considered to have no impact on Authority reporting.

### AASB 1059 Service Concession Arrangements: Grantors

AASB 1059 addresses the accounting for arrangements that involve an operator providing public services related to a service concession asset on behalf of a public sector grantor for a specified period of time and managing at least some of those services. This standard also applies

a new control concept to the recognition of service concession assets and related liabilities.

Where a transaction meets the definition of a service concession arrangement, a service concession asset and liability will be recognised on the balance sheet and valued in accordance with the standard.

AASB 1059 is not applicable to the Authority and has not been reported on in this Financial Statement.

Several other amending standards and AASB interpretations have been issued that apply to the current reporting periods, but are considered to have no impact on public sector reporting.

Standards and interpretations issued but not yet effective

No Australian accounting standards have been early adopted for 2020–21.

Several other amending standards and AASB interpretations have been issued that apply to future reporting periods but are considered to have limited impact on public sector reporting.

### **Standards and interpretations issued but not yet effective**

No Australian accounting standards have been early adopted for 2020–21.

Several other amending standards and AASB interpretations have been issued that apply to future reporting periods but are considered to have limited impact on public sector reporting.

### **c) Reporting entity**

The financial statements cover the Authority as an individual reporting entity.

The *Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority* ('the Authority') is a Northern Territory entity established under the *Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act 1989 (NT)*.

The principal place of business of the Authority is: Level 4 RCG Centre, 47 Mitchell Street, Darwin, Northern Territory 0800.

### **d) Agency and Territory items**

The financial statements of the Authority include income, expenses, assets, liabilities and equity over which the Authority has control (agency items). Certain items, while managed by the Authority, are controlled and recorded by the Territory rather than the Authority (Territory items). Territory items are recognised and recorded in the Central Holding Authority as discussed below.

### **Central Holding Authority**

The Central Holding Authority is the 'parent body' that represents the government's ownership interest in government-controlled entities.

The Central Holding Authority also records all Territory items, such as income, expenses, assets and liabilities controlled by the government and managed by agencies on behalf of the government. The main Territory item is Territory income, which includes taxation and royalty revenue, Commonwealth general purpose funding (such as GST revenue), fines, and statutory fees and charges.

The Central Holding Authority also holds certain Territory assets not assigned to agencies as well as certain Territory liabilities that are not practical or effective to assign to individual agencies such as unfunded superannuation and long service leave.

The Central Holding Authority recognises and records all Territory items, and as such, these items are not included in the Authority's financial statements. However, as the Authority is accountable for certain Territory items managed on behalf of government, these items have been separately disclosed in Note 20 – Schedule of administered Territory items.

### **e) Comparatives**

Where necessary, comparative information for the 2019–20 financial year has been reclassified to provide consistency with current year disclosures.

### **f) Presentation and rounding of amounts**

Amounts in the financial statements and notes to the financial statements are presented in Australian dollars and have been rounded to the nearest thousand dollars, with amounts of \$500 or less being rounded down to zero. Figures in the financial statements and notes may not equate due to rounding.

### **g) Changes in accounting policies**

There have been no changes to accounting policies adopted in 2020–21 as a result of management decisions. Changes in policies relating to COVID-19 are disclosed in k) below.

### **h) Accounting judgements and estimates**

The preparation of the financial report requires the making of judgements and estimates that affect the recognised amounts of assets, liabilities, revenues and expenses and the disclosure of contingent liabilities. The estimates and associated assumptions are based on historical experience and various other factors that are believed to be reasonable under the circumstances, the results of which form the basis for making judgements about the carrying values of assets and liabilities that are not readily apparent from other sources. Actual results may differ from these estimates.

The estimates and underlying assumptions are reviewed on an ongoing basis. Revisions to accounting estimates are recognised in the period in which the estimate is revised if the revision affects only that period, or in the period of the revision and future periods if the revision affects both current and future periods.

Judgements and estimates that have significant effects on the financial statements are disclosed in the relevant notes to the financial statements.

### **i) Goods and services tax**

Income, expenses and assets are recognised net of the amount of goods and services tax (GST), except where the amount of GST incurred on a purchase of goods and services is not recoverable from the Australian Tax Office (ATO). In these circumstances, the GST is recognised as part of the cost of acquisition of the asset or as part of the expense.

Receivables and payables are stated with the amount of GST included. The net amount of GST recoverable from,

or payable to, the ATO is included as part of receivables or payables in the balance sheet.

Cash flows are included in the cash flow statement on a gross basis. The GST components of cash flows arising from investing and financing activities, which are recoverable from, or payable to, the ATO are classified as operating cash flows. Commitments and contingencies are disclosed net of the amount of GST recoverable or payable unless otherwise specified.

### j) Contributions by and distributions to government

The Authority may receive contributions from government where the government is acting as owner of the Authority. Conversely, the Authority may make distributions to government. In accordance with the Financial Management Act 1995 and Treasurer's Directions, certain types of contributions and distributions, including those relating to administrative restructures, have been designated as contributions by, and distributions to, government. These designated contributions and distributions are treated by the Authority as adjustments to equity.

The statement of changes in equity provides additional information in relation to contributions by, and distributions to, government.

### k) Impact of COVID-19

In 2019–20, management made a decision as a result of COVID-19 to postpone all consultations with Custodians and travel to regional and remote centres from 13 March 2020 to 5 June 2020 inclusive. This decision was based on the Authority Board Chairman instructions and the Biosecurity Determination 2020. As a result of this postponed travel, in 2020–21, all affected Authority Certificates and consultations with Custodians were fast tracked, and a direct result was a significant surplus in sales of goods and services that generated \$2.611 million in 2020–21.

## 3. Comprehensive operating statement by output group

	Note	Protection of Sacred Sites		Corporate and Shared Services		Total	
		2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020
		\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
<b>INCOME</b>							
Appropriation	0a						
Output		2,582	2,068	860	1,113	3,442	3,181
Sales of goods and services	0b	2,611	2,039	0	0	2,611	2,039
Goods and services received free of charge	5	634	531	211	286	845	817
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>		<b>5,827</b>	<b>4,638</b>	<b>1,071</b>	<b>1,399</b>	<b>6,898</b>	<b>6,037</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>							
Employee expenses		2,748	2,211	1,175	1,889	3,923	4,100
Administrative expenses							
Property management		9	13	31	32	40	45
Purchases of goods and services	6	1,015	569	619	615	1,634	1,184
Depreciation and amortisation	11, 12	176	156	59	84	235	240
Other administrative expenses <sup>1</sup>		647	531	216	286	863	817
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>		<b>4,595</b>	<b>3,480</b>	<b>2,100</b>	<b>2,906</b>	<b>6,696</b>	<b>6,385</b>
<b>NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)</b>		<b>1,232</b>	<b>1,158</b>	<b>(1,029)</b>	<b>(1,507)</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>(348)</b>
<b>COMPREHENSIVE RESULT</b>		<b>1,232</b>	<b>1,158</b>	<b>(1,029)</b>	<b>(1,507)</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>(348)</b>

<sup>1</sup> Includes DCDD service charges.

This comprehensive operating statement by output group is to be read in conjunction with the notes to the financial statements.

### Income

Income encompasses both revenue and gains.

Income is recognised at the fair value of the consideration received, exclusive of the amount of GST. Goods and services income is recognised at the point in time when the service has been delivered and payment has been requested.



#### 4. Revenue

Revenue from contracts with customers have been disaggregated below into categories to enable users of these financial statements to understand the nature, amount, timing and uncertainty of income and cash flows. These categories include a description of the type of product or service line, type of customer and timing of transfer of goods and services.

##### a) Appropriation

	2021			2020		
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
	Revenue from contracts with customers	Other	Total	Revenue from contracts with customers	Other	Total
Output	0	3,442	3,442	0	3,181	3,181
<b>Total appropriation</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3,442</b>	<b>3,442</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3,181</b>	<b>3,181</b>

Output appropriation is the operating payment to each agency for the outputs they provide as specified in the Appropriation Act. It does not include any allowance for major non-cash costs such as depreciation. Output appropriations do not have sufficiently specific performance obligations and recognised on receipt of funds.

##### The Authority did not receive Commonwealth appropriation.

Where appropriation received has an enforceable contract with sufficiently specific performance obligations as defined in AASB 15, revenue is recognised as and when goods and or services are transferred to the customer or third party beneficiary. Otherwise, revenue is recognised when the Authority gains control of the funds.

Revenue from contracts with customers have been disaggregated below into categories to enable users of these financial statements to understand the nature, amount, timing and uncertainty of income and cash flows. These categories include a description of the type of product or service line, type of customer and timing of transfer of goods and services.

##### b) Sales of goods and services

	2021			2020		
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
	Revenue from contracts with customers	Other	Total	Revenue from contracts with customers	Other	Total
Sales of goods and services	1,819	792	2,611	1,068	972	2,039
<b>Total sales of goods and services</b>	<b>1,819</b>	<b>792</b>	<b>2,611</b>	<b>1,068</b>	<b>972</b>	<b>2,039</b>

##### Rendering of services

Revenue from rendering of services is recognised when the Authority satisfies the performance obligation by transferring the promised services. The service the Authority provides is an Authority Certificate that protects sacred sites from damage by setting out the conditions for using or carrying out works proposed by a proponent on an area of land and/or sea. These conditions relate to sacred sites in the area or in the vicinity of the proposed works, so that they are not damaged. It is a legal document issued under the Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act 1989 (NT), and indemnifies the holder against prosecution under the Act for damage to sacred sites in the area of the Authority Certificate provided the proposed work or use has been carried out in accordance with the conditions of the Authority Certificate. The Authority typically satisfies its performance obligations once the Authority Certificate conditions have been drafted for delegate approval and all costs have been finalised.

Revenue from contracts with customers have been disaggregated below into categories to enable users of these financial statements to understand the nature, amount, timing and uncertainty of income and cash flows. These categories include a description of the type of product or service line, type of customer and timing of transfer of goods and services.

	2021	2020
	\$'000	\$'000
<b>Type of good and service:</b>		
Regulatory services	0	0
Service delivery	1,819	1,068
<b>Total revenue from contracts with customers by good or service</b>	<b>1,819</b>	<b>1,068</b>
<b>Type of customer:</b>		
Australian Government entities	236	268
State and territory governments	0	14
Non-government entities	1,583	786
<b>Total revenue from contracts with customers by type of customer</b>	<b>1,819</b>	<b>1,068</b>
<b>Timing of transfer of goods and services:</b>		
Overtime	0	0
Point in time	1,819	1,068
<b>Total revenue from contracts with customers by timing of transfer</b>	<b>1,819</b>	<b>1,068</b>

## 5. Goods and services received free of charge

	2021	2020
	\$'000	\$'000
Corporate and information services	833	809
Repairs and maintenance	12	8
	845	817

Resources received free of charge are recognised as revenue when, and only when, a fair value can be reliably determined and the services would have been purchased if they had not been donated. Use of those resources is recognised as an expense. Resources received free of charge are recorded as either revenue or gains depending on their nature.

Repairs and maintenance expenses and associated employee costs are centralised and provided by the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Logistics and forms part of goods and services free of charge of the Authority.

## 6. Purchases of goods and services

	2021	2020
	\$'000	\$'000

The net surplus/(deficit) has been arrived at after charging the following expenses:

### Goods and services expenses:

<i>Custodian Consultation</i>	270	134
<i>Consultants (majority Anthropological)</i>	138	155
<i>Information technology consultants</i>	295	99
<i>Media Consultant</i>	5	2
Consultants <sup>1</sup>	708	390
Advertising <sup>2</sup>	1	3
Marketing and promotion <sup>3</sup>	11	11
Document production	77	39
Legal expenses <sup>4</sup>	13	10
Recruitment <sup>5</sup>	6	0
Training and study	26	41
Official duty fares <sup>6</sup>	143	43
Travelling allowance	35	24
Information technology charges and communications	181	218
Motor vehicle expense <sup>7</sup>	193	173
Authority Board <sup>8</sup>	86	68
Relocation	4	21
Other	150	142
	<b>1,634</b>	<b>1,184</b>

<sup>1</sup> Includes marketing, promotion, IT consultants and Custodian of sacred sites payments as legislated under Schedule 2 of the Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Regulations.

<sup>2</sup> Does not include recruitment related advertising or advertising for marketing and promotion.

<sup>3</sup> Includes advertising for marketing and promotion but excludes marketing and promotion consultants' expenses, which are incorporated in the consultants category.

<sup>4</sup> Includes legal fees, claim and settlement costs.

<sup>5</sup> Includes recruitment-related advertising costs.

<sup>6</sup> includes helicopter charters for land surveys.

<sup>7</sup> The Authority maintains a fleet of 4WD vehicles due to the requirement for staff to travel to regional and remote locations.

<sup>8</sup> The Authority Board is required to hold 4 meetings per calendar year under the Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act 1989 (NT).

## 7. Write-offs, postponements, waiver, gifts and ex-gratia payments

	Agency				Territory items			
	2021	No. of trans.	2020	No. of trans.	2021	No. of trans.	2020	No. of trans.
	\$'000		\$'000		\$'000	\$'000		
<b>Write-offs, postponements and waivers under the Financial Management Act 1995</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
Represented by:								
<b>Amounts written off, postponed and waived by delegates</b>								
Irrecoverable amounts payable to the Territory or an agency written off <sup>1</sup>	16	12	0	0	0	0	0	1
Asset Write Off <sup>2</sup>	22	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total written off, postponed and waived by delegates</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>

<sup>1</sup> Relates to historical write offs dating back to 2016-17 that were recognised as bad debts and expensed in 2020-21.

<sup>2</sup> In 2017-18 database Compliance module that was recognised in the Clearing Account as a future asset and not capitalised due to database system instability and an independent recommendation to freeze any further enhancements that may impact the in house database system that houses all sacred site information. The potential asset was written off to the value of \$22,000.

## 8. Cash and deposits

	2021	2020
	\$'000	\$'000
Cash on hand	1	1
Cash at bank	3,576	2,941
	<b>3,577</b>	<b>2,942</b>

For the purposes of the balance sheet and the cash flow statement, cash includes cash on hand, cash at bank and cash equivalents. Cash equivalents are highly liquid short-term investments that are readily convertible to cash. Cash at bank includes monies held in the Accountable Officer's Trust Account (AOTA) that are ultimately payable to the beneficial owner. The Authority does not hold an AOTA.

## 9. Cash flow reconciliation

### a) Reconciliation of cash

The total of Authority 'Cash and deposits' of \$3,576 million recorded in the balance sheet is consistent with that recorded as 'Cash' in the cash flow statement.

### Reconciliation of net surplus/deficit to net cash from operating activities

	2021	2020
	\$'000	\$'000
<b>Net surplus/deficit</b>	202	(348)
<i>Non-cash items:</i>		
<b>Depreciation and amortisation</b>	235	240
Asset write-offs/write-downs	22	0
Asset donations/gifts	0	0
Gain/loss on disposal of assets	0	0
<i>Changes in assets and liabilities:</i>		
Decrease/increase in receivables	126	(252)
Decrease/increase in inventories	0	0
Decrease/increase in prepayments	0	0
Decrease/increase in other assets	0	0
Decrease/increase in payables	101	7
Decrease/increase in provision for employee benefits	(34)	40
Decrease/increase in other provisions	5	(82)
Decrease/increase in other liabilities	0	0
<b>Net cash from/(used in) operating activities</b>	<b>655</b>	<b>(395)</b>

## 10. Receivables

	2021	2020
	\$'000	\$'000
<b>Current</b>		
Accounts receivable	305	387
Less: loss allowance	(1)	(5)
Interest receivables		
GST receivables	(17)	(24)
Prepayments	16	10
Other receivables	0	61
<b>Total receivables</b>	<b>303</b>	<b>429</b>

Receivables are initially recognised when the Authority becomes a party to the contractual provisions of the instrument and are measured at fair value less any directly attributable transaction costs. Receivables include contract receivables, accounts receivable, accrued contract revenue and other receivables.

Receivables are subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method, less any impairments.

Accounts receivable and contract receivables are generally settled within 30 days and other receivables within 60 days.

The loss allowance reflects lifetime expected credit losses and represents the amount of receivables the Authority estimates are likely to be uncollectible and are considered doubtful.

### Credit risk exposure of receivables

Receivables are monitored on an ongoing basis to ensure exposure to bad debts is not significant. The entity applies the simplified approach to measuring expected credit losses. This approach recognises a loss allowance based on lifetime expected credit losses for all accounts receivables, contracts receivables and accrued contract revenue. To measure expected credit losses, receivables have been grouped based on shared risk characteristics and days past due.

The expected loss rates are based on historical observed loss rates, adjusted to reflect current and forward-looking information.

In accordance with the provisions of the FMA, receivables are written-off when there is no reasonable expectation of recovery. Indicators that there is no reasonable expectation of recovery includes a failure to make contractual payments for a period greater than 120 days past due.

Due to COVID-19, the Authority's credit risk exposure did not increase and is reflected in the expected credit losses reported. To ease financial hardship faced by individuals and businesses as a result of the COVID-19, the Territory Government modified its debt recovery process and postponed the payment date for a number of regulatory fees and charges. The Authority has not experienced and is not expecting to experience any loss allowances for receivables due to its client base.

The loss allowance for receivables and reconciliation as at the reporting date is disclosed below.

Loss allowance for receivables	2021				2020			
	Gross receivables	Loss rate	Expected credit losses	Net receivables	Gross receivables	Loss rate	Expected credit losses	Net receivables
	\$'000	%	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	%	\$'000	\$'000
Internal receivables	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Not overdue	63	0	0	63	152	0	0	152
Overdue for less than 30 days	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Overdue for 30 to 60 days	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Overdue for more than 60 days	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total internal receivables</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>152</b>
External receivables	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Not overdue	228	0	1	227	234	0	5	229
Overdue for less than 30 days	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Overdue for 30 to 60 days	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Overdue for more than 60 days	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Total external receivables</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>227</b>	<b>234</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>229</b>

Total amounts disclosed exclude statutory amounts and prepayments and include contract receivables and accrued contract revenue.

Reconciliation of loss allowance for receivables	2021	2020
	\$'000	\$'000
Internal receivables		
Opening balance	0	0
Written off during the year		
Recovered during the year		
Increase/decrease in allowance recognised in profit or loss		
<b>Total internal receivables</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
External receivables		
Opening balance	5	5
Written off during the year	1	0
Recovered during the year		
Increase/decrease in allowance recognised in profit or loss	(4)	0
<b>Total external receivables</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>

## Prepayments

Prepayments represent payments in advance of receipt of goods and services or that part of expenditure made in one accounting period covering a term extending beyond that period.

## Credit risk exposure of advances paid

Advances paid are monitored on an ongoing basis to ensure exposure to bad debts is not significant. The Authority applies the AASB 9 general approach to measuring expected credit losses. This approach recognises a loss allowance based on 12-month expected credit losses if there has been no significant increase in credit risk since initial recognition and lifetime expected credit losses if there has been a significant increase in credit risk since initial recognition.

The loss allowance for advances paid and reconciliation as at the reporting date is disclosed below.

## 11. Other assets

### a. Agency as a lessor

Leases under which the Authority assumes substantially all the risks and rewards of ownership of an asset are classified as finance leases. Other leases are classified as operating leases

Subleases are classified by reference to the right-of-use asset arising from the head lease, rather than by reference to the underlying asset. A sublease is an arrangement where the underlying asset is re-leased by a lessee (intermediate lessor) to another party, and the lease (head lease) between the head lessor and original lessee remains in effect.

#### Finance leases

At the lease commencement date, the entity recognises a receivable for assets held under a finance lease in its statement of financial position at an amount equal to the net investment in the lease. The net investment in leases is classified as financial assets amortised cost and equals the lease payments receivable by a lessor and the unguaranteed residual value, plus initial direct costs, discounted using the interest rate implicit in the lease initial direct costs.

Finance income arising from finance leases is recognised over the lease term, based on a pattern reflecting a constant periodic rate of return on the lessor's net investment in the lease.

The Authority does not have any finance lease or sublease arrangements.

### b. Contract cost asset

Costs to obtain a contract are expensed where goods and services will be transferred within one year or less and only capitalised if deemed material. Territory Government employee costs that satisfy the criteria for recognition as a cost to fulfil a contract are not capitalised and expensed immediately. Other costs to fulfil a contract are accounted for as a contract cost asset if deemed material. For the 2020–21 and 2019–20 reporting periods, no costs were capitalised as a contract cost asset.

## 12. Property, plant and equipment

### a) Total property, plant and equipment

	2021	2020
	\$'000	\$'000
<b>Plant and equipment</b>		
At fair value	1,375	1,376
Less: accumulated depreciation	(1,336)	(1,213)
	<b>39</b>	<b>163</b>
<b>Computer Hardware</b>		
At fair value	32	36
Less: accumulated depreciation	(20)	(21)
	<b>12</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Total property, plant and equipment</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>178</b>

### 2021 Property, plant and equipment reconciliations

Property, plant and equipment includes right-of-use assets under AASB 16 Leases and service concession assets under AASB 1059. This is not applicable for the Authority for 2020–21. A reconciliation of the carrying amount of property, plant and equipment at the beginning and end year is set out below:

	Land	Buildings	Plant and equipment	Computer hardware	Total
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Carrying amount as at 1 July 2020	0	0	163	15	178
Additions	0	0	(1)	0	(1)
Disposals	0	0	0	0	0
Depreciation/amortisation expense	0	0	(123)	(3)	(126)
Additions/disposals from asset transfers	0	0	(22)	0	(22)
<b>Carrying amount as at 30 June 2021</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>51</b>

	Land	Buildings	Plant and equipment	Computer hardware	Total
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
Carrying amount as at 1 July 2020	0	0	163	15	178
Additions	0	0	(1)	0	(1)
Disposals	0	0	0	0	0
Depreciation/amortisation expense	0	0	(123)	(3)	(126)
Additions/disposals from asset transfers	0	0	(22)	0	(22)
<b>Carrying amount as at 30 June 2021</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>51</b>
Carrying amount as at 1 July 2019	0	0	403	0	403
Additions	0	0	(107)	17	(91)
Disposals	0	0	0	0	0
Depreciation/amortisation expense	0	0	(133)	(2)	(135)
<b>Carrying amount as at 30 June 2020</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>163</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>178</b>

### Acquisitions

Property, plant and equipment are initially recognised at cost and subsequently revalued at fair value less accumulated depreciation and impairment. Cost is the amount of cash or cash equivalents paid or the fair value of the other consideration given to acquire the asset at the time of its acquisition or construction or, where applicable, the amount attributed to that asset when initially recognised in accordance with the requirements of other accounting standards.

All items of property, plant and equipment with a cost or other value, equal to or greater than \$10,000 are recognised in the year of acquisition and depreciated as outlined below. Items of property, plant and equipment below the \$10,000 threshold are expensed in the year of acquisition.

The construction cost of property, plant and equipment includes the cost of materials and direct labour, and an appropriate proportion of fixed and variable overheads.

### Complex assets

Major items of plant and equipment comprising a number of components that have different useful lives, are accounted for as separate assets. The components may be replaced during the useful life of the complex asset.

### Subsequent additional costs

Costs incurred on property, plant and equipment subsequent to initial acquisition are capitalised when it is probable that future economic benefits in excess of the originally assessed performance of the asset will flow to the agency in future years. Where these costs represent separate components of a complex asset, they are accounted for as separate assets and separately depreciated over their expected useful lives.

### Revaluations and impairment

#### Revaluation of assets

Subsequent to initial recognition, assets belonging to the following classes of non-current assets are revalued with sufficient regularity to ensure the carrying amount of these assets does not differ materially from their fair value at reporting date:

- land
- buildings
- infrastructure assets
- heritage and cultural assets
- biological assets
- intangibles.

Plant and equipment are stated at historical cost less depreciation, which is deemed to equate to fair value.

#### Impairment of assets

An asset is said to be impaired when the asset's carrying amount exceeds its recoverable amount.

Non-current physical and intangible Authority assets are assessed for indicators of impairment on an annual basis or whenever there is indication of impairment. If an indicator of impairment exists, the Authority determines the asset's recoverable amount. The asset's recoverable amount is determined as the higher of the asset's current replacement cost and fair value less costs to sell. Any amount by which the asset's carrying amount exceeds the recoverable amount is recorded as an impairment loss.

Impairment losses are recognised in the comprehensive operating statement. They are disclosed as an expense unless the asset is carried at a revalued amount. Where the asset is measured at a revalued amount, the impairment loss is offset against the asset revaluation surplus for that class of asset to the extent an available balance exists in the asset revaluation surplus.

In certain situations, an impairment loss may subsequently be reversed. Where an impairment loss is subsequently reversed, the carrying amount of the asset is increased to the revised estimate of its recoverable amount. A reversal of an impairment loss is recognised in the comprehensive operating statement as income, unless the asset is carried at a revalued amount, in which case the impairment reversal results in an increase in the asset revaluation surplus.

Authority property, plant and equipment assets were assessed for impairment as at

30 June 2021. No impairment adjustments were required as a result of this review. Although there were no impairment of assets, the Authority did write off an asset that had not been capitalised and is acknowledged in the above tables. The computer module was not activated due to the instability of the database system and the recommendation through an independent assessment that no further enhancements should be made to the system.

### Depreciation and amortisation expense

Items of property, plant and equipment, including buildings but excluding land, have limited useful lives and are depreciated or amortised using the straight-line method over their estimated useful lives.

Amortisation applies in relation to intangible non-current assets with limited useful lives and is calculated and accounted for in a similar manner to depreciation.

The estimated useful lives for each class of asset are in accordance with the Treasurer's Directions and are determined as follows:

	2021	2020
Plant and equipment	10 years	10 years
Computer software	5 years	5 years
Computer hardware	5 years	5 years

Assets are depreciated or amortised from the date of acquisition or from the time an asset is completed and held ready for use.

The estimated useful lives disclosed above includes the useful lives of right-of-use assets under AASB 16 and service concession assets under AASB 1059.

### 13. a) Intangibles

	2021	2020
	\$'000	\$'000
<b>Other intangibles</b>		
At valuation	586	0
Less: accumulated amortisation	(441)	(0)
Written down value – 30 June	144	0
<b>Total intangibles</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>0</b>

### Impairment of intangibles

Agency intangible assets were assessed for impairment as at 30 June 2021. No impairment adjustments were required as a result of this review.

	2021	2020
	\$'000	\$'000
<b>Reconciliation of movements</b>		
<b>Other intangibles</b>		
Carrying amount at 1 July	252	242
Additions	0	116
Disposals	0	0
Amortisation	(108)	(106)
<b>Carrying amount as at 30 June</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>252</b>

### 14. Payables

	2021	2020
	\$'000	\$'000
Accounts payable	13	4
Accrued expenses	162	70
Other payables	0	0
<b>Total payables</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>74</b>

Liabilities for accounts payable and other amounts payable are carried at cost, which is the fair value of the consideration to be paid in the future for goods and services received, whether or not billed to the agency. Accounts payable are normally settled within 20 days from receipt of valid invoices under \$1 million or 30 days for invoices over \$1 million.

### 15. Provisions

	2021	2020
	\$'000	\$'000
<b>Current</b>		
<i>Employee benefits</i>		
Recreation leave	300	335
Leave loading	59	56
Other employee benefits	0	3
<i>Other current provisions</i>	0	0
<i>Other provisions (Payroll Tax and Superannuation Contribution)</i>	70	66
<b>Total provisions</b>	<b>429</b>	<b>459</b>

The Authority employed 32.35 employees as at 30 June 2021 (32.54 employees as at 30 June 2020).

### Employee benefits

Provision is made for employee benefits accumulated as a result of employees rendering services up to the reporting date. These benefits include wages and salaries and recreation leave. Liabilities arising in respect of wages and salaries, recreation leave and other employee benefit liabilities that fall due within 12 months of reporting date are classified as current liabilities and are measured at amounts expected to be paid. Non-current employee benefit liabilities that fall due after 12 months of the reporting date are measured at present value, calculated using the government long-term bond rate.

No provision is made for sick leave, which is non-vesting, as the anticipated pattern of future sick leave to be taken is less than the entitlement accruing in each reporting period.

Employee benefit expenses are recognised on a net basis in respect of the following categories:

- wages and salaries, non-monetary benefits, recreation leave and other leave entitlements
- other types of employee benefits.

As part of the financial management framework, the Central Holding Authority assumes the long service leave liabilities of government agencies, including the Authority and therefore no long service leave liability is recognised in agency financial statements.



## Superannuation

Employees' superannuation entitlements are provided through the:

- Northern Territory Government and Public Authorities Superannuation Scheme (NTGPASS)
- Commonwealth Superannuation Scheme (CSS)
- or non-government employee nominated schemes for those employees commencing on or after 10 August 1999.

The Authority makes superannuation contributions on behalf of its employees to the Central Holding Authority or non-government employee-nominated schemes. Superannuation liabilities related to government superannuation schemes are held by the Central Holding Authority and therefore not recognised in the Authority financial statements.

## 16. Financial instruments

A financial instrument is a contract that gives rise to a financial asset of one entity and a financial liability or equity instrument of another entity.

Financial assets and liabilities are recognised on the balance sheet when the Authority becomes a party to the contractual provisions of the financial instrument. The Authority's financial instruments include cash and deposits; receivables; advances paid; investment in shares; payables; advances received; borrowings and derivatives.

Due to the nature of operating activities, certain financial assets and financial liabilities arise under statutory obligations rather than a contract. Such financial assets and liabilities do not meet the definition of financial instruments as per AASB 132 Financial Instruments: Presentation. These include statutory receivables arising from taxes including GST and penalties.

The Authority does not have any exposure to interest rate risk, foreign exchange risk, credit risk, price risk and liquidity risk arise in the normal course of activities. The Territory Government's investments, loans and placements, and borrowings are predominantly managed through the NTTC adopting strategies to minimise the risk. Derivative financial arrangements are also utilised to manage financial risks inherent in the management of these financial instruments. These arrangements include swaps, forward interest rate agreements and other hedging instruments to manage fluctuations in interest or exchange rates.

### a) Categories of financial instruments

The carrying amounts of the Authority's financial assets and liabilities by category are disclosed in the table below.

Fair value through profit or loss	Mandatorily at fair value	Designated at fair value	Amortised cost	Fair value through other comprehensive income	Total
	\$'000	%	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
<b>2020-21</b>					
Cash and deposits			3,576		3,576
Receivables <sup>1</sup>			287		287
Prepayments			16		16
<b>Total financial assets</b>			<b>3,880</b>		<b>3,880</b>
Payables <sup>1</sup>			175		175
Provisions			429		429
<b>Total financial liabilities</b>			<b>604</b>		<b>604</b>
<b>2019-20</b>					
Cash and deposits			2,942		2,942
Receivables <sup>1</sup>			419		419
Prepayments			10		10
<b>Total financial assets</b>			<b>3,371</b>		<b>3,371</b>
Payables <sup>1</sup>			74		74
Provisions			459		459
<b>Total financial liabilities</b>			<b>533</b>		<b>533</b>

## Categories of financial instruments

The Authority's financial instruments are classified in accordance with AASB 9.

Financial assets are classified under the following categories:

- amortised cost
- fair value through other comprehensive income (FVOCI)
- fair value through profit and loss (FVTPL).

Financial liabilities are classified under the following categories:

- amortised cost
- fair value through profit and loss (FVTPL).

These classifications are based on the Authority's business model for managing the financial assets and the contractual terms of the cash flows. Where assets are measured at fair value, gains and losses will either be recorded in profit or loss, or other comprehensive income.

Financial instruments are reclassified when and only when the Authority's business model for managing those assets changes.

Financial assets with embedded derivatives are considered in their entirety when determining whether their cash flows are solely payment of principal and interest.

### Financial assets at amortised cost

Financial assets are classified at amortised cost when they are held by the Authority to collect the contractual cash flows and the contractual cash flows are solely payments of principal and interest.

These assets are initially recognised at fair value and subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method, less impairment. The Authority's financial assets categorised at amortised cost include receivables, advances paid, leases receivables, term deposits and certain debt securities.

Financial assets at fair value through other comprehensive income

Financial assets are classified at fair value through other comprehensive income when they are held by the Authority to both collect contractual cash flows and sell the financial assets, and the contractual cash flows are solely payments of principal and interest.

These assets are initially and subsequently recognised at fair value. Changes in the fair value are recognised in other comprehensive income, except for the recognition of impairment gains or losses and interest income, which are recognised in the operating result in the comprehensive operating statement. When financial assets are derecognised, the cumulative gain or loss previously recognised in other comprehensive income is reclassified from equity to the comprehensive operating statement.

For equity instruments elected to be categorised at FVOCI, changes in fair value recognised in other comprehensive income are not reclassified to profit or loss on derecognition of the asset. Dividends from such instruments continue to be recognised in the comprehensive operating statement as other income when the Authority's right to receive payments is established.

The Authority does not have any financial assets under this category.

### Financial assets at fair value through profit or loss

Financial assets are classified at FVTPL where they do not meet the criteria for amortised cost or FVOCI. These assets are initially and subsequently recognised at fair value with gains or losses recognised in the net result for the year.

The Authority's financial assets categorised at FVTPL include investments in managed unit trusts and certain debt instruments. Unrealised gains in relation to these investments are recognised in other economic flows in the comprehensive operating statement, however realised gains are recognised in the net result.

### Financial liabilities at amortised cost

Financial liabilities at amortised cost are initially measured at fair value, net of directly attributable transaction costs. These are subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest rate method. The Authority's financial liabilities categorised at amortised cost include all accounts payable, deposits held, advances received, lease liabilities and borrowings.

### Financial liabilities at fair value through profit or loss

Financial liabilities are classified at FVTPL when the liabilities are either held for trading or designated as FVTPL. Financial liabilities classified at FVTPL are initially and subsequently measured at fair value with gains or losses recognised in the net result for the year.

For financial liabilities designated at FVTPL, changes in the fair value of the liability attributable to changes in the Authority's credit risk are recognised in other comprehensive income, while remaining changes in the fair value are recognised in the net result.

The Authority does not have any financial liabilities under this category.

### Derivatives

The Authority may enter into a variety of derivative financial instruments to manage its exposure to interest rate risk. The Authority does not speculate on trading of derivatives.

Derivatives are initially recognised at fair value on the date a derivative contract is entered in to and are subsequently remeasured at their fair value at each reporting date. The resulting gain or loss is recognised in the comprehensive operating statement immediately unless the derivative is designated and qualifies as an effective hedging instrument, in which event, the timing of the recognition in the comprehensive operating statement depends on the nature of the hedge relationship. Application of hedge accounting will only be available where specific designation and effectiveness criteria are satisfied.

### Netting of swap transactions

The Authority, from time to time, may facilitate certain structured finance arrangements, where a legally recognised right to set-off financial assets and liabilities exists, and the Territory intends to settle on a net basis. Where these arrangements occur, the revenues and expenses are offset, and the net amount is recognised in the comprehensive operating statement.

## b) Credit risk

Credit risk is the risk that one party to a financial instrument will cause financial loss for the other party by failing to discharge an obligation.

The Authority has limited credit risk exposure (risk of default). In respect of any dealings with organisations external to government, the Authority has adopted a policy of only dealing with credit worthy organisations and obtaining sufficient collateral or other security where appropriate, as a means of mitigating the risk of financial loss from defaults.

The carrying amount of financial assets recorded in the financial statements, net of any allowances for losses, represents the Authority's maximum exposure to credit risk without taking account of the value of any collateral or other security obtained.

Credit risk relating to receivables is disclosed in Note 10.

## c) Liquidity risk

Liquidity risk is the risk the Authority will not be able to meet its financial obligations as they fall due. The Authority's approach to managing liquidity is to ensure it will always have sufficient funds to meet its liabilities when they fall due. This is achieved by ensuring minimum levels of cash are held in the Authority bank account to meet various current employee and supplier liabilities. The Authority's exposure to liquidity risk is minimal. Cash injections are available from the Central Holding Authority in the event of one-off extraordinary expenditure items arise that deplete cash to levels that compromise the Authority's ability to meet its financial obligations.

## d) Market risk

Market risk is the risk the fair value of future cash flows of a financial instrument will fluctuate because of changes in market prices. It comprises interest rate risk, price risk and currency risk.

### (i) Interest rate risk

Interest rate risk is the risk that the fair value or future cash flows of a financial instrument will fluctuate because of changes in market interest rate.

The Authority is not exposed to interest rate risk Authority financial assets and financial liabilities are non interest bearing.

### (ii) Price risk

The Authority is not exposed to price risk as the Authority does not hold units in unit trusts.

### (iii) Currency risk

The Authority is not exposed to currency risk as the Authority does not hold borrowings denominated in foreign currencies or transactional currency exposures arising from purchases in a foreign currency.

## 17. Related parties

### (i) Related parties

The Authority is a government administrative entity and is wholly owned and controlled by the Territory Government. Related parties of the department include:

- the portfolio minister and key management personnel (KMP) because they have authority and responsibility for planning, directing and controlling the activities of the department directly
- close family members of the portfolio minister or KMP including spouses, children and dependants
- all public sector entities that are controlled and consolidated into the whole of government financial statements
- any entities controlled or jointly controlled by KMPs or the portfolio minister or controlled or jointly controlled by their close family members.

### ii) Key management personnel (KMP)

Key management personnel of the Authority are those persons having authority and responsibility for planning, directing and controlling the activities of the Authority. These include the minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage, the Chief Executive Officer and the 4 members of the executive team of the Authority as listed below:

- Dr Sophie Creighton, Director, Research and Land Information
- Mr Robert Pocock, Acting Director, Policy and Governance (commenced on 21 September 2020)
- Mr Che Walsh, Director, Policy and Governance (extended leave commenced on 14 September 2020)
- Mr Alan Buckingham, Director, Corporate Services (ceased on 1 July 2020).

### iii) Remuneration of key management personnel

The details below excludes the salaries and other benefits of minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage as the minister's remunerations and allowances are payable by the Department of the Legislative Assembly and consequently disclosed within the Treasurer's annual financial statements.

The aggregate compensation of key management personnel of the Authority is set out below:

	2021	2020
	\$'000	\$'000
Short-term benefits	577	818
Post-employment benefits	70	158
Long-term benefits	0	0
Termination benefits	29	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>676</b>	<b>976</b>

#### iv) Related party transactions:

##### Transactions with Northern Territory Government-controlled entities

The Authority's primary ongoing source of funding is received from the Central Holding Authority in the form of output and capital appropriation and on-passed Commonwealth national partnership and specific-purpose payments.

The following table provides quantitative information about related party transactions entered into during the year with all other Northern Territory Government-controlled entities.

2021 Related party	Revenue from related parties	Payments to related parties	Amounts owed by related parties	Amounts owed to related parties
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
All Territory Government departments (including local councils)	792	583	76	0
Australian Government	236	0	22	0

2020 Related party	Revenue from related parties	Payments to related parties	Amounts owed by related parties	Amounts owed to related parties
	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000
All Territory Government departments (including local councils)	1,788	1,088	221	1
Australian Government	268	0	0	0

*The above figures do not include CHA, NT Government appropriation or free of charge services; it relates purely to business transactions.*

## 18. Contingent liabilities and contingent assets

### a) Contingent liabilities

The Authority had no contingent liabilities as at 30 June 2021 or 30 June 2020.

### b) Contingent assets

The Authority had no contingent assets as at 30 June 2021 or 30 June 2020.

## 19. Events subsequent to balance date

No events have arisen between the end of the financial year and the date of this report that require adjustment to, or disclosure in these financial statements

## 20. Schedule of administered Territory items

The following Territory items are managed by the Authority on behalf of the government and are recorded in the Central Holding Authority (refer Note 2(d)).

	2021	2020
TERRITORY INCOME AND EXPENSES	\$'000	\$'000
<b>Income</b>		
Fees from regulatory services	91	40
<b>Total income</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Expenses</b>		
Central Holding Authority income transferred	91	40
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>Territory income less expenses</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>

## 21. Budgetary information

Comprehensive operating statement	2020-21 Actual \$'000	2020-21 Original budget \$'000	Variance \$'000	Note
<b>INCOME</b>				
Appropriation				
Output	3,442	3,442	0	
Sales of goods and services	2,611	1,999	612	1
Interest revenue				
Goods and services received free of charge	845	777	68	2
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>6,898</b>	<b>6,218</b>	<b>680</b>	
<b>EXPENSES</b>				
Employee expenses	3,923	4,147	224	3
Administrative expenses				
Purchases of goods and services	1,634	1,086	(548)	4
Repairs and maintenance	0	0	0	
Depreciation and amortisation	235	218	(17)	
Other administrative expenses	863	777	(86)	5
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>6,696</b>	<b>6,228</b>	<b>(468)</b>	
<b>NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>(10)</b>	<b>192</b>	
<b>COMPREHENSIVE RESULT</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>(10)</b>	<b>192</b>	

### Notes:

The following note descriptions relate to variances greater than 10 per cent, or where multiple significant variances have occurred.

- Increase in demand for service in 2020-21, particularly relates to mining and development.
- Additional DCDD charges.
- Surplus employee budget due to a range of positions being vacant throughout the year.
- Additional operational expenditure predominantly relates to information technology project consultancies, digitalisation of the Darwin scared site registry files and travel costs relating the fieldwork in regional and remote locations due to increased demand for services.
- Additional DCDD charges and an information technology intangible compliance module that was developed in 2017-18 and written off in 2020-21 due to system instability.

Balance sheet	2020-21 Actual \$'000	2020-21 Original budget \$'000	Variance \$'000	Note
<b>ASSETS</b>				
<b>Current assets</b>				
Cash and deposits	3,576	3,150	426	1
Receivables	287	418	(131)	2
Prepayments	16	10	6	3
<b>Total current assets</b>	<b>3,880</b>	<b>3,748</b>	<b>302</b>	
<b>Non-current assets</b>				
Property, plant and equipment	51	43	8	
Intangibles	144	170	(26)	
<b>Total current liabilities</b>	<b>195</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>(18)</b>	4
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>4,075</b>	<b>3,791</b>	<b>284</b>	
<b>LIABILITIES</b>				
<b>Current liabilities</b>				
Payables	175	(73)	102	5
Provisions	429	459	(30)	
<b>Total current liabilities</b>	<b>604</b>	<b>532</b>	<b>72</b>	
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES</b>	<b>604</b>	<b>532</b>	<b>72</b>	
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<b>3,471</b>	<b>3,259</b>	<b>212</b>	
<b>EQUITY</b>				
Capital	1,621	1,621	0	
Reserves				
Accumulated funds	1,850	1,638	212	1
<b>TOTAL EQUITY</b>	<b>3,471</b>	<b>3,259</b>	<b>212</b>	

**Notes:**

The following note descriptions relate to variances greater than 10 per cent or where multiple significant variances have occurred.

- 2020-21 saw an increase in demand for services due to the postponement of works from 2019-20 in response to the COVID-19 internal border restrictions and an increased confidence in mining exploration and development across the Northern Territory.
- Variance demonstrates a strong debtor management approach.
- The annual Oracle database licence is treated as a prepayment and released on a monthly arrangement due to payment being made in advance.
- The video conferencing facilities in the Alice Springs office were upgraded in 2020-21, and all other assets are nearing the end of their useful life.
- Largely related to accrued salary expenses and travel costs associated with fieldwork that were accrued at the end of the financial year.

	2020-21 Actual	2020-21 Original budget	Variance	Note
Cash flow statement	\$'000	\$'000	\$'000	
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES</b>				
<b>Operating receipts</b>				
Appropriation				
Output	3,442	3,442	0	
Receipts from sales of goods and services	2,822	1,999	823	1
<b>Total operating receipts</b>	<b>6,898</b>	<b>6,218</b>	<b>823</b>	
<b>Operating payments</b>				
Payments to employees	3,943	4,147	(204)	2
Payments for goods and services	1,666	1,086	580	3
<b>Total operating payments</b>	<b>5,609</b>	<b>5,233</b>	<b>376</b>	
<b>Net cash from/(used in) operating activities</b>	<b>655</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>447</b>	
<b>CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES</b>				
<b>Investing payments</b>				
Purchases of assets	21	0	21	4
<b>Total investing payments</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>21</b>	
<b>Net cash from/(used in) investing activities</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>21</b>	
Net increase/(decrease) in cash held	634	208	426	
Cash at beginning of financial year	2,942	2,942	0	
<b>CASH AT END OF FINANCIAL YEAR</b>	<b>3,576</b>	<b>3,150</b>	<b>426</b>	

**Notes:**

The following note descriptions relate to variances greater than 10 per cent or where multiple significant variances have occurred.

1. Variance primarily reflective of the increase demand for services experienced in 2020-21.
2. Variance due to a number of position vacancies throughout 2020-21; all positions are now recruited to.
3. Variance reflective of expenses associated with increased business activity, the continuation of the information technology replacement project and the finalisation of the digitalisation of sacred site records.
4. The purchase of a video conferencing facility for the Alice Springs office.

## 21. Budgetary information

In addition to the specific Authority operations that are included in the financial statements, the Authority administers or manages other activities and resources on behalf of the Territory, such as the collection of fees. The Authority does not gain control over assets arising from these collections, consequently no income is recognised in the Authority's financial statements. The transactions relating to these activities are reported as administered items in this note.

Administered Territory items	2020-21 Actual \$'000	2020-21 Original budget \$'000	Variance \$'000	Note
<b>TERRITORY INCOME AND EXPENSES</b>				
<b>Income</b>				
Fees from regulatory services	91	56	35	1
<b>Total income</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>35</b>	
<b>Expenses</b>				
Central Holding Authority income transferred	91	56	35	
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>35</b>	
<b>Territory income less expenses</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>0</b>	

### Notes:

The following note descriptions relate to variances greater than 10 per cent or where multiple significant variances have occurred.

1. The variance reflects businesses increasingly seeking information to determine potential site risks prior to undertaking works or seeking an Authority Certificate.







Image: Custodian Maurice Doolan during fieldwork in a helicopter, NT.

“MOST IMPORTANTLY,  
UNDER THE SACRED SITES  
ACT, THE AUTHORITY  
CANNOT AND DOES  
NOT AUTHORISE THE  
DESTRUCTION OF  
SACRED SITES IN  
THE NT. WE MUST  
CONSULT WITH  
CUSTODIANS, PROVIDE  
CERTAINTY FOR  
CUSTODIANS AND  
DEVELOPERS ALIKE,  
AND PROSECUTE  
WHEN PEOPLE DO  
THE WRONG THING.”

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**Aboriginal Areas  
Protection Authority**  
*protecting sacred sites across the territory*

