



Aboriginal Areas
Protection Authority

ANNUAL REPORT 2024 - 25



Protecting sacred sites across the Territory



Rocks at Croker Island, NT

Cover image: Simpsons Gap, Alice Springs, NT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Authority acknowledges and pays respect to the custodians of country across the Northern Territory and honours their enduring and powerful connection to this land and its waters. We thank all First Nation's people with whom we work and collaborate to protect sacred sites for all Territorians.

DISCLAIMER

The Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority has taken due care in ensuring information contained in this annual report is true and correct at the time of publication, however changes in circumstances after the time of publication may impact on its accuracy. The Authority disclaim all liability associated with the use of this information by others in contexts not approved by the Authority.

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



Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority

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

The Hon Joshua Burgoyne MLA
Minister for Lands, Planning and Environment
DARWIN NT 0800

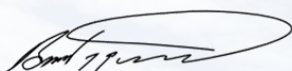
26 September 2025

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 2024 to 30 June 2025.

The report refers to the thirty-sixth year of operation of the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority.

Yours Sincerely



Bobby Nunggumajbarr
Chairman
26 September 2025

The Hon Joshua Burgoyne MLA
Minister for Lands, Planning and Environment
DARWIN NT 0800

26 September 2025

Dear Minister,

I am pleased to present the annual report of the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority (the Authority) for the financial year 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025, in accordance with the Treasurers Direction R2.1.6. Pursuant to the *Financial Management Act 1995* (FMA) and *Information Act 2002*, and Treasurer's Directions, I advise that to the best of my knowledge and belief.

1. proper records of all transactions affecting the Authority are kept, and employees under my control observe the provisions of the FMA, the *Financial Management Regulations 1995* and Treasurer's Directions;
2. procedures within the Authority 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 FMA;
3. no indication of fraud, malpractice, major breach of legislation or delegation, major error in or omission from the accounts and records exists;
4. in accordance with the requirements of section 15 of the FMA, the internal audit capacity available to the Authority is adequate, and the results of internal audits have been reported to me;
5. the financial statements included in the Annual Report have been prepared from proper accounts and records and are in accordance with Treasurer's Directions; and
6. the Authority is working in compliance with the *Information Act 2002*.

Yours sincerely



Robert Pocock
Interim Chief Executive Officer
26 September 2025

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INTRODUCTION

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.

Aboriginal sacred sites are places within the landscape that have special meaning or significance under Aboriginal tradition. Hills, rocks, waterholes, trees, plains, lakes, billabongs and other natural features can be sacred sites. Sacred sites derive their status from their association with particular aspects of Aboriginal social and cultural tradition. This body of tradition is mainly concerned with the activities of ancestral beings, collectively believed to have created the physical and social world that people now inhabit.



Dundee Beach, NT

PURPOSE OF THE ANNUAL REPORT

This is an Annual Report on the administration and operation of the Authority for the 2024–25 financial year.

The Annual 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 1995*, 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, Aboriginal custodians, government agencies, the Northern Territory public and land users across the Northern Territory.

CUSTODIAN VALUES	AUTHORITY GUIDING VALUES	CLIENT VALUES
	Two Laws	
	<i>Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act 1989</i>	
Traditional Law	Independence	Legal Certainty
Knowledge	Integrity	Advice

Message From Our Chairman



”

Protecting sacred sites is not just a regulatory function, it is a responsibility that carries deep cultural, historical and spiritual weight.

This past year has been a time of challenge and change for the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority, marked by significant developments in legislation, major project activity across the Northern Territory, and continued efforts to uphold the protection of Aboriginal sacred sites.

One of the most concerning developments has been the passing of the Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Amendment Bill 2025. The Government said the changes were meant to make the Sacred Sites Act work better, but the way the changes were made was disappointing.

There was insufficient consultation with Traditional Owners, Land Councils, and key Aboriginal stakeholders, which is a serious oversight in any legislative process that directly impacts Aboriginal cultural heritage. The amendments themselves also make no mention of the need to consult with Aboriginal custodians before any actions to protect or manage sacred sites. As the body responsible for administering the Sacred Sites Act, the Authority Board is disappointed that these amendments do not reflect the level of engagement, respect and collaboration that Aboriginal people rightfully expect and deserve.

Protecting sacred sites is not just a regulatory function, it is a responsibility that carries deep cultural, historical and spiritual weight. The Act only works when Aboriginal voices are central to the conversation.

One of the most significant outcomes of the year was the finalisation of the Gunlom Falls prosecution in October 2024.

The Director of National Parks was found guilty of unauthorised work on a sacred site and fined \$200,000, the largest penalty ever issued under the Sacred Sites Act. This decision reaffirms the importance of respecting Aboriginal sacred sites and sends a clear message about the consequences of ignoring custodian advice and the well-established and trusted Authority processes to protect sacred sites.

In addition to Gunlom, the Authority has been forced to take action on several other matters, including prosecutions against Vista Gold and McArthur River Mine. These cases are outliers amidst hundreds of companies who do the right thing, but they demonstrate our commitment to upholding the law and ensuring accountability when sacred sites are threatened or harmed.

The focus of the Board remains firmly on protecting sacred sites through strong partnerships with custodians, clear legal processes and open communication. We urge the Northern Territory Government to re-engage with Aboriginal communities and their representatives in good faith and ensure that future legislative changes are shaped by the people whose lives, culture, and identity are bound to country.

Thank you to all the Board members, staff, Aboriginal custodians and Territorians who support our work. I am proud to have been re-appointed as Chairman of the Authority Board, and together, we continue to uphold the cultural integrity of the Northern Territory by protecting what is sacred.

Mr Bobby Nunggumajbarr
Chairman



South alligator crossing, NT

Message From Our Deputy Chairman



”

Authority certificates help ensure developments respect cultural heritage and have the support of custodians and the local community.

It was a pleasure to be appointed as Deputy Chairman of the Authority Board in November 2024.

The Board continues to be passionate about the work it does in protecting sacred sites.

In the reporting period, the Authority registered 20 sacred sites across the Territory including sites in Goomadeer River Estuary, Madarrgaidj Bay and Braithwaite Point. This takes the Authority's total number of registered sacred sites to 2268. The Board and I are focused on ways to increase the number of sacred site registrations with the help of the four Land Councils, ranger groups and other custodians. It's a significant undertaking.

Development in the Northern Territory gains important benefits from engaging with the Authority and obtaining Authority Certificates. These certificates are legal documents that give everyone certainty that proper consultation has happened and that sites are protected. This gives certainty for developers, Aboriginal custodians and the public alike. They help development proceed without conflict with sites, and with the support of custodians and the community.

In November 2024, I travelled to Canberra to attend the Heritage Chairs and Officials of Australia and New Zealand forum. This marked the Authority's first participation since becoming a member. An overview of the Authority's role and the legislative foundation of the Sacred Sites Act was provided to those in attendance from each state and territory. We also briefed attendees on the Gunlom case, in which the Director of National Parks was prosecuted and fined for causing damage to a sacred site. The next meeting is scheduled to be held in Melbourne in October 2025, and both the Chairman and I are expected to attend.

Throughout this year, the Authority has maintained its commitment to supporting small businesses, not-for-profit organisations, and community initiatives by granting full or partial fee waivers for 15 projects which included the Ti-Tree Dialysis Clinic and Staff Accommodation, Emergency works on Sacred trees in Alice Springs, construction of shelters in Pirlangimpi and Yanyuwa Makassar Places Archaeology research project just to name a few.

As well as Darwin, the Board also convened meetings in Katherine and Jabiru this financial year.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to all Board members and Authority staff for their continued commitment. We may be a small team, but we are doing important work.

Lorraine Jones

Ms Lorraine Jones
Deputy Chairman



Timber Creek, NT

Message From Outgoing CEO



”

We remain committed in our goal to protect sacred sites and support Aboriginal custodians in their ongoing connection to country.

The Authority marks another busy year of critical work in safeguarding Aboriginal sacred sites across the Northern Territory.

This financial year the Authority has issued 94 Authority Certificates and responded to 1015 requests for sacred sites records.

The Authority has been working closely with the Department of Logistics and Infrastructure on the Territory Energy Link Project which envisions a multi-use infrastructure corridor designed to support the transport of energy and a variety of commodities including water, hydrogen and data. Spanning approximately 671km from Elliott to Darwin and with a proposed width of 530 meters, this corridor will be a critical backbone for future development and sustainable growth in the region.

In addition, the Authority is actively supporting the Telstra Inter-City Fibre Network project. This ambitious undertaking involves the construction of a new 2,500km fibre optic path between Darwin and Glendambo, South Australia.

To meet the growing demand placed on the Authority, particularly due to the scale and complexity of major projects, we have expanded our staffing. This increase ensures we are better equipped to conduct consultations and support custodians in the protection of their sacred sites.

The Authority is also continuing work on a multi-year project to develop an improved integrated sacred site database. This will safeguard the record of sacred sites in the NT, streamline internal processes, and simplify and enhance the client experience.

It is one of the great strengths of the Northern Territory that we have the Sacred Sites Act, and the independent Authority to deliver certainty and clarity for developers in the protection of sacred sites. The work of the Authority helps ensure that custodians have free, prior and informed consent regarding development, but importantly, the lack of vested interests also gives the broader public confidence in the process.

In recent years the Territory has seen an increase in land users attempting to sidestep the work of the Authority. Whilst the Authority welcomes strong relationships between land users and the custodians of that land, private negotiations, where conflicting and sometimes undisclosed commercial interests are at play, erodes confidence in sacred site protection. Only the work of the Authority offers certainty and legal protection for developers, and attempting to bypass its processes not only endangers sacred sites but can be far more costly and puts projects and reputations at risk.

As we look ahead, we remain steadfast in our goal to protect sacred sites and guide development. I extend my deep thanks to our Board, staff, stakeholders and most importantly to the Aboriginal custodians whose cultural knowledge and commitment guide our work every day.

Dr. Benedict Scambary
Chief Executive Officer



Tree at Mary River, NT

A scenic view of a river at sunset. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and blue. The river is calm, reflecting the sky. In the foreground, there are green plants and a large brown semi-circle overlay with white dotted lines. The text "OUR ORGANISATION" is written in white capital letters on the brown semi-circle.

OUR ORGANISATION

Mary River, NT

OUR HISTORY

The Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority has existed in several forms for 47 years.

Our history is entwined with the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 (Aboriginal Land Rights Act) the legislation that gives the Northern Territory the power to pass laws for the protection of sacred sites. That Act provides a foundation for the Sacred Sites Act.

When the Northern Territory achieved self-government in 1978, one of the first pieces of legislation to be introduced into the new Legislative Assembly was the Aboriginal Sacred Sites Bill 1978. This became law in November 1978 and led to the establishment of a permanent Aboriginal Sacred Sites Authority a year later, which was the precursor to today's Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority.

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 law, it became an offence to enter, remain on, carry out works on, or desecrate sacred sites anywhere in the NT. Other enduring aspects of today's legal protection were also established at that point, including a Board largely made up of Aboriginal custodians nominated by the Northern Territory's Aboriginal Land Councils, and a clear definition of a sacred site.

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 the late Mr Raphael Aputimi 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 *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 supporting 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 *Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act (1989)* and the establishment of the current Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority.

Under the legislation the Authority is recognised as the expert body for identifying and consulting with Aboriginal custodians and for issuing Authority Certificates. All Authority Certificates reflect consultation with custodians about development plans and set out clear conditions under which work can proceed near sacred sites. While Authority Certificates are voluntary, they give developers, businesses and individuals certainty about how to protect sacred sites.

The Sacred Sites Act also greatly strengthened the penalty provisions for entering, working on or desecrating a sacred site, and all sites registered by the Authority were now to be considered *prima facie* sacred sites. The legislation also extended protection to sites located within the sea or other bodies of water.

In 2019, following the acceptance of all 135 recommendations of the Scientific Inquiry into Hydraulic Fracturing in the Northern Territory, the *Petroleum (Environment) Regulations 2016* 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.

AAPA Board Chairs

1979 – 1982

RAPHAEL APUATIMI OAM

1982 – 1985

WENTEN RUBUNTJA AM

1986 – 1997

MUSSOLINI HARVEY AM

1997 – 2007

ROY HAMMER

2007 – 2009

MILLIWANGA SANDY

2009 – 2015

BERNARD ABBOTT

2015 – 2016

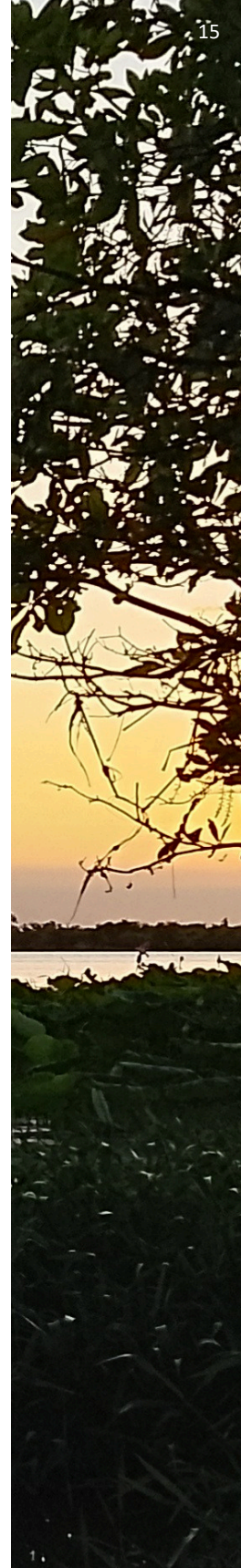
JENNY INMULUGULU

2016 – 2019

PHILIP WILYUKA

2019 - CURRENT

BOBBY NUNGGUMAJBARR



Key services provided by the Authority

Under the Sacred Sites Act, the Authority is responsible for overseeing the protection of Aboriginal sacred sites on land and sea across the whole of Australia's Northern Territory.

Primarily the Authority protects sacred sites by:

- Recording and maintaining of the register of sacred sites in the Northern Territory, and providing information to the public.
- Issuing Authority Certificates, which set out the conditions by which work can proceed on and around sacred sites.

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, if the applicant complies with any conditions imposed to protect sacred sites.

While Authority Certificates are voluntary, with the exception of regulated activities under the *Petroleum (Environment) Regulations Act 2016 (NT)* prior to Ministerial approval of an Environmental Management Plan for that activity, 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 desecration of a sacred site, which can lead to prosecution, reputational damage, project delays and extra cost.

Requests for information

Members of the public can seek advice on sacred sites by requesting access to the register of sacred sites. The Authority provides abstracts of records on where sacred sites are known to exist, so they are not inadvertently damaged.

These abstracts give information at a point in time on the sacred sites that are likely to be at risk if works are carried

out without seeking more detailed information. The Authority might advise that works should not be carried out on these sacred sites without an Authority Certificate and that any development proposals must 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.

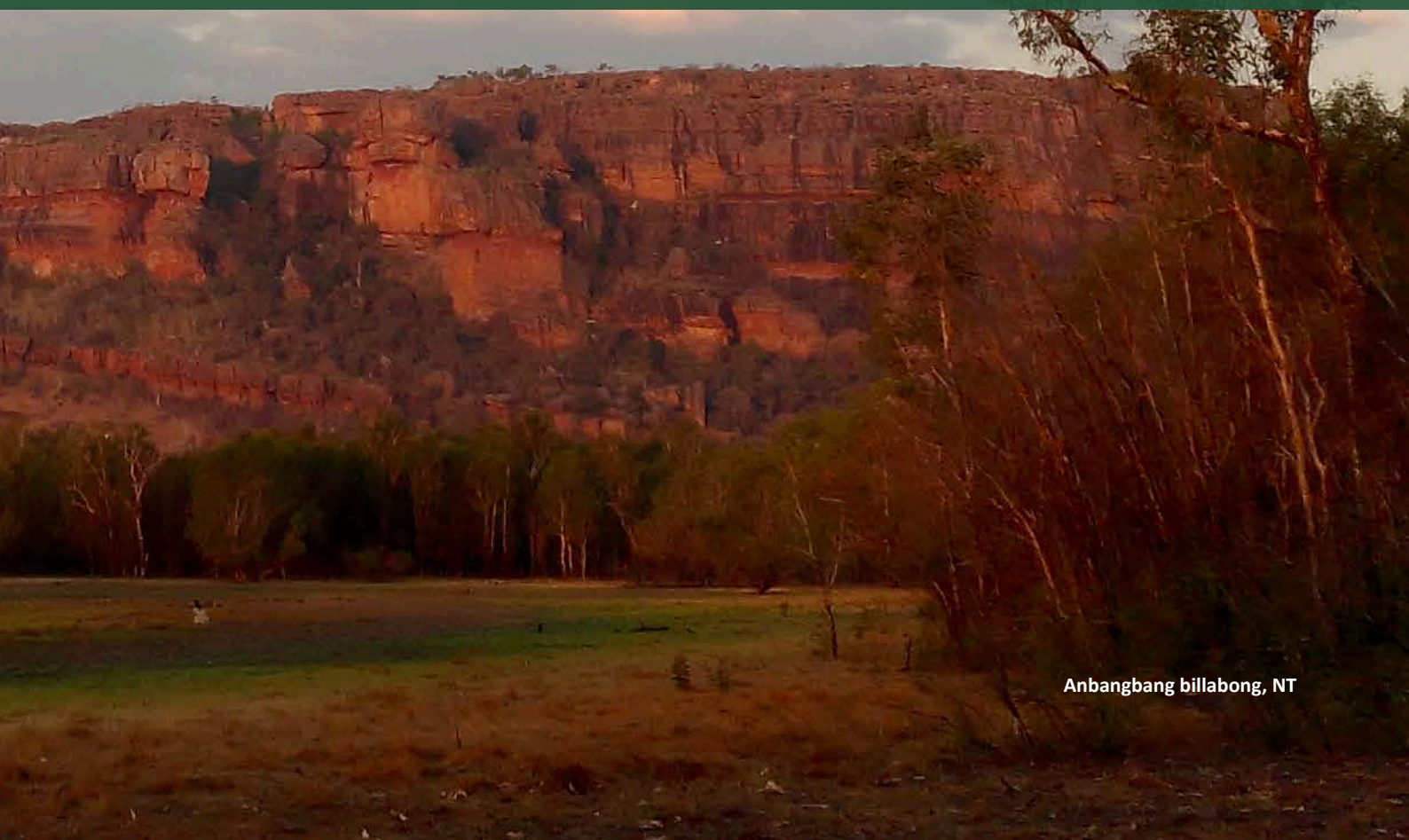
In accordance with the Sacred Sites Act, staff present a report on that information to the Authority Board for registration approval.

Our Stakeholders

The Authority serves a diverse range of stakeholders:

- Northern Territory and Australian Government agencies
- Aboriginal custodians and Traditional Owners
- Industry groups (including the mining, oil, gas 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)
- Private and non-government organisations who use land across the Territory.

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



Anbangbang billabong, NT

STRATEGIC PLAN 2024–2027



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

2024 TO 2027 STRATEGIC PLAN

MISSION STATEMENT

Protecting sacred sites
across the Territory

GOAL

Raise Community Awareness
Grow community awareness of the
importance of Aboriginal sacred sites
across the Northern Territory

Elevate the Client Experience

greater efficiencies and legal
certainty

Grow our Expertise

Grow our expertise to drive our
strategic priorities

Build Digital Connectivity

Deliver digital platforms to
streamline and enhance the AAPA
experience for all users

OUTCOME

Increased community and stakeholder awareness

Delivery of consistent service that meets client and stakeholder
expectations through development of a streamlined service
delivery model

A high performing workforce with the requisite specialist
expertise

Tailored digital platforms that are secure and responsive to
the changing context of Aboriginal Sacred site protection

OUR VALUES

Custodian Values: traditional law and knowledge **Authority Guiding Values:** Two Laws, Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act, Independence and Integrity **Client Values:** Legal Certainty, Advice.

ORGANISATION HIGHLIGHTS IN 2024-25

The Authority registered

20 sacred sites

during Authority board meetings.

37% of the Authority Certificates issued were within 3 months

The Authority completed

1015 requests for information

from the Authority's records.

Authority staff and consultants spent

519 days in the field

The Authority issued

94 Authority Certificates

for projects across the Northern Territory, including Ngukurr Boat Ramp Upgrade, Birdum Sand Project, Alice Springs Satellite Ground Station, Construction of Shelters in Pirlangimpi.

The Authority subsidised community projects to the value of

\$284,978

GOVERNANCE

Ormiston Gorge, NT

The Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority Board comprises 12 members.

Ten of those members are custodians nominated by Northern Territory land councils in equal numbers: five males and five females. The other two members are nominated by the Northern Territory Government.

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 Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Board, who must be of opposite gender, based on nominations from the Authority.



Minister Burgoyne with CEO & Authority Board



Authority Board members at Jabiru Board meeting



Authority Board members at Cahill's Crossing

AUTHORITY BOARD MEETINGS

Under the Sacred Sites Act, the Authority must meet a minimum of four times each calendar year.

In the 2024-25 financial year, the Chairman called the following meetings:

142nd board meeting	23 & 24 July 2024	Darwin
143rd board meeting	21 October 2024	Jabiru
144 th board meeting	5 December 2024	Darwin
145 th board meeting	25 & 26 February 2025	Darwin
146 th board meeting	27 March 2025	Darwin
147 th board meeting	27 & 28 May 2025	Katherine

ABORIGINAL AREAS PROTECTION AUTHORITY BOARD



MR BOBBY NUNGGUMAJBARR
Chairperson

Region: Roper Basin
First appointed: 29 September 2015
Re-appointed: 3 November 2024
First appointed Chair: 18 March 2019

Mr Bobby Nunggumajbarr is a senior Nunggubuyu man from Numbulwar in south-east Arnhem Land. He has had a long career in public administration, serving on the Yugul Mangi Community Government Council and the Roper Gulf Shire. He was the Senior Project Officer at the Northern Land Council's Ngukurr office for over 15 years. Widely respected for his knowledge and leadership, he has been the elected Chairman of the Board since 2019.



MS LORRAINE JONES
Deputy Chairperson

Region: Victoria River Basin
First appointed: 24 August 2021
Re-appointed: 25 August 2024
First appointed Deputy Chair: 28 November 2024

Ms Lorraine Jones is a community leader, cross-cultural trainer, and traditional owner from Timber Creek. She represents the Victoria River District on the Northern Land Council (NLC) Executive Council. Ms Jones is also the Deputy Chair of the Bradshaw Liaison Committee and board member of the Bradshaw and Timber Creek Contracting and Resource Company.



MS JENNY INMULUGULU

Region: Arnhem Land West
First appointed: 26 April 2006
Re-appointed: 3 November 2024

Ms Jenny Inmulugulu is a traditional owner of Warruwi on South Goulburn Island. She served as Deputy Chair on the AAPA Board from 2008-2012. 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.



MS VALERIE MARTIN

Region: Yuendumu Hinterland
First appointed: 2 August 2016
Re-appointed: 11 May 2023

Ms Valerie Martin is a senior Warlpiri woman from Yuendumu. She represents the Tanami region on the Central Land Council Executive Council. Ms Martin is also deputy chair of Pintupi Anmatyerre Warlpiri Media, and a director for Imparja Television, Warlpiri Media Aboriginal Corporation and the Yapa Kurlangu Ngurrara Aboriginal Corporation. She is also an interpreter with the Aboriginal Interpreter Service (AIS). Ms Martin served as the AAPA Deputy Chairperson from 2016 to 2024.



MS BARBARA SHAW

Region: Alice Springs Hinterland
First appointed: 27 March 2019
Date re-appointed: 1 June 2022

Ms Barbara Shaw is the inaugural chair of the NT Aboriginal Investment Corporation. She is also Deputy Chair of the Central Land Council, and Executive Member. Ms Shaw is a youth worker in Alice Springs and has been co-chair of the Aboriginal Housing NT, co-ordinator of the Tangentyere Women's Family Safety Group and a former engagement officer with the Royal Commission into the Protection and Detention of Children in the Northern Territory.



MR NEVILLE PETRICK

Region: Plenty River Basin
First appointed: 27 March 2019
Date re-appointed: 1 June 2022

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. He speaks Alyawarr, Arrernte and English.



MS JENNIFER YANTARRNGA

Region: Arnhem Land East
First appointed: 24 August 2021
Re-appointed: 25 August 2024

Ms Jennifer Yantarrnga is a respected elder of the Yantarrnga Clan of Umbakumba, Groote Eylandt. Ms Yantarrnga is heavily involved in general community liaison and is a strong conduit between the Anindilyakwa Land and Sea Rangers and the Anindilyakwa Land Council (ALC) Head Office. She collaborates in joint initiatives with stakeholders in relation to the ALC Anthropology Unit, and Anindilyakwa intellectual property and cultural knowledge protection.



MR CHRISTOPHER NEADE

Region: Barkly Central
First appointed: 2 November 2021
Re-appointed: 3 November 2024

Mr Christopher Neade is a Waanyi man from the Barkly Tablelands and lives in Elliot. He was elected to the Northern Land Council in 2016. Mr Neade studied in Mt Isa before starting work on cattle stations throughout the Barkly region. He is a Local Authority Member with the Barkly Regional Council and an advocate for development opportunities in the Barkly and to ensure Aboriginal people are treated with fairness and respect.



MR GEOFFREY MATTHEWS

Region: VRD/Barkly West
First appointed: 11 May 2023

Mr Geoffrey Matthews was born on Mount Doreen Station and worked as a grader operator for the Wulain Outstation Resource Centre in Lajamanu. He also worked as an Aboriginal community police officer for ten years, and was a liaison officer for the Central Land Council's anthropology team. He is currently a CLC executive member and is president of the Wulain Homelands Council Aboriginal Corporation. Mr Matthews speaks Warlpiri, Jaru and English.



MR EDWARD PORTAMINNI

Region: Tiwi Islands
First appointed: 25 August 2024

Mr Teddy (Edward) Portaminni grew up in Wurriyamunga (previously called Nguui) and learnt traditional Tiwi knowledge and skills from the local old people, his grandparents, aunts and uncles. Mr Portaminni is a member of the Tiwi Land Council for the Wurankuwu clan, and he is the Chairperson of Tarrtipi Homelands Aboriginal Corporation (THAC). He is an elder, educator and community leader with a comprehensive knowledge of Tiwi culture and protocol.



MS RACHEL PERKINS

Government appointment
First appointed: 14 July 2024

Ms Rachel Perkins is an Arrernte/Kalkadoon filmmaker with a thirty-year career. She currently co-chairs the First Nations Heritage Protection Alliance's joint working group with the Commonwealth, focused on reforming national First Nations cultural heritage legislation. She has previously served on the National Heritage Council and the NT Heritage Council. She has also served on numerous Aboriginal NGO's and commonwealth statutory boards as well as being a founding board member of the National Indigenous Television Service. Ms Perkins is currently chair of the Australian Film, Television and Radio School.



MR NIGEL BROWNE

Government appointment
First appointed: 13 July 2021

Mr Nigel Browne is a descendent of the Larrakia and Wulna peoples. He has held the position of Chief Executive Officer at the Larrakia Development Corporation since 2013, and is a Director with The Healing Foundation. Mr Browne is also a member of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.

OUTGOING BOARD MEMBERS

The Authority would like to thank Barbara Shaw and Neville Petrick for their significant and important contribution as a member of the Authority commencing 27 March 2019 and finishing on 1 June 2025. For more than six years Barbara and Neville have been a strong voice for the views of custodians in protecting Aboriginal sacred sites. They have both contributed to the Authority in fulfilling its function to protect sacred sites across the Northern Territory. The Authority wishes them the best for the future.



INCOMING BOARD MEMBERS

We welcome Douglas Multa and Joyce Jones to the board. The Administrator of the Northern Territory appointed them both as new members of the Authority on 26 June 2025. The Authority looks forward to working with them both as members of the Authority.

REMEMBERING DICK KIMBER OAM 1939-2024

Mr Dick Kimber was the first Sacred Sites officer appointed in the Northern Territory by the NT Sacred Sites Authority in 1974. Mr Kimber was a member of the Authority Board from 2003-2009 and he made an outstanding contribution. The Authority is grateful for the knowledge and advice he shared with us over the years.



REMEMBERING NELLIE CAMFOO 1932-2025

Ms Nellie Camfoo was appointed to the Authority on 28 February 1992 and served until 2006. She held the position of Deputy Chair for the entire duration of her tenure on the board. Ms. Camfoo's role within the Authority, particularly as a senior custodian of women's interests, was instrumental in safeguarding women's sacred sites throughout the Northern Territory. She consistently demonstrated a strong commitment to her country ensuring that women's cultural responsibilities were clearly understood and respected by both the Authority and the wider community. One of the conference rooms at the Authority's Darwin office was named in her honour.



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 GOVERNED

The primary policy and decision-making body are the Authority Board, established under section 5 of the Sacred Sites Act. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) is appointed by the Administrator and is 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 1995*.



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, Corporate Services, and Policy and Governance.



Devil's Marbles, NT

ORGANISATIONAL CHART



Custodian Charlie Mangulda at Croker Island, NT

LEGISLATION AND POLICY

COMMONWEALTH AND NORTHERN TERRITORY LAWS

The establishment of the Sacred Sites Act by the Northern Territory Government was enabled by section 73 of the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1976*, which gives the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly power to enact laws:

‘73(1)(a) 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.

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 Aboriginal Land Rights Act and the 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...’



Burnt rock at Kakadu, NT

NORTHERN TERRITORY ABORIGINAL SACRED SITES LEGISLATION AMENDMENT BILL 2025

On the 15 May 2025, the Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Amendment Bill 2025 was passed through Parliament.

The three key amendments made by this Bill are:

- Formalises the existing composition of the members of the Authority.
- Allows for Certificates to be transferred and a recorded party to be added to a Certificate where the land and work or use of the land are the same.
- Establishes a framework for the Authority to enter into enforceable undertakings with individuals alleged to have contravened the act.

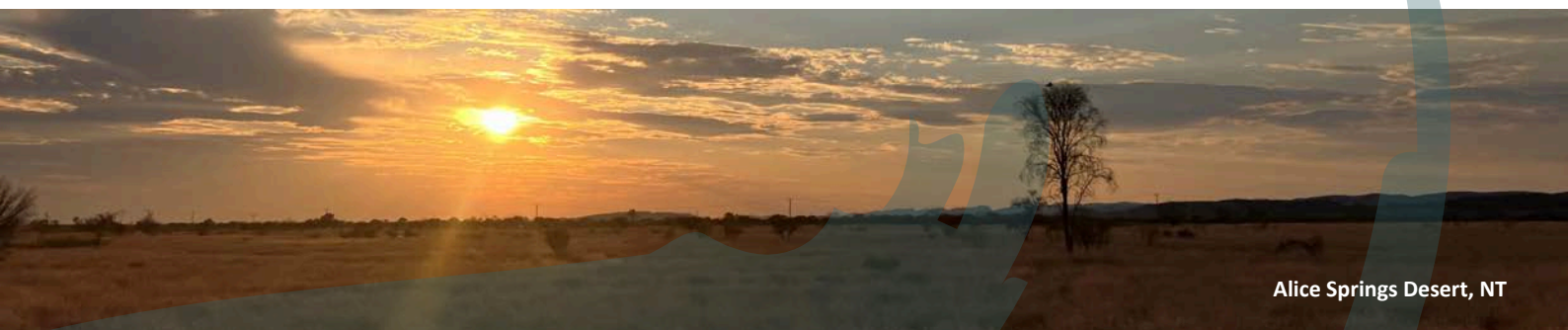
The amendments aim to provide a concise suite of reforms to improve the operation of the Sacred Sites Act. The amendments ensure the Act, and the Regulations are contemporary and remain effective in achieving their purpose, in particular:

Composition of members – formalises the existing practice of having 10 Aboriginal members nominated by Land Councils and 2 additional members nominated by the Minister.

Transferring and adding parties to Certificates – allows existing Certificates to be transferred or have additional parties added as long as the proposed work and use of the land are the same and all existing conditions in protecting sacred sites remain unhinged.

Enforceable undertakings – provides an additional tool for the Authority to make people remediate damages to sacred sites, rather than prosecuting people through the court process.

The Sacred Sites Amendment Bill received Assent from the Administrator on 29 May 2025.



Alice Springs Desert, NT

LANDOWNERS AND DEVELOPERS

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

As uses and development of land evolves, alongside onshore gas and other mining activities, there is increasing need for the Authority to develop sophisticated responses to ensure the ongoing protection of sites

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 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. Mr Robert Pocock, Director Aboriginal Justice Unit, Attorney-General's Department served as the Authority's representative until May 2025.

EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT GROUP

The Authority's Executive Management Group comprises of 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.

During the 2024-2025 financial year, the EMG members were:

- Dr Benedict Scambary, Chief Executive Officer
- Cameron McInerney, Director, Policy and Governance
- Nicola Jackson, Director, Corporate Services
- Shannon Tchia, Director, Research
- Jitendra Kumarge, Acting Director Research

COMMITTEES

AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE

The purpose of the Audit and Risk Committee is to provide independent assurance and assistance to the CEO on the effectiveness of the Authority's audit, risk management and internal control processes, to assist the CEO achieve their external accountability and legislative compliance responsibilities and therefore improving the Authority's governance arrangements.

The committee will undertake the following functions:

- monitor strategic, reputational, corporate and operational risk management and the adequacy of the internal controls established to manage identified risks;
- monitor the adequacy of the Authority's internal control environment and review the adequacy of policies, practices, and procedures in relation to their contribution to, and impact on, the Authority's internal control environment.
- monitor the internal audit function (including development and implementation of the internal audit plan, coordination of audit programs, monitoring of internal audit findings, including managements responses to, and implementation of the audit recommendations)
- monitor the Northern Territory Auditor-General's audit program; audit findings, including reports to the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly and the Authority's responses to, and implementation of the audit recommendations.
- review the draft Annual Report and Financial Statements prior to their approval by the CEO; and
- within the context of the committee's purpose, undertake any other functions determined from time to time by the CEO.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY (ICT) CHANGE ADVISORY BOARD

The role of this board is to improve the efficiency of the Authority's ICT systems and to foster an environment for the free exchange of ideas within the Authority. The board's responsibilities include:

- Review of business cases, project plans, software upgrades for ICT initiatives and investment decisions
- Provide leadership, resources and champion the approved ICT projects and changes
- Report on ICT projects to the Authority's EMG on an as need basis
- Increase the awareness of staff regarding ICT processes, policies and standards and any upcoming ICT changes and projects

The members of the ICT Change Advisory Board were the CEO, Director Corporate Services, Registrar, Client Services Manager, Research Manager, Alice Springs Office Manager, Senior Business Officer, Director Policy and Governance and Systems and Information Manager.



PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES

Custodian Charlie Mangulda
at Croker Island, NT



Yellow Waters, NT

NOTABLE AUTHORITY CERTIFICATES

INFRASTRUCTURE

The Authority supported the infrastructure and investment priorities of the Northern Territory and Federal Government by issuing Certificates for:

- New Adelaide River Gauging Station
- Ubirr Carpark, Walkway and Lookout
- Works at Yellow Water (Ngurrungurrudjba), Home Billabong and Coinda at Kakadu National Park
- East Alligator Upstream Boat Ramp at Kakadu National Park
- Roadworks on Kubara Road
- Northern Info Bay at Kakadu National Park
- Central Arnhem Road, Waterhouse River Water Extraction
- Gutjangan Bremer Island Township Development
- Gunlom Water Tank & Associated Infrastructure

MINING / EXPLORATION & OIL AND GAS

The Authority issued 14 Authority Certificates to ensure the protection of sacred sites within oil and gas works throughout the Northern Territory.

The Authority issued 8 Authority Certificates to ensure the protection of sacred sites within mining works.

The *Northern Territory's Petroleum (Environment) Regulations 2016* stipulate an Authority Certificate must be obtained for petroleum activities. Six Certificates were issued in accordance with the Petroleum Regulations including for Imperial Oil and Gas Pty Ltd and Onshore Energy APT Management Services Pty Ltd and INPEX Operations Australia Pty Ltd.

Mining and exploration only equated 20% of all Authority Certificates issued in 2024-25. It translated to 26% or \$0.845M of revenue.

WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

ABORIGINAL COMMUNITY PROJECTS AND ENTERPRISES

The Authority works with and supports a wide range of Aboriginal organisations and projects.

This year, the Authority issued a certificate to the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Aboriginal Corporation for emergency tree works in Alice Springs, the Authority also issued a certificate to the Bawaka Aboriginal Corporation for the construction of Bawaka Road at Port Bradshaw in East Arnhem. AAPA also issued certificates to Jawoyn Association Aboriginal Corporation, Mabunji Aboriginal resource Indigenous Corporation, Gundejeihmi Aboriginal Corporation, Namultja Aboriginal Corporation and Nguwulidi Aboriginal Corporation.

LAND COUNCILS

The Authority works with and supports the local Land Councils in the Northern Territory and their projects.

An Authority Certificate was issued to the Tiwi Islands Regional Council for the construction of Shelters at Pirlangimpi.



CEO and Chairman of
the NLC, Matthew Ryan



CEO and AAPA staff member with CEO
and Chairman of the NLC

CENTRE FOR NATIVE TITLE AND ANTHROPOLOGY (CNTA)

On the 17 and 18 March 2025, a two-day workshop was held with the Northern Land Council, Tiwi Land Council and the Authority.

This workshop was designed to gain closer relationships between AAPA and the Land Councils and to understand each other's work and methods under each of our Acts.

Staff from the Authority presented to the Land Council's and showed the different systems and databases we work with.

HERITAGE CHAIRS AND OFFICIALS OF AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

On the 21 and 22 November 2024, the Director of Policy and Governance and Deputy Chairman travelled to Canberra to attend the Heritage Chairs and Officials of Australia and New Zealand forum. Board member Rachel Perkins was also in attendance at the meeting. This is the first meeting AAPA has attended since becoming new members.

Each state and territory submitted written reports which were discussed at the meeting. The Authority's work was explained, including its establishment under the Sacred Sites Act. The Gunlom case was also discussed, in which the Director of National Parks was fined for damage to a sacred site.

The Heritage Council of the Northern Territory were also present where they explained their first successful prosecution under the Heritage Act against a pastoral company over the damage to the Wave Hill Walk-off Route.

The next meeting is scheduled for October 2025 in Melbourne.



Gumararra Beach, North of Bawaka, NT

COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH

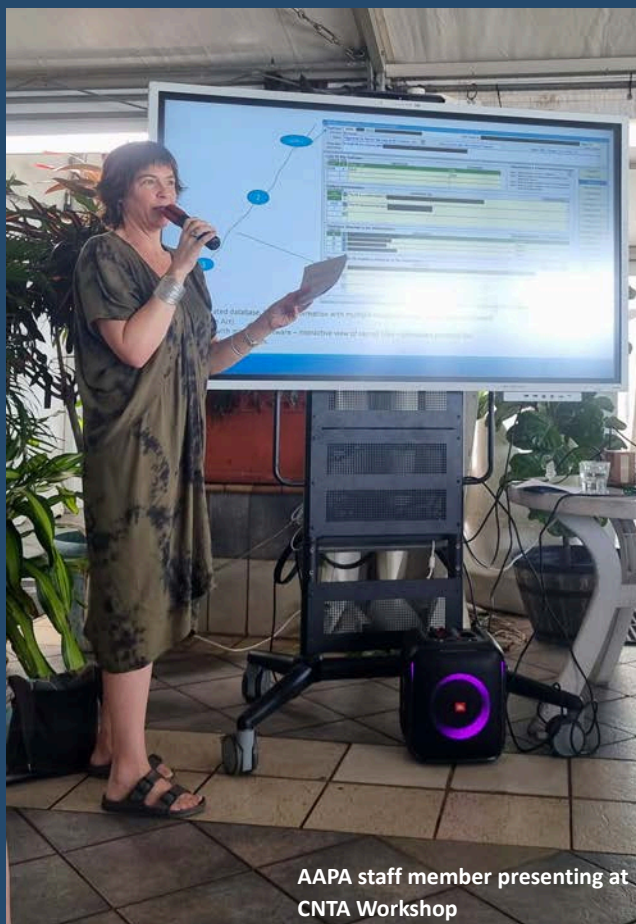
Presentations to stakeholders.

In 2024-2025 the Authority delivered presentations to various industry holders:

- Buffel Grass Weed Advisory Committee
- NT based AELERT Global Summit
- Manitoba Indigenous Reconciliation, Government of Manitoba, Winnipeg Canada
- CNTA workshop with the Northern Land Council, Tiwi Land Council and Anindilyakwa Land Council
- Prescribed Bodies Corporate (PBC) Regional Forum in Central Australia
- Yanyuwa Sea Country Planning Working Group
- AIATSIS Summit 2025



AAPA staff member presenting at
CNTA Workshop



AAPA staff member presenting at
CNTA Workshop

In November 2024, Paola and Lauri from the Research team attended the Australian Anthropological Society's annual conference, which saw papers on a variety of topics presented.

Of particular note, there were presentations by previous Authority staff members (and current consultants), Gareth Lewis and Dr Patrick Horton.

Gareth and Patrick spoke about the resources sector in general, and varying Aboriginal perspectives on the industry, as informed by their fieldwork.



AAPA staff members attending the Australian Anthropological Society's annual conference in WA

MEDIA

The protection of the Northern Territory's sacred sites has continued to attract media interest this year.

The High Court case relating to unauthorised works at Gunlom Falls in Kakadu National Park saw the Authority Board and traditional custodians travel to Kakadu in October 2024 for the final two-day hearing by the NT Local Court.

At the hearing the Director of National Parks pled guilty and was fined \$200,000, the largest penalty ever awarded under the Sacred Sites Act. It marked the end of the court case, which commenced in 2020, and paved the way for the reopening of Gunlom to the public.

Media coverage of the final hearing included ABC, NT News, 9 News, the Guardian and National Indigenous Times.

Other prosecutions that have generated media interest include the conviction of McArthur River Mine for unauthorised work on the Damangani sacred site, and the conviction and \$160,000 fine issued against Vista Gold for working on a sacred site, breaching a condition of an Authority Certificate and causing damage to a sacred site at their Mount Todd gold mine near Katherine.

The Authority Board also held a press conference in March 2025 to respond to the NT Government's proposed amendments to the Sacred Sites Act. They were very concerned at the lack of consultation with Aboriginal custodians, and the speed at which the amendments were introduced and considered.

The Board issued a media release in May 2025 after the amendments passed, expressing disappointment that proper consultation was never held.

In addition, the Authority responded to a number of broader media stories, including news that Equatorial Launch Australia was leaving the Territory, by advising journalists that ELA held an Authority Certificate with no conditions, and which covered their activities into the future.

The Authority also commented on the NT Cattlemen's Association concerns about the desecration of a burial site near Lorella Springs Station, and responded to queries about the development of the Darwin Waterfront Hotel, making it clear that Larrakia custodians consulted in good faith regarding the design of the hotel but that ultimately the decision to proceed is a matter for the developer.

In 2024-25 the Authority distributed five media releases.

Submissions and comments

The Authority has provided written submissions on topics that have been relevant to Authority. This includes discussion papers, consultation plans and submissions through the Northern Territory Government Have Your Say page.

The Authority provides comments for Environmental Management Plans (EMP), Environment Protection Authority (EPA) and provides comment to Development Assessment Services (DAS), the Pastoral Land Board (PLB), Crown Land Estate and to the Pastoral Assessment team, DLPE.

In 2024-25, the Authority provided comment on 4 EMP's and 10 EPA's.

In 2024-25, the Authority made a total of 129 comments.

The Authority has also provided input on 4 submissions which include:

- Draft Territory Co-ordinator Bill
- Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Legislation Amendment Bill 2025
- Strategic Planning Policy
- Heritage significance of the Darwin Esplanade.

\$200k Kakadu fine

Commonwealth's Gunlom Falls site breach



Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority chair Bobby Nunggumajbarr, right, shaking hands with Bolmo clan senior man Joseph Markham; (right) Traditional owner and Wurrkbarbar clan senior man Joshua Hunter; (below) Bolmo clan woman Rachel Willika Kendino. Pictures: Zizi Averill



Zizi Averill

Kakadu custodians have pledged to reopen Gunlom Falls next year after the Commonwealth was slapped with the largest sacred site fine in the Territory's history.

On Wednesday Territory Local Court Chief Judge Elizabeth Morris fined the Parks Australia \$200,000 after a walkway was constructed against the advice of traditional owners, exposing a sacred men's site to the public.

Ms Morris said the walkway was requested by the traditional owners from the Kakadu Management Board in 2016, with Parks initially designing the plans with the consent and co-operation of Jawoyn cultural leaders.

However, during the tender process the clear warnings about the sacred men's site were ignored and new plans were drawn, despite multiple calls for additional consultation and site visits.

When the track to the Gunlom Falls upper pool opened in 2019, Jawoyn leaders were shocked and hurt to find the pathway was within 10m of the protected men's site.

Ms Morris said not only were the sacred rock artworks visible to the public, but it exposed women and children to the site Jawoyn believed would cause them harm.

Ms Morris heard from Bolmo clan senior man Joseph Markham on Tuesday, who said as a Junggayi - a cultural "policeman" - he felt a deep sense of "shame" over the sacred site's exposure.

"He spoke of feeling powerless. He felt like his voice was ignored by the Director," she said.

Ms Morris said the case represented a clash between the two hierarchies, the cultural responsibilities of the three Jawoyn clans and the bureaucracy of Canberra.

Ms Morris said Parks attempted to act as "landlords".

She said while Parks was not "willfully ignorant nor in complete disregard" of the Jawoyn, she condemned their actions as not "reasonable".

Ironically, it was Ms Morris who was the presiding judge as Parks Australia pleaded not guilty and claiming the Commonwealth "immunity" to the

Territory's sacred site laws more than four years ago.

After a Supreme and High Court battle, the case returned before Ms Morris in a special on Country hearing in the shadow of the sacred site National Parks admitted to breaching. Ms Morris said Parks appeared truly "remorseful", having apologised and signed a deed of settlement with the Jawoyn people.

Indeed new Director of National Parks Ricky Archer was visibly emotional as he promised to make rebuilding the agency's relationship with traditional owners his "priority".

"As an Indigenous person I take the protection of sacred sites to heart," Mr Archer said.

"It's something that I culturally, personally and now professionally will be doing as much as I can to ensure we learn the lessons ... and improve the way Parks Australia operates."

Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority chief executive Benedict Scambary said the NT Sacred Site Act fine set a precedent and a "clear message" to everyone building in the Territory.

None of the local court fine payout will go towards the Jawoyn people or the AAPA, however it is understood that Parks agreed to pay traditional owners \$500,000 in a civil compensation case.

The walkway is now termite-ridden and unsafe to climb to the upper pool.

Bolmo clan woman Rachel Willika Kendino said the healing process also needed to occur within "our spirit, of our ancestors and our country".

"It will be healed when we have lots of animals coming back, and fishes that we can gather and come together," Ms Willika Kendino said.

"Hunting, fishing and teaching our next generation: That's where healing comes."

"When we come back and speak to our ancestors, call out to them ... that's part of our healing, because it reconnects to the land."

Traditional owner and Wurrkbarbar clan senior man Joshua Hunter said visitors would be "back here next year".

Future is guarded by sacred sites law

Benedict Scambary



When the Northern Territory achieved self-government in 1978, one of the first pieces of legislation to be introduced was the Aboriginal Sacred Sites (NT) Bill.

It recognised and valued the strong, significant connection of Aboriginal culture to country, and it set up the mechanism to ensure the protection of sacred sites while supporting development.

That mechanism is the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority, and it has been operating for over 40 years, consulting with Aboriginal custodians and providing guidance to land-users.

It is a small, independent authority led by an Aboriginal board, and it is one of the strengths of the NT, supporting both Aboriginal culture and traditions as well as new opportunities for Territory growth and development.

It is when the processes of the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority are not followed, that you usually hear about sacred sites in the news.

Last month, at a hearing at Gunlom Falls in Kakadu, Parks Australia pleaded guilty and was fined for working on a sacred site.

It took years, but the question of immunity was finally resolved, unanimously, by the High Court, which found Parks Australia did have to answer for their actions under NT Law.

And now, under the NT Sacred Sites Act and the baking hot sun at Gunlom, Parks Australia has pleaded guilty, been fined, and the matter is done.

Our Sacred Sites Act is more than legislation; it's part of what makes the Territory a remarkable place to live and work.

The Gunlom case serves as a reminder that respecting sacred sites isn't a formality; it's an investment in maintaining our Territory's rich cultural landscape and shared future.

Dr Benedict Scambary is CEO of the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority

Tuesday May 20, 2025 | NT News

NEWS 05

Pastoralists claim bill win

Sacred site reforms mean work authority papers now transferable

Fia Walsh

The pastoral industry has welcomed changes to the Northern Territory's Sacred Sites Act that make it easier for authority certificates to be transferred, while Indigenous stakeholders say they have been left out of the conversation.

The amendment Bill passed into law on Thursday evening, formalising the composition of the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority (AAPA) Board, and allowing for damage remediation enforcement to occur outside of court.

Most significantly for industry, authority certificates -

which set out the conditions for works carried out near sacred sites - can now be transferred or have parties added, as long as the proposed work and use of the land are the same.

NT Cattlemen's Association chief executive Romy Carey said the reforms were "a constructive step toward delivering greater clarity, efficiency, and confidence for the pastoral industry".

"Enhancing the transferability of authority certificates and reducing regulatory duplication will provide landholders with the certainty they need to invest and develop responsibly across the Territory," she said.

The Minerals Council of Australia NT also welcomed the "improved efficiency" of cultural heritage approvals and said it looked forward to working with the government and traditional owners for future reform.

AAPA, the body overseeing the protection of sacred sites, said the Territory government had missed a crucial opportunity to modernise and strengthen the Act.

"The Sacred Sites Act is meant to protect Aboriginal sacred sites, but Aboriginal people and their representative organisations have not been consulted on these changes,"

said chair Bobby Nunggumajbarr. "The NT Cattlemen's Association says they welcome these amendments, but they do not engage with the Sacred Sites Act."

"I hope their sudden support signals a willingness to work with AAPA to protect sacred sites on their pastoral leases."

"These changes have been quickly drafted without a good understanding of the importance of sacred sites to the NT community, and they increase the potential for disputes and legal challenges."

"The AAPA Board supports economic development in the NT, and the protection of our

sacred sites is a critical part of that."

Central Land Council chair Warren Williams wrote to Lands, Planning and Environment Minister Joshua Burgoyne on Wednesday, expressing his concerns.

"Use of land is very vague - for example, mining is a 'use of land' but a mine can be big or small and the conditions needed to protect sacred sites could be very different," Mr Williams said in the letter.

"You have heard our delegates speak from the heart about how important sacred sites are to our people and the stress and suffering we experi-

ence when they are damaged or at risk of harm."

"I am, we are, asking you to sit down at the table with us to make real improvements to the Sacred Sites Act that will protect sacred sites and make the laws work better for everyone."

Mr Burgoyne said the reforms ensured the legislation reflected modern regulations and boosted site protection.

"The cultural authority of custodians remains central, and the amendments will provide much needed clarity and simpler, streamlined approval processes, while ensuring the protection of sacred sites remains paramount," he said.

MAJOR PROJECTS

Territory Energy Link Project

The Territory Energy Link Project is proposed to be a multi-use infrastructure corridor to facilitate the construction of linear, infrastructure assets that can transport energy and other commodities (e.g water, hydrogen, data). The corridor is proposed to be 130m wide and extend approximately 671km, from Elliott to Darwin. The current Authority Certificate application relates to the planning stages of the project (i.e. environmental survey and geotechnical testing only) and includes a 530m planning corridor.

The Department of Logistics and Infrastructure have submitted eight applications for Authority Certificates to support development of the project and fieldwork consultations are commencing.

Telstra Inter City Fibre Network

Telstra is building an intercity fibre network, including a new 2,500km path between Darwin and Glendambo, South Australia as part of the Telstra Inter-City Fibre Project. This network will significantly increase network capacity and speed, aiming for up to 650 Gbps. Telstra has submitted seventeen applications for the project, and fieldwork has commenced for all of these, with one certificate already issued.





A photograph of a forest with tall, thin trees and dense green foliage. A large, semi-transparent green circle is overlaid on the bottom left of the image. Inside this circle, the words "PERFORMANCE REPORT" are written in white, bold, sans-serif capital letters. The circle's edge is decorated with a series of white dots.

PERFORMANCE REPORT



Protection of Sacred Sites

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.

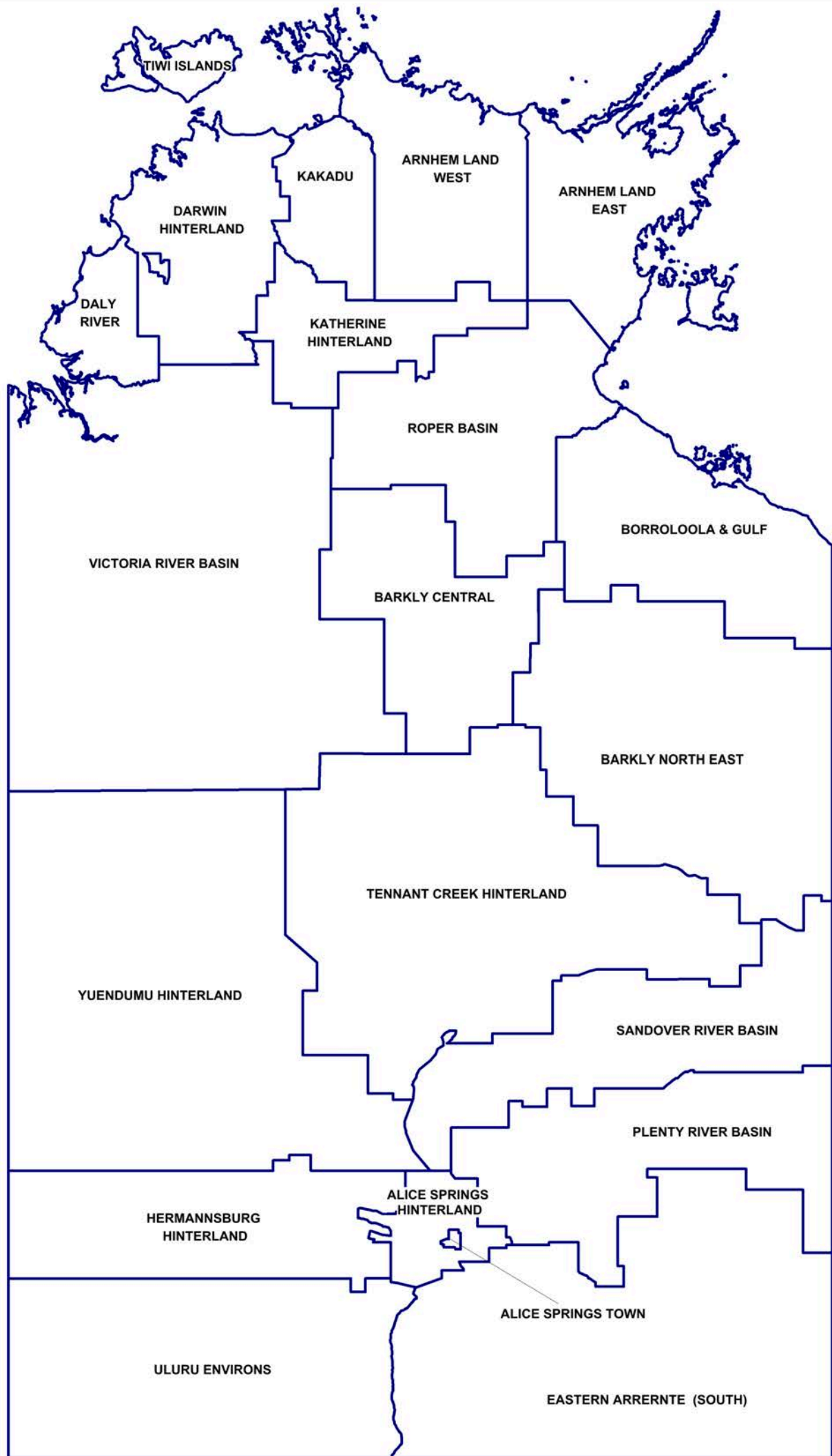
Timeliness is assessed by the average number of days between acceptance of costs for Authority Certificate applications or requests for information and the issuing of those requests.

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.



Thin trees and ant mounds,
Kakkadu, 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.

Authority Certificates are based on consultations with custodians, which define clear conditions on what can and cannot be done in and around sacred sites.

An Authority Certificate provides a defence against prosecution if the applicant complies with conditions imposed to protect sacred sites.

While Authority Certificates are voluntary (except for onshore petroleum activities), 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 desecration of the site, which can lead to prosecution, project delays and reputational damage.

Quantity

In 2024-25, the Authority received 165 Authority Certificate applications. A total of 94 Authority Certificates were issued for projects across the NT, and 49 applications were withdrawn.

Issued Authority Certificates

The 94 Authority Certificates issued by the Authority in 2024-25 is an increase from last years total of 83.

Withdrawn Authority Certificates

The 49 applications withdrawn by applicants in 2024-25 is an increase from the 45 applications withdrawn in 2023-24.

Of the 49 withdrawn applications, 14 were withdrawn by the Northern Territory Government. The other main user groups that withdrew their applications included the Commonwealth Government and private individual companies.

Refused Authority Certificates

In this reporting period, the Authority did refuse one Authority Certificate application.

Figure 1: Key performance indicator

Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	Actual 2020-21	Actual 2021-22	Actual 2022-23	Actual 2023-24	Target 2024-25	Actual 2024-25
Authority Certificates issued	111	92	131	83	100	94
Requests for information completed	971	896	873	926	850	1015
Average time between receiving Authority Certificate application and completing service	130 days	135 days	144 days	125 days	120 days	120 days
Average time between receiving request for information and completing service	2.53 days	1.9 days	2.2 days	3.2 days	3 days	2.4 days
Statutory appeals	1 appeal (ongoing from 2018-19)	0	0	2 appeals	< 1%	0

Figure 2: Number of Authority Certificates received, issued, withdrawn and refused from 2019 to 2025

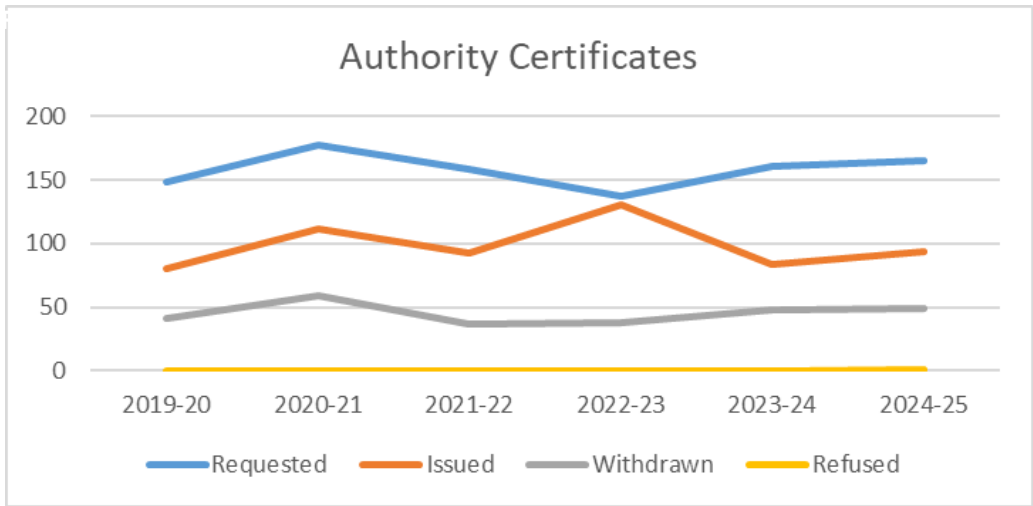


Figure 3: Number of days to issue an Authority Certificate

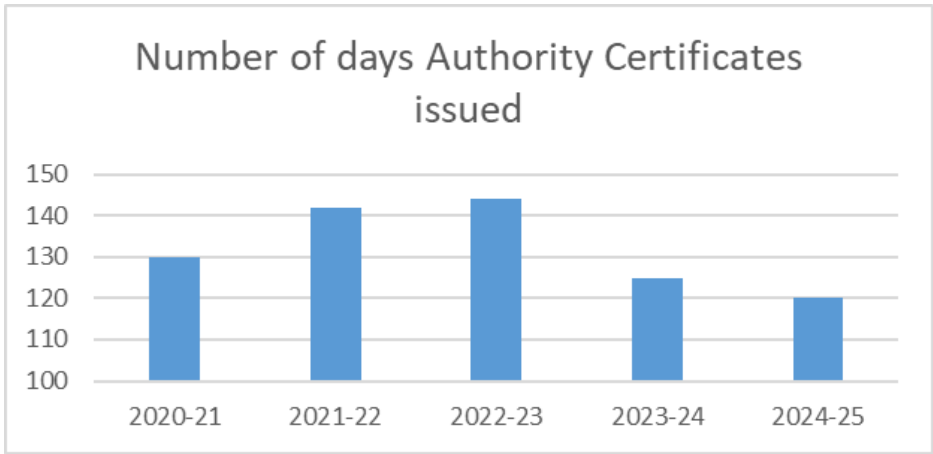


Figure 4: Average days to issue Authority Certificates

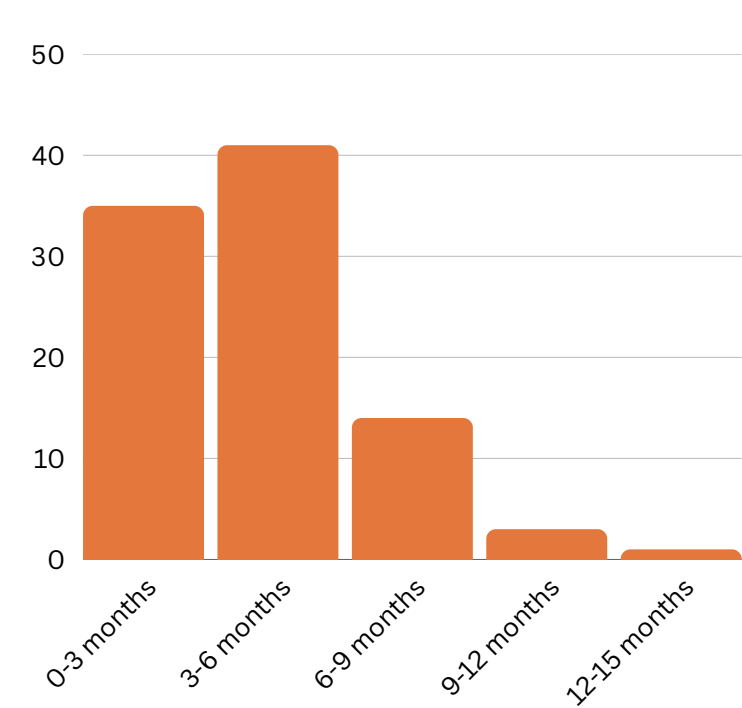


Figure 5: Regional picture – Authority Certificate issued (94) and user group

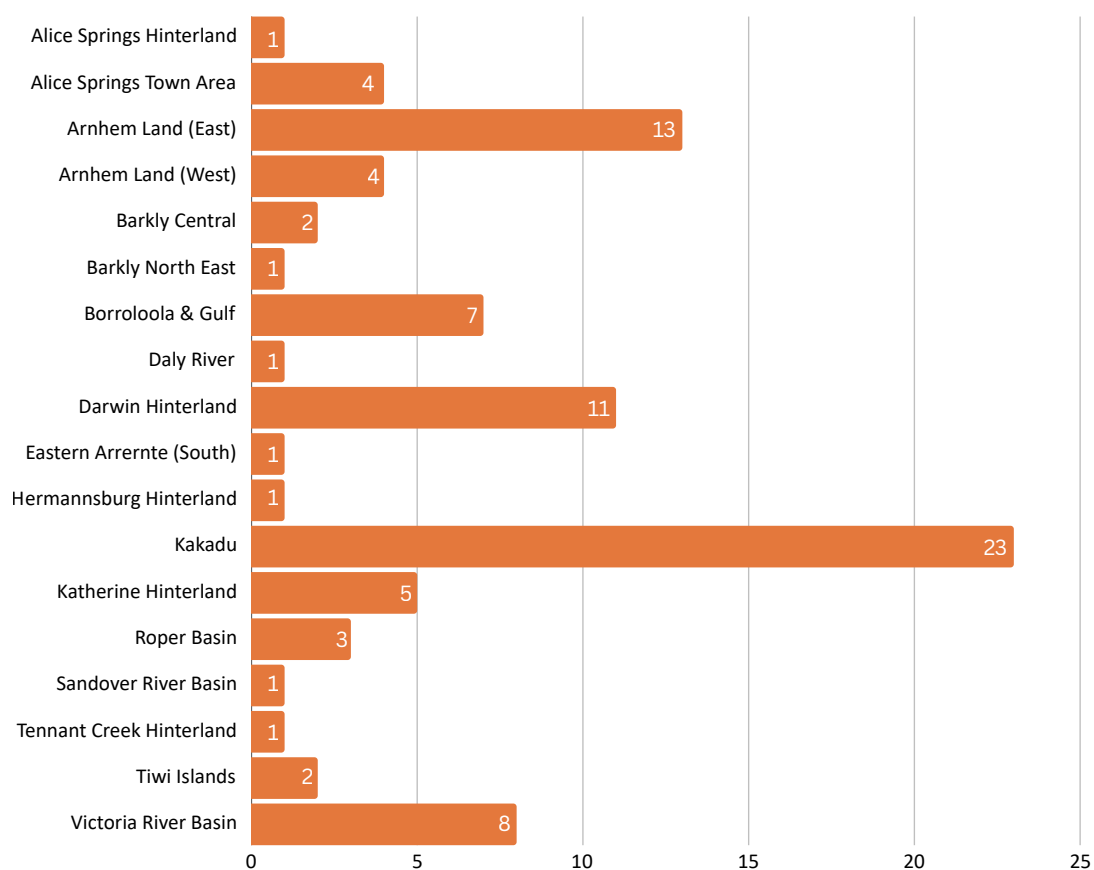
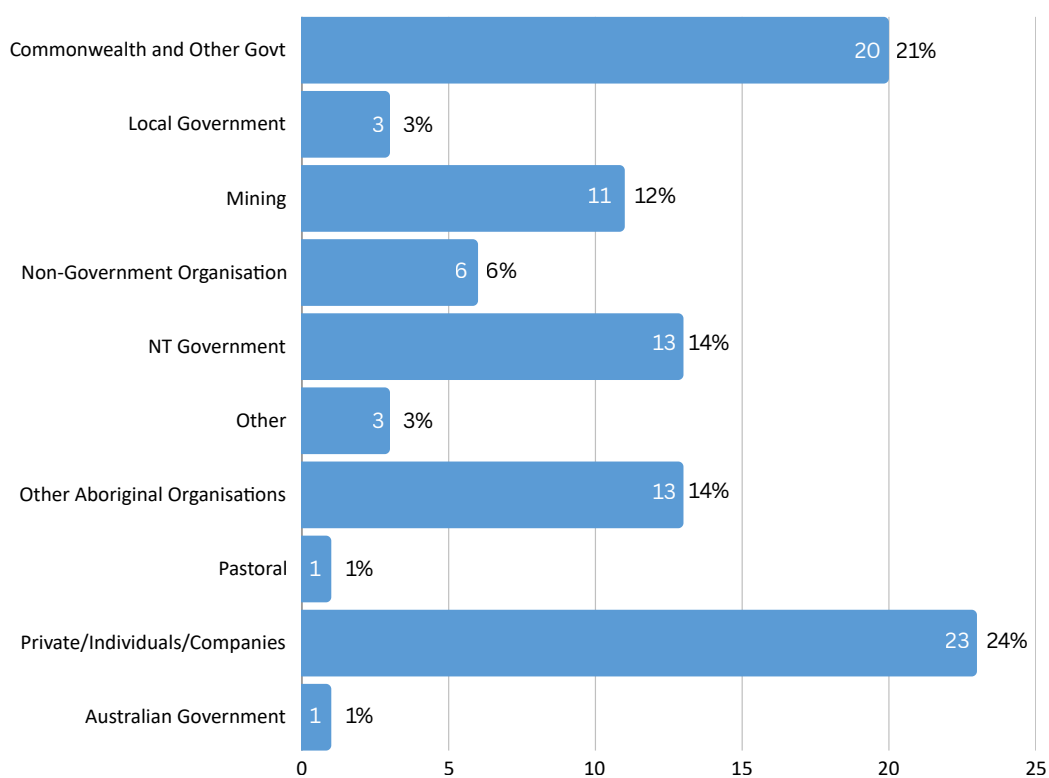


Figure 6: Issued Certificate User Group





REQUEST FOR INFORMATION

Quantity

In 2024-25, the Authority received and responded to 1015 requests for information from the Register of Sacred Sites.

Most requests were for an abstract of the Authority's records. Other requests were for inspections of the Authority Certificate Register and the inspection of the Register of Sacred Sites and other requests.

An Abstract of records issued by the Authority is not a conclusive statement about the extent of sacred sites in that subject area. The Abstract of records is for general information purposes only and should not be relied upon persons undertaking land clearing activities. Relying on Abstract of records for works increases the risk of damage to sacred sites which also increases the corporate reputation risk and possible prosecution, fines or even jail time.

REGISTERED SACRED SITES

Aboriginal sacred sites are vital to the cultural heritage of the Northern Territory. They are an intrinsic part of a continuing body of practices and beliefs emanating from Aboriginal laws and traditions, and their preservation is important for all Australians.

While all sacred sites are protected in the Northern Territory, registering a sacred site establishes its status with comprehensive documentation.

Registration of a sacred site by the Board of the Authority is considered as proof in court of law that a place is indeed a sacred site. The detailed information held by the Authority on registered sacred sites also results in more effective conditions within Authority Certificates.

Recorded sites are sacred sites that have been made known to the Authority for a variety of sources. In some cases the Authority has not been able to fully assess the information regarding recorded sites, nor have these sites been fully mapped. These sacred sites are still protected by the Sacred Sites Act.

The Authority manages the protection of sacred sites through:

- Responding to requests for sacred site protection from custodians, including the recording and documenting of sacred site information, registration of sacred sites, the provision of related protection measures and the keeping of confidential sacred site records.

- Making available for public inspection the Register of Sacred Sites, the Authority Certificate register and other sacred sites records.

- Responding to applications for Authority Certificates, carrying out research and surveys, and consulting with Aboriginal custodians to determine the constraints, if any, imposed on proposed works on or use of land by the protection of sacred sites.

- Enforcing the Sacred Sites Act, including prosecuting offences against the Sacred Sites Act.

Quantity

- The Authority registered 20 sacred sites in 2024-25. Sacred sites are registered at the Authority board meetings which occurs at least four times a year.
- The Authority recorded 232 sacred sites through fieldwork in this reporting period.
- Over 100,783 kms have been travelled by vehicle by AAPA staff.

In total, the Authority has 2268 registered sacred sites and 11719 recorded sacred sites in its database, bringing the total number of documented sacred sites in the Northern Territory to 13987 in 2024-25.

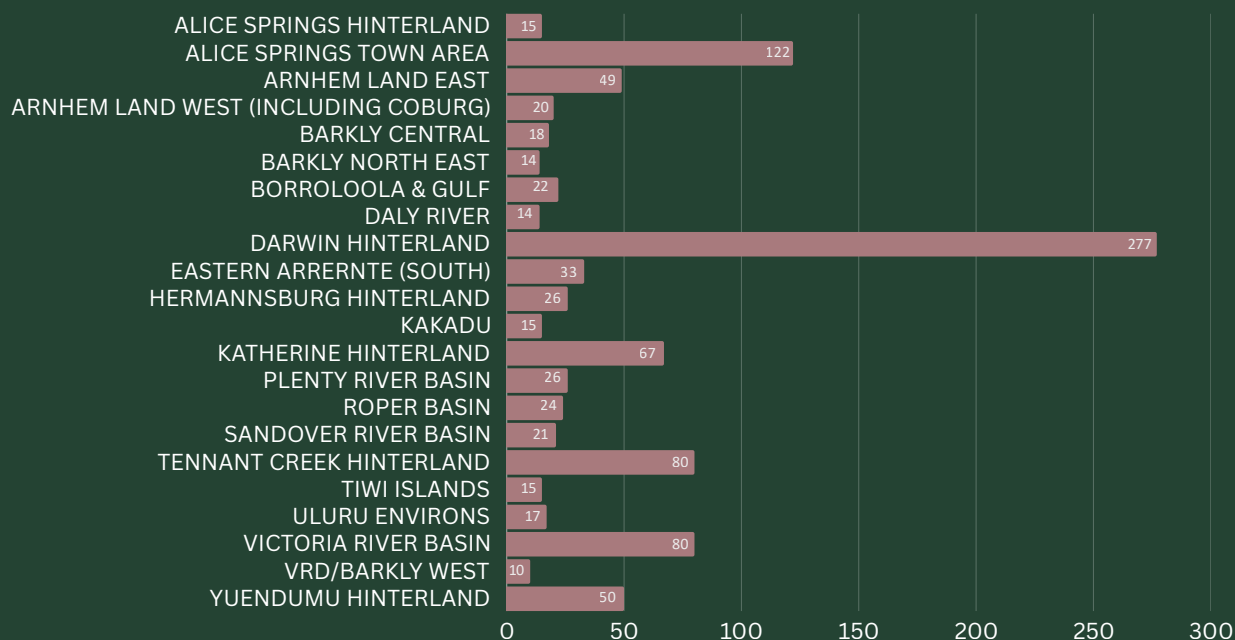


Figure 7: Requests for Information by region

REGISTRATION OF SACRED SITES FROM ARLA TO KARRABU

On the second day of the 145th Authority Board meeting, the Authority Board approved 11 sacred sites across Arnhem Land being registered. The sacred sites are located on the Country of Mawng and Kunbarlang between Arla (Relief Point) and Karrabu (Goomadeer Point), between the communities of Warwu and Maningrida.

This has been a collaboration between Traditional Owners and a Charles Darwin University PhD student Mr Sam Williams. The group have been working together since early 2023 on a project to care for important places on Country and to make sure that this inheritance is passed on to the next generation of Traditional Owners from this part of coastal Arnhem Land.

Chairman of the Authority Board Bobby Nunggumajbarr said "there is a lot of work involved in sacred site registration and the Board welcomes the support from CDU and others to help collect the necessary and detailed information on these significant sites"



AAPA CEO and Board members with Maningrida custodians



Left to right (back): Douglas Djalanba, Charles Yirrwala, Henry Imberamama, Sam Williams, Jackie Gould
Left to right (front) Samuel Gulwa, Jack Marilain, Molly Yarrngu

SACRED SITE
Beyond this point lies a site of
traditional significance
to Aboriginal people
**PLEASE RESPECT THIS
SACRED PLACE**
THE PENALTY FOR UNLAWFUL
HOURS OR DEGRADATION
OF A SACRED SITE MAY
BE UP TO 3000
PENALTY UNITS

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.

Compliance encompasses all aspects of the Authority's work that contributes to conformity with the Sacred Sites Act. The Authority has a dedicated Compliance Unit that is established to:

- Work with stakeholders in the public and private sector to engage with the Authority Certificate process and voluntarily comply with the conditions set out in an Authority Certificate issued;
- Audit proponents to ensure conditions in Authority Certificates are being followed;
- Respond to and investigate complaints about damage to sacred sites;
- Prosecute offences against the Sacred Sites Act; and
- Support custodian access to sacred sites.

GUNLOM FALLS DECISION

On 23 October 2024, the Northern Territory Local Court fined Parks Australia \$200,000, marking the end of a long-running legal battle over unauthorised works near the sacred site of Gunlom Falls.

In 2020, the Authority commenced prosecution in the Northern Territory Local Court alleging that the Director of National Parks (DNP) undertook works on the Gunlom Falls sacred site in Kakadu National Park against the advice of custodians and without authorisation from the Authority under the Sacred Sites Act.

A two-day High Court hearing on the 22-23 October 2024 at Gunlom Falls heard the DNP plead guilty and they were fined \$200,000 which is the largest fine ever to be given under the NT Sacred Sites Act.



Judge Morris with custodian Joshua Hunter



AAPA CEO, staff and Board member with Hutton and McCarthy lawyers



AAPA Board members and staff at Gunlom Falls hearing

The Authority's Chairman Mr Bobby Nunggumajbarr said after the decision was handed down, "Kakadu is an important place for the whole nation. Gunlom Falls is a special place for the whole of the nation. Aboriginal people want to be able to share it with everyone, but they must have confidence that its sacred places will be respected. Today that confidence was restored.

The path has now been realigned, the court case is finally over, the strength of our Sacred Site Act has been proven, and hopefully soon, by working together, this beautiful place can welcome visitors once more."

On the 4 July 2025, Gunlom falls re-opened to the public and visitors once again.

FIELDTRIPS

In the 2024-25 financial year, the Compliance Unit undertook 6 fieldtrips across the NT to investigate allegations of damage to sacred sites and obtain further evidence in support of the Authority's current prosecutions.

In 2024-25, the Authority:

- Received 33 alleged site damage reports.
- 32 investigations completed.
- Commenced 3 new prosecutions and successfully completed 3 prosecutions.

At the end of the 2024-25 financial year:

- 25 cases were under investigation.
- 19 days were spent in the field.
- 3 prosecutions were before the courts.



Helicopter used for fieldwork



Mapping fieldwork at Kangaroo Flats conducted by AAPA staff



GPS recording at Totum Road by AAPA staff



Ormiston Gorge, NT



OUR PEOPLE

2024-25 Snapshot



Our **full-time** equivalent (FTE) workforce increased to **37.29** in 2024-25 compared to 31.62 in 2023-24

Our **headcount** of **staff** increased from **37** staff up to **44** in 2024-25.

66% of the workforce were **female** in 2024-25 compared to **63%** in 2023-24

The **median age** of staff was **43** in 2024-25 compared to **42** years in 2023-24.

49% of our staff were **aged between 25 and 44** in 2024-25 compared to **50%** in 2023-24

68% of our staff were ongoing **permanent** employees in 2024-25 compared to **75%** in 2023-24

10% of our staff identified as **indigenous** in 2024-25 compared to **9%** in 2023-24

25% of our staff identified as being from a **culturally and linguistically diverse** background in 2024-25 compared to **20%** in 2023-24

0% of our staff identified as having a **disability** in 2024-25.

67% of the workforce has **worked for the Authority** (including NTG service where applicable) for **less than five years**

30% of the workforce has **worked for the Authority** (including NTG service where applicable) for **more than five years**, and **one staff member** has worked for the authority for more than 30 years.

62% of our staff were employed in the **professional** (55%) or **technical** streams (7%).

36% of our staff had a **flexible work agreement** in place and a further **16%** work **part time or casual**.

\$22,564 was spent in 2024-25 compared to \$52,025 in 2023-24 on **training and development** for our staff

\$11,918 was spent on providing **49 individual support services** for staff



Authority staff



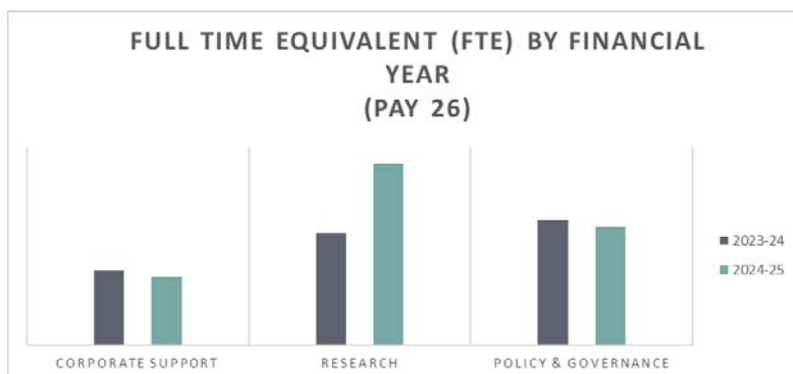
Authority staff out on fieldwork



Authority staff and Board member en route to Gunlom Falls

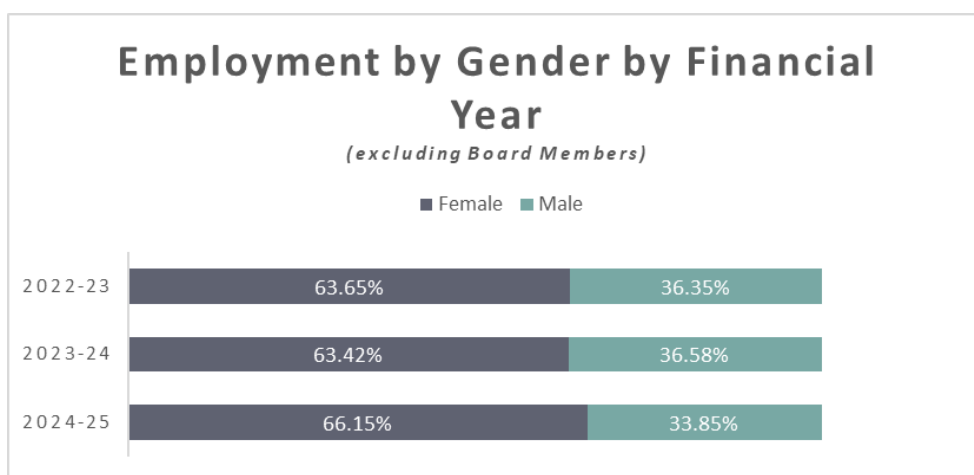
WORKFORCE PROFILE

The Authority's workforce in 2024-2025 increased by 5.67 full time equivalent (FTE) staff to 37.29, compared to 31.61 in the prior year. This increase was primarily due to the commencement of several short-term positions that are externally funded for a 12 month period. The Authority has also filled all the specialist positions vacancies in the Alice Springs office after several difficult and highly challenging recruitment attempts.



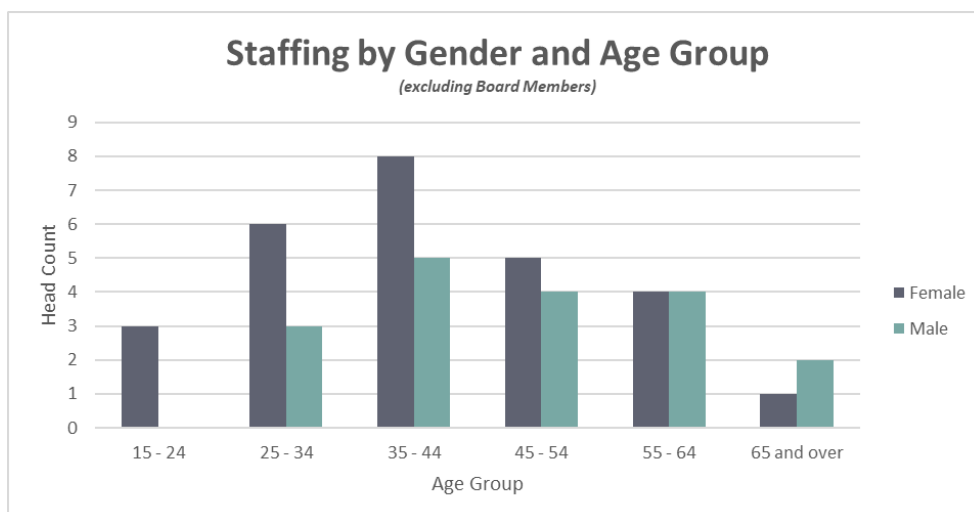
Gender Comparison

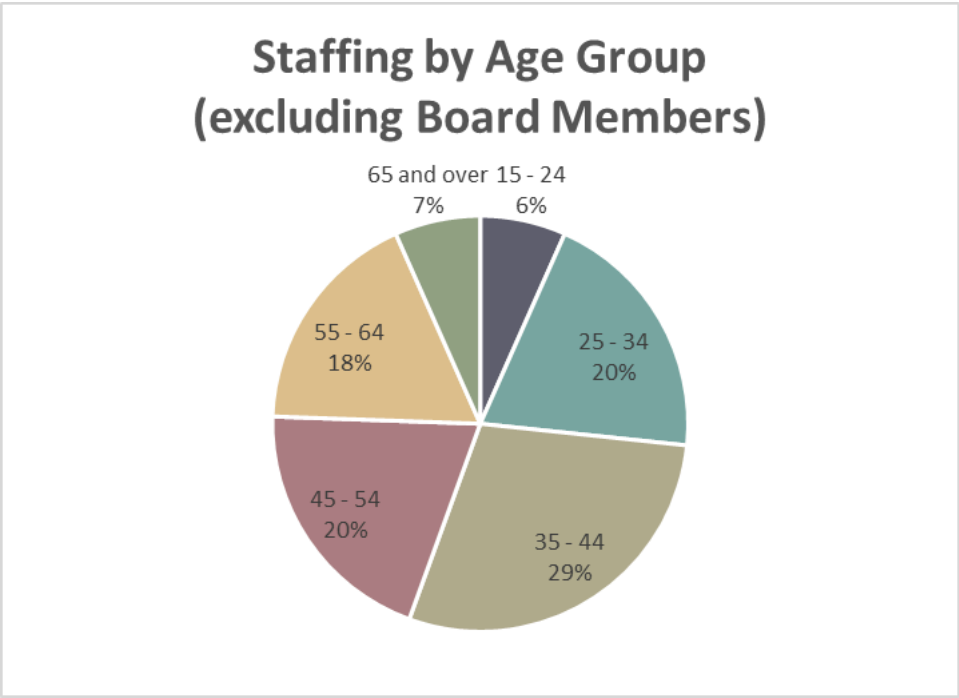
For 2024-2025 females made up 66.15% of the Authority's employees. Over the last three years, there has been minor gender adjustments with males decreasing by 2.5% since 2022-23.



Employees by age and gender

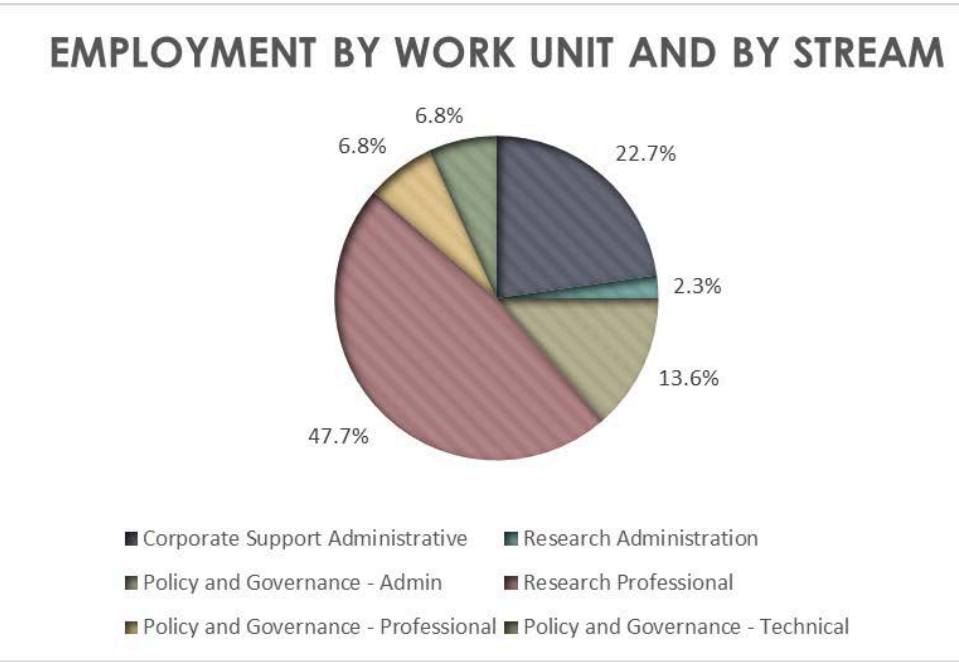
In 2024-25, the median age of employees was 43 which demonstrates a gradual ageing in the workforce over the last six years with the median age growing from 38 in 2019-20. At 30 June 2024, 63% of the female workforce was between 15-44 and 56% of males were aged between 45 and over.





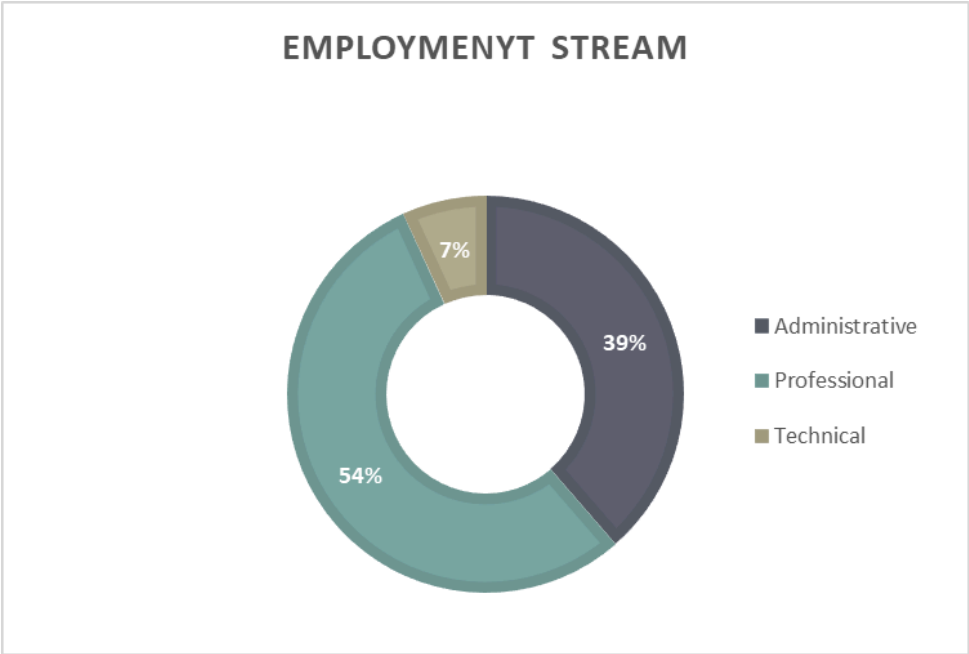
Employees by unit

In comparison to last financial year there has been minimal changes to the employment by work unit and stream. The Research unit undertakes the Authority’s anthropological services and most employees are within the professional stream with one externally funded position being administrative. The Policy and Governance unit which also manages the technical services and compliance functions of the Authority, made up 27% of the Authority with 14% administrative, 7% professional and 7% technical. The Corporate Support unit is entirely made up of administrative personnel, is the smallest unit and consists of the Chief Executive Officer and the Corporate Services functions.



Employees by stream

In 2024-25, the administrative stream employed 39% of the workforce which is a decrease of 10% from the previous year. The professional stream increased by 9% to 56%. The technical stream had a small increase of 2%. The significant adjustment in the professional stream is explained by the externally funded position within the Research unit to manage the significant projects of 2025 as well as the successful recruitment to fill vacancies in the Alice Springs Research unit.



Recruitment and retention

In 2024-25, there were sixteen new commencements and eight separations, of which six were resignations and two were transfers to different agencies. Of the six new commencements, five were permanent appointments.

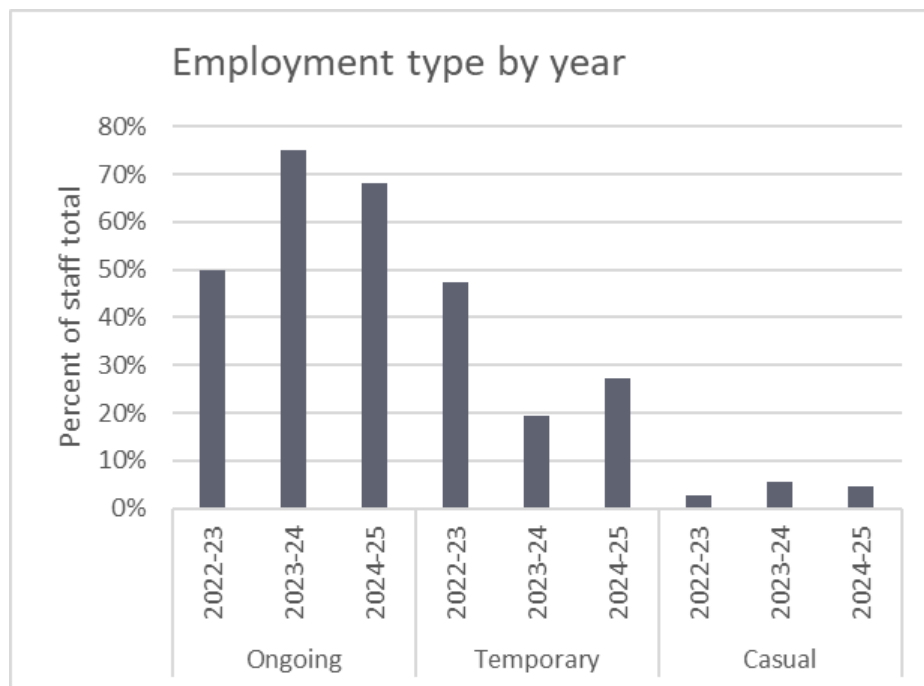
Twenty one recruitment actions were undertaken in 2024-25 with twelve of these having successful outcomes. Of the seven unsuccessful recruitment rounds, four were unable to identify a suitable applicant with the relevant skills knowledge and experience required for the role(s). Two recruitment actions were cancelled due to changes in business operations and the need change recruitment direction.
All positions are advertised under special measures.

Recruitment and retention

	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Separations	9	12	8
Commencements	17	6	16
Total	26	18	24

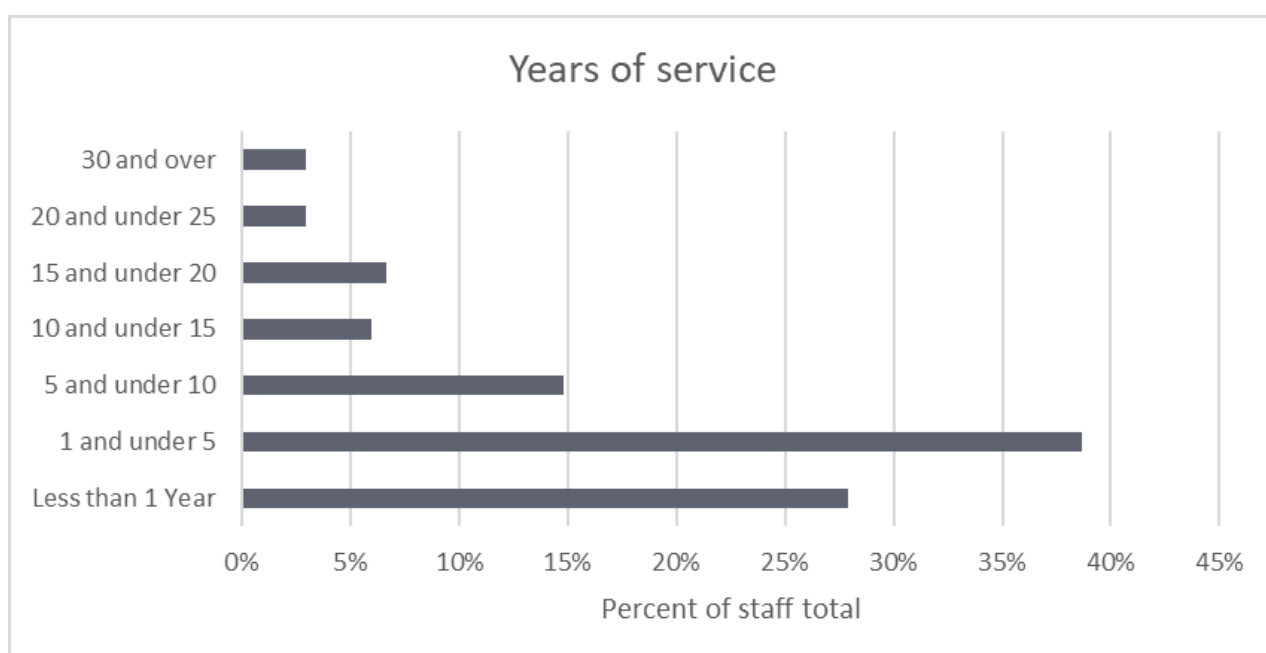
Employment types

The Authority has seen an increase in temporary contract employees in 2024-25 due to the external funding for eleven positions to work through the significant projects of 2025. Three funding agreements were negotiated with two being for the 2025 calendar year and the third for 2025 and 2026. The slight decrease in ongoing employment is due to three true vacancies that the Authority is working to fill in the 2025-26 financial year.



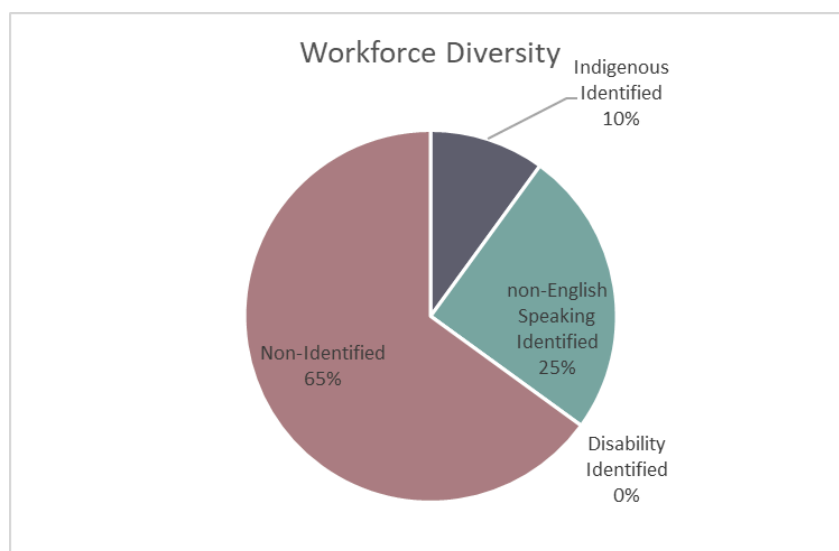
Retention

In 2024-25, 67% of the workforce had been employed by the Authority for less than five years which is consistent to the last reporting period and is consistent with the short-term project and funding based positions. This year 19% of the workforce had been employed by the Authority for 10 years or more, which is again consistent with the prior reporting period.



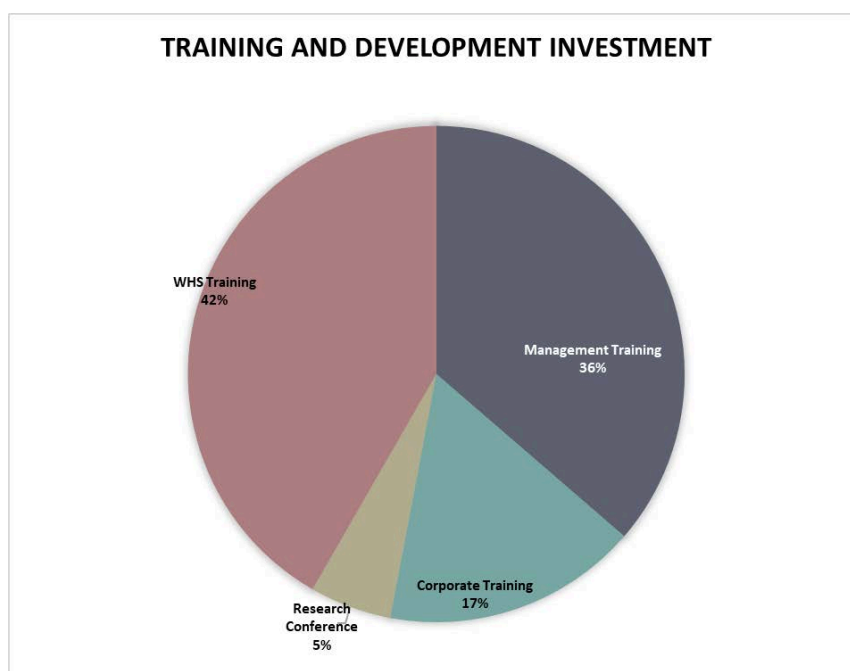
Diversity

The Authority is committed to the principles of inclusion, equity and diversity. Overall, this year the percentage of staff identifying as Indigenous increased from 9% to 10%. The percentage of staff identifying as being from a culturally and linguistically diverse background increased from 20% to 25%. The percentage of staff that identified as having a disability remained at 0% for the sixth year in a row. In 2024-25 the Authority continued to mandate the special measures principles to increase Aboriginal employment however, it has been noted that Aboriginal applicants for positions are a rarity. In 2024-25 there continued to be negligible Aboriginal applicants for professional stream roles which was the majority of recruitment actions. Three of the five non-professional or technical stream position advertised in 2024-25 successfully recruited an Aboriginal applicant. The Authority remains committed to increasing its Aboriginal employee numbers and its target of 20%.



Training and development

In 2024-25, training and development continued to be invested in with \$23,000 spent on a range of programs. Over \$9,000 was invested in work health and safety (WHS) training, in topics such as remote first aid and four-wheel-drive defensive driving, for research officers as well as other staff that undertake remote travel. This training helps ensure the safety of our staff travelling in remote areas. All staff that undertake remote fieldwork or travel regularly are encouraged to attend refresher training every year prior to the peak-travel season and regular safety and call in procedures are refreshed with staff and consultants to ensure consistent safety practices are in place. Over \$8,000 was invested in emerging leaders of the Authority to undergo Leadership for New Managers and Emerging Leaders Training programs ran through Department of Corporate Digital Development. The remaining 22% of the expenses were on general corporate training and staff attending the Australian Anthropological Society conference.





Celebrating
10
YEARS
at the Authority

Staff Profile

Ms Wendy Forscutt Registrar

With a decade of service at the Authority, Wendy is a valued member of the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority. A lifelong Territorian, Wendy has lived in the Northern Territory for 56 years and brings a deep understanding of the local context to her role as a registrar.

Wendy works in the Client Services Unit and is responsible for managing all information and ensuring the integrity of all information released to the public. Another part of Wendy's role is maintaining the public registers, overseeing applications and handling the majority of enquiries that come through the Authority; and serving as a central point of contact and support to the public and stakeholders.

Wendy was introduced to the Authority through the guidance and support of Peter Russell and Ambre Philpott, whose encouragement helped her into a meaningful and lasting career.

Wendy brings a wealth of lived experience and professional knowledge to her role. When asked about what keeps her motivated, she cites the stability and security of the work as well as the personal hope of future travels.

A quote that holds special meaning for Wendy is "Life is but a visit, death is going home". Believed to be of Vietnamese origin and offers a sense of peace and the hope of reunion with loved ones.

Wendy's ongoing commitment and deep local knowledge make her an integral part of the Authority's operations and values.

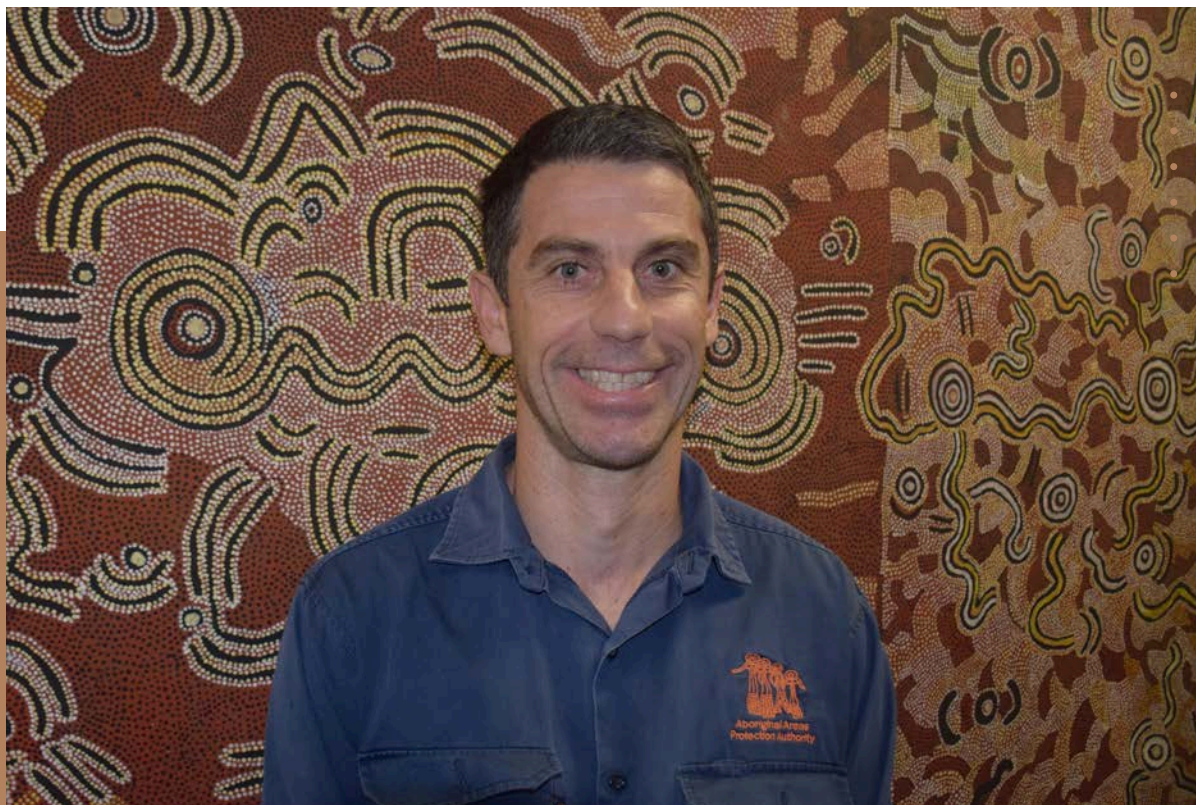
Ms Kim Flitcroft Assistant Registrar

With 10 years working at the Authority, and 14 years living in the Northern Territory, Kim originally came to the Territory for a two week job and never left. After working in an art gallery and seeking a change, Kim was introduced to the Authority through a recommendation of a previous staff member Alli Bitar and has been a key part of the team ever since.

Kim's role involves handling customer enquiries via phone and email, assisting applicants with their applications, processing Authority Certificate and Requests for Information, preparing agreements and certificates, managing the Alice Springs office and vehicle fleet, supporting board member travel arrangements and any other tasks that may arise day to day.

Kim holds a Certificate III in Hospitality and a Diploma of Business. A highlight working at the Authority for Kim is the strong connection with custodians, enjoying visits for a cuppa and a chat, spontaneous street greetings and even the occasional cheeky siren from a local police officer.

Kim is motivated by the goal of paying off her home and retiring with family in Yamba on the east coast, they live by the saying "The country will look after you" – for better or worse. A phrase shared with her by a senior custodian in Mparntwe, which left a lasting impression on her.



Staff Profile

Mr Matthew Dmitrieff

Research Manager

Matthew first joined the Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority in 2009 after relocating from Sydney, NSW to the Northern Territory. He worked with the Authority until 2013, then returned in 2020, bringing his total time with the Authority to nine years.

In 2024, Matthew stepped into the role as Consultant Research Manager where he oversees and supports consultant anthropologists conducting research projects, primarily Authority Certificates on behalf of the Authority. Matthew plays a vital role in the protection and management of sacred sites across the Territory.

Matthew's journey into applied anthropology began during a university field research trip to the Northern Territory in 2008. That experience, along with an Aurora internship at NTSCorp in New South Wales which set his interest in the field. A recommendation from a staff anthropologist who had previously worked at the Authority led Matthew to apply and he has been committed to the work ever since.

Matthew holds a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in Anthropology and Human Geography, which provided the foundation of his career in cultural heritage and community-based research.

What Matthew enjoys most about the Authority:

"The people. I am a big fan of the CEO Ben and admire the courage he shows in standing up for the protection of sacred sites. This extends to our board members as well. I really respect the unique skills my colleagues bring and enjoy working alongside them."

What keeps him motivated:

"The leadership and commitment of Ben and the Board. Seeing their dedication inspires me to keep contributing."



Staff Profile

Ms Sheetal Sharma

Senior Records and Information Systems Officer

Sheetal has been a dedicated member of the AAPA team for over five years, having commenced her role in August 2019.

She moved to the Northern Territory in 2016 with her husband under Australia's skilled migration program. Since then, they have made the NT their home and are now proud parents of two daughters, both born in Darwin.

In her role as Senior Records and Information Systems Officer, Sheetal plays a critical part in maintaining AAPA's records in an organised, secure, and accessible manner, ensuring full compliance with relevant policies and procedures. She manages the Content Manager (TRM) system, overseeing system configuration, user access, and governance to ensure consistency and integrity across the Authority.

In addition to records management, Sheetal maintains the AAPA intranet, ensuring it remains current, functional, and user friendly for all staff. She also conducts ICT inductions for new staff, delivers ongoing training, and provides ICT support to assist staff with day to day technical issues which helps the Authority remain connected and productive.

Growing up in India, career paths often revolved around either becoming a doctor or an engineer. With a dislike for biology, Sheetal gravitated toward engineering and discovered a passion for IT and systems management.

Sheetal holds a Bachelor of Technology (B.Tech), with a specialisation in Electronics and Communications.

Working at AAPA has been a rewarding experience for her. As a migrant, Sheetal feels welcomed and valued and sees her role as a unique opportunity to learn about Aboriginal culture, values, and traditions. She takes pride in contributing to a meaningful cause while growing both personally and professionally.

Her favourite quote is inspired by the tragic Air India crash: "Life is fragile. Live every moment to the fullest and appreciate what you have."

Sheetal stays motivated by the knowledge that her work makes a difference, her eagerness to learn and face new challenges and the support of her family.

MILESTONES

Shilo Panatos, Kim Flitcroft and Wendy Forscutt celebrated 10 years of continued service.

STAFFING HIGHLIGHTS

Lynne Bricknell in Compliance completed the OneNTG Emerging Leaders Program at the end of 2024.

CULTURAL EVENTS

Staff participated in a number of cultural recognition events this year. In July 2024, the Authority held its inaugural stall at the Keep the fire burning. Blak, loud and proud NAIDOC event. Staff were able to engage with the community to showcase the work of the Authority and the importance of protecting sacred sites. Staff also attended the NAIDOC march down Mitchell Street in Darwin City.

Staff also attended the Barunga Festival held from 6-9 June 2025. One of the Barunga's main features is the Bunggul traditional dance, with dancers coming from across the top end putting on a spectacular showcase. Nationally acclaimed musicians perform alongside emerging community artists from all over the NT, in a breeding ground of musical collaboration.



Authority NAIDOC Stall 2024



NAIDOC March 2024



WELLBEING AND SUPPORT PROGRAMS

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

The Authority has always maintained a commitment to flexible work arrangements for staff and recognise 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 2024-25 seven staff were employed on a part-time basis due to family and lifestyle commitments. A further 16 staff, although working full time, had flexible workplace arrangements to vary their standard working hours. This means that 52% of our workforce are employed under flexible working arrangements, whether that be part-time employment or a variation of the standard working hours, a 8% decrease from the previous year.

FLU VACCINATION PROGRAM

The Authority utilised the whole of government flu vaccination program in Darwin and Alice Springs. Where staff were unable to participate in this program the Authority reimbursed staff for the costs they incurred. Approximately 25% accessed this program.

CHRISTMAS CLOSEDOWN

In 2024-25, the Authority closed its doors over the Christmas period. This enabled staff to have a break between Christmas and New Year. Staff accessed recreation leave during this period.

EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Authority continued to promote the Employee Assistance Program in 2024-25 and encouraged staff and family members to access the free and confidential counselling service through the whole-of-government contract.

In 2024-25, staff and family members participated in 49 individual, confidential counselling sessions.

WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY

The Authority is committed to ensuring the safety of all our staff, whether they are travelling remotely or are in the office. In 2024-25 remote travel and staff welfare continued to be recognised as the highest organisational risk. To mitigate the risk, a rigorous call-in process is 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.

There were no incidences that a recovery was required in 2024-25.

WORKPLACE INCIDENTS

There were no new workers compensation claims in 2024-25.



Crab claw pipe



Bullita homestead near Timber Creek

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY REPORTING

SACRED SITES AND THE ENVIRONMENT

With climate change causing shifts in weather patterns, rising temperatures, and more extreme events, sacred sites and the surrounding environment face new risks. Aboriginal people's deep understanding of the land is vital in adapting to these changes and helping communities respond in ways that protect both culture and nature.

Aboriginal sacred sites are much more than just special places, they're deeply connected to the land and the natural environment. These sites hold stories, traditions and spiritual meaning that has been passed down.

Custodians consistently emphasise the fragile state of their sacred sites and the cultural landscapes they are part of. Unusual weather patterns, such as late season bushfires, intense rainfall leading to floods, and higher than normal temperatures are causing serious damage to these landscapes and the sacred places within them. Many of these sites include important trees, rock formations, specific plant species and waterways that hold cultural significance.

By respecting and protecting these places, we're not just honouring culture, we're also helping to look after the environment and build resilience against climate change for future generations.



THE AUTHORITY IN THE COMMUNITY

The Authority values the importance of giving back to the community by supporting small business, community organisations and activities. In 2024-25, the Authority supported 15 applicants which included Bawaka Aboriginal Corporation, Tiwi Islands Regional Council, Parks and Wildlife Commission NT, by providing full or partial waivers of charges for Authority Certificates.

The total costs of these waivers were \$284,978 representing 8.68% of the Authority's self-generated income for 2024-25.

The Authority supported the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress Aboriginal Corporation, and their activities of emergency works on Sacred Trees in Alice Springs as they were a fire risk and were causing structural problems to buildings they had fallen on. The Authority supported the corporation by waiving their application costs.

The Authority also supported the Central Land Council and their activities to their office extension in Alice Springs by waiving part of their application costs.



Custodian at Croker Island



FINANCIAL REPORT

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OVERVIEW FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2025

The Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority (the Authority) is a statutory authority established under the *Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act 1989 (NT)* to administer sacred site protection in the Northern Territory.

In 2024-25, The Authority continued to see a high demand for services for large scale projects from 2023-24. This included multiple government Agencies and private companies engaging with the Authority for medium term (12 month) projects to issue certificates in their areas of operations. This spans across major infrastructure and mining explorations as well as national and territory parks and tourism destinations. The Authority achieved \$4.482 million in self-generated revenue and an overall surplus budget position of \$0.199 million.

This year saw a continuation of infrastructure Authority Certificates applications including communications, power, water and sewage infrastructure (53%) which generated \$1.2 million or 37% of self-generated revenue. Mining, oil and gas equated to 20% of all Authority Certificates issued in 2024-25 which translated to 26% or \$0.845 million of revenue generated. Tourism equated to 11% of certificates issued which generated \$0.451 million or 11% of revenue generated. Aboriginal Community Development represented 9% of certificates issued or 6% (\$0.291 million) of revenue generated.

The Authority received output appropriation of \$3.243 million to assist in protecting sacred sites across the Northern Territory. The success of this investment is evident through the issuing of 94 Authority Certificates and the generation of \$4.482 million in revenue recording 232 sacred sites and registering 20 sacred sites. The Authority also held six Authority Board meetings and successfully prosecuted 2 matters before the local courts and commenced 2 new prosecutions.

In 2024-25 the Authority commenced the year with a baseline self-generated income budget of \$2.5 million. This was increased to \$4.249 million based on projected performance and commitments. Of the \$1.749 million increase, \$1.069 million was allocated to the purchase of goods and services to accommodate the continuation of engaging consultant anthropologists and the remaining \$0.680 million was allocated to employee expenses.

Overall, the Authority increased its purchase of goods and services budget from \$1.370 million to \$2.439 million which exceeded budget by \$0.346 million. This over expenditure is predominantly related to Authority Certificate expenses for consultants and custodians (\$0.127 million). legal expenses (\$0.052 million) and an increase in Board meetings (\$0.153 million).

A two day on country court hearing was held at Gunlom Falls, Kakadu National Park in October of 2025. Parks Australia pled guilty and received the highest fine ever to be issued under the Act, for undertaking works on the Gunlom Falls sacred. This work was undertaken against the advice of custodians and without an Authority Certificate issued by AAPA under the Sacred Sites Act. This was an extraordinary outcome for the Authority and Custodians who had been fighting for recognition and justice over the past 5 years including action in every court of Australia from Darwin local and Supreme courts to the High Court of Australia.

Employee related costs continued to be the largest expense to the Authority in 2024-25 totaling \$4.737 million. However, a minor surplus of \$0.108 million was experienced as the previous recruitment challenges for anthropology positions in Alice were finally resolved, providing a full complement of staff by May 2025.

2024-25 was again a highly successful year for the Authority, delivering 94 Authority certificates with a further 152 Authority Certificates underway.

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 Australian Accounting Standards and with the requirements as prescribed in 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 2025 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.



Shannon Tchia
Delegate
29 August 2025



Andrew Harvey
Director Corporate Services
29 August 2025

COMPREHENSIVE OPERATING STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2025

	Note	2025	2024
		\$000	\$000
INCOME			
Appropriation	5		
Output		3,243	4,263
Sales of goods and services ^(b)	6	4,482	3,281
Goods and services received free of charge	7	971	905
Other income ^(b)	9	8	0
TOTAL INCOME	3	8,703	8,449
EXPENSES			
Employee benefits expense	10	4,737	4,613
Administrative expenses			
Property management		32	81
Purchases of goods and services	11	2,753	2,406
Depreciation and amortisation	21,22,23	11	96
Other administrative expenses ¹		970	905
TOTAL EXPENSES	3	8,504	8,101
NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)		199	349
COMPREHENSIVE RESULT		199	349

¹ Includes DCDD service charges and DLI repairs and maintenance service charges.

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

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 30 JUNE 2025

	Note	2025	2024
		\$000	\$000
ASSETS			
Current assets			
Cash and deposits	15	2,426	2,209
Receivables	17	770	234
Total current assets		3,196	2,443
Non-current assets			
Property, plant and equipment	21, 31	20	10
Intangibles	22, 31	-	1
Total non-current assets		20	11
TOTAL ASSETS		3,216	2,454
LIABILITIES			
Current liabilities			
Payables	26	270	220
Provisions	28	449	455
Other liabilities	29	518	-
Total current liabilities		1,238	675
Total non-current liabilities		-	-
TOTAL LIABILITIES		1,238	675
NET ASSETS		1,979	1,779
EQUITY			
Capital		(2,379)	(2,379)
Accumulated funds		4,358	4,159
TOTAL EQUITY		1,979	1,779

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

STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2025

	Note	Equity at 1 July	Comprehensive result	Transactions with owners in their capacity as owners	Equity at 30 June
		\$000	\$000	\$000	\$000
2025					
Accumulated funds		(4,154)	(199)	-	(4,353)
Transfers from reserves		(5)	-	-	(5)
		(4,159)	(199)	-	(4,358)
Capital – transactions with owners					
Equity injections					
Capital appropriation		(564)	-	-	(564)
Equity transfers in		(1,195)	-	-	(1,195)
Other equity injections		(57)	-	-	(57)
Total Equity injections		(1,816)	-	-	(1,816)
Equity withdrawals					
Capital withdrawal ^(d)		4,195	-	-	4,195
		2,379	-	-	2,379
Total Capital – Transactions with owners					
Total equity		(1,779)	(199)	-	(1,979)
2024					
Accumulated funds		(3,805)	(349)		(4,154)
Transfers from reserves		(5)	-	-	(5)
		(3,810)	(349)	-	(4,159)
Capital – transactions with owners					
Equity injections					
Capital appropriation		(564)	-	-	(564)
Equity transfers in		(1,195)	-	-	(1,195)
Other equity injections		(57)	-	-	(57)
Total equity injections		(1,816)	-	-	(1,816)
Equity withdrawals					
Capital withdrawal ^(d)		195	-	4,000	4,195
Total Capital – Transactions with owners		(1,621)	-	4,000	2,379
Total equity		(5,431)	(349)	4,000	(1,779)

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

CASH FLOW STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2025

	Note	2025	2024
		\$000	\$000
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES			
Appropriation received			
Output	5	3,243	4,263
Receipts from sales of goods and services		4,591	3,635
Total operating receipts		7,834	7,898
Operating payments			
Payments to employees		(4,712)	(4,520)
Payments for goods and services		(2,884)	(2,712)
Total operating payments		(7,597)	(7,233)
Net cash from/(used in) operating activities	16	237	665
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES			
Investing payments			
Purchases of non-financial assets		(20)	-
Total investing payments		(20)	-
Net cash from/(used in) investing activities		(20)	-
CASH FLOWS FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES			
Equity withdrawals		-	(4,000)
Total financing payments		-	(4,000)
Net cash from/(used in) financing activities	16	-	(4,000)
Net increase/(decrease) in cash held		217	(3,335)
Cash at beginning of financial year		2,209	5,544
CASH AT END OF FINANCIAL YEAR	15	2,426	2,209

The cash flow statement is to be read in conjunction with the notes to the financial

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1. OBJECTIVES AND FUNDING

The Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority (the Authority) is an independent statutory authority established under the Northern Territory Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act 1989 (NT). 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 generates goods and services income derived from providing Authority Certificates to clients to maintain its operations. Employee expenses of \$4.737 million continued to be the largest expense accounting for 55% of total expenditure.

The Authority achieved a surplus of \$0.199 million and accomplished \$4.482 million in goods and services revenue. This revenue was the outcome of the issuing of 94 Authority Certificates in 2024-25, breakdown of certificate issued per industry can be found in the financial statement overview of this report.

In 2024-25, 94 Authority Certificates were issued of which, 13 can be attributed to the contracting of 17 anthropological consultants over 31 contracts costing the Authority \$.546 million and generating \$1.131 million in revenue, 26% of total revenue.

2024-25 also saw an increase in Authority Board meeting costs with an increase in the number of board meetings being held from four to six in 2024-25. Two additional Board meetings were held to consider recent changes to the Sacred Sites Act in Darwin. A board meeting was also held in Jabiru to coincide with the hearing at Gunlom Falls. Other meeting locations included Katherine and Darwin. The Authority Board costs increased by \$51,000 to \$251,000 compared to \$208,000 in 2023-24 due to this increase of meetings and the regional locations where they were held.

Legal costs (\$0.162 million) also continued to be high in 2024-25 due to 5 prosecutions and 3 legal advices into potential prosecutions. Most of the legal expenses pertained to the Department of Logistics and Infrastructure's Arlparra prosecution totaling \$72,236 which related to a breach of an Authority Certificate condition resulting in the destruction of a sacred white gum tree.

For reporting purposes outputs delivered by the Authority are summarised into two output groups. Note 3 provides summarised financial information in the form of a comprehensive operating statement by the output group.

2. STATEMENT OF MATERIAL ACCOUNTING POLICY INFORMATION

a) Statement of compliance

These financial statements are general purpose financial statements and have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Financial Management Act 1995, related Treasurer's Directions and Australian Accounting Standards and Interpretations issued by the Australian Accounting Standards Board. 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 agency 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 and
6. applicable explanatory notes to the financial statements.

Standards and interpretations effective from 2024-25 financial year

Several amendments and interpretations have been issued that apply to the current reporting period but are considered to have no or minimal impact on public sector reporting.

Standards and interpretations issued but not yet effective

No Australian accounting standards have been adopted early for 2024-25 financial year.

b) 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) and can utilise to further its own objectives. Certain items, while managed by the Authority, are administered 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 36 – Schedule of administered Territory items.

c) 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.

d) 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.

3. COMPREHENSIVE OPERATING STATEMENT BY OUTPUT GROUP

	Note	Protection of Sacred Sites		Corporate and Shared Services		Total	
		2025	2024	2025	2024	2025	2024
		\$000	\$000	\$000	\$000	\$000	\$000
INCOME							
Appropriation	5						
Output		2,594	3,410	649	853	3,243	4,263
Sales of goods and services ^(b)	6	4,482	3,281			4,482	3,281
Goods and services received free of charge	7	777	724	194	191	971	905
Other income ^(b)	9			8		8	
TOTAL INCOME		7,853	7,415	851	1,034	8,704	8,449
EXPENSES							
Employee expenses	10	3,902	3,720	835	893	4,737	4,613
Administrative expenses							
Property management		7	5	25	77	32	82
Purchases of goods and services	11	2,345	1,919	408	487	2,753	2,406
Repairs and maintenance							
Depreciation and amortisation	21,22, 23	2	77	9	19	11	96
Other administrative expenses ¹		777	724	194	181	971	905
TOTAL EXPENSES		7,033	6,445	1,471	1,657	8,504	8,102
NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)		820	970	(620)	(623)	199	349
COMPREHENSIVE RESULT		820	970	(620)	(623)	199	349

¹ Includes DCDD service charges and DLI repairs and maintenance service charges.

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

4. APPROPRIATION

	2025			2024		
	\$000 Revenue from contracts with customers	\$000 Other	\$000 Total	\$000 Revenue from contracts with customers	\$000 Other	\$000 Total
Output Commonwealth	0	3,243	3,243	0	4,263	4,263
Total appropriation in the operating statement	0	3,243	3,243	0	4,263	4,263

Output appropriation is the operating payment to the Authority 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.

Where appropriation received has an enforceable contract with sufficiently specific performance obligations, the transaction is accounted for under AASB 15 as revenue from contracts with customers. In this case, 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.

Appropriations accounted as 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.

5. SALES OF GOODS AND SERVICES

	2025			2024		
	\$000	\$000	\$000	\$000	\$000	\$000
	Revenue from contracts with customers	Other	Total	Revenue from contracts with customers	Other	Total
Sale of goods and service delivery revenue	3,295	1,187	4,482	2,050	1,231	3,281
Total sales of goods and services	3,295	1,187	4,482	2,050	1,231	3,281

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 conditions for using and 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) that 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.

Sales of goods and services accounted as 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.

	2025	2024
	\$000	\$000
Type of good and service:		
Service delivery	4,482	3,281
Other		
Total revenue from contracts with customers	4,482	3,281
Type of customer:		
Commonwealth Government	277	295
State and territory governments	1,380	1,248
Non-government entities	2,824	1,737
Total revenue from contracts with customers	4,482	3,281
Timing of transfer of goods and services:		
Point in time	4,482	3,281
Total revenue from contracts with customers	4,482	3,281

6. GOODS AND SERVICES RECEIVED FREE OF CHARGE

	2025	2024
	\$000	\$000
Corporate and information services	962	899
Repairs and maintenance	9	4
Total goods and services received free of charge	971	905

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 incurred on the Authority's assets and costs associated with administration of these expenses are centralised and in the Department of Logistics and Infrastructure on behalf of the Authority, and form part of goods and services received free of charge by the Authority.

In addition, the following corporate services staff and functions are centralised and provided by Department of Corporate and Digital Development on behalf of the Authority and form part of goods and services received free of charge by the Authority:

- financial services including accounts receivable, accounts payable and payroll
- employment and workforce services
- information management services
- procurement services
- property leasing services.

7. EMPLOYEE BENEFITS EXPENSE

	2025	2024
	\$000	\$000
Salaries and wages	3,986	3,907
Superannuation expenses	489	446
Fringe benefits tax	17	20
Payroll tax	246	239
Total employee benefits expense	4,737	4,613

The number of full-time equivalent employees for 2024-25 was 37.29 (2023-24: 31.93).

Salaries and wages are recognised in the reporting period when the employee renders services to the Territory Government. It includes recreation leave, labour hire costs, allowances and other benefits, which are recognised in the reporting period when employees are entitled to the benefit or when incurred.

The recognition and measurement policy for employee benefits is detailed in Note 15: Payables and Note 16: Provisions.

8. PURCHASES OF GOODS AND SERVICES

	2025	2024
	\$000	\$000
The net surplus/(deficit) has been arrived at after charging the following expenses:		
Goods and services expenses:		
Custodian Consultation	548	301
Consultants (majority Anthropological)	700	592
Information Technology Consultants	70	135
Media Consultant	0	0
Consultants ¹	1,318	1,028
Advertising ²	2	1
Marketing and promotion ³	19	26
Document production	12	17
Legal expenses ⁴	162	194
Recruitment ⁵	12	4
Training and study ⁶	38	53
Official duty fares ⁷	123	178
Travelling allowance	38	37
Information technology charges and communications	243	238
Motor Vehicle Expenses	253	234
Authority Board ⁸	237	145
Relocation	14	7
Other	284	243
Total purchases of goods and services	2,755	2,405

¹ Includes marketing, promotion and IT consultants.

² Does not include recruitment related advertising or advertising for marketing and promotion.

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

⁴ Includes legal fees, claim and settlement costs.

⁵ Includes recruitment-related advertising costs.

⁶ Reduction due to one off commitment to an Aboriginal leadership and development program.

⁷ Reduction in air charter expenses (helicopter and less intra territory fares)

⁸ Increase due to additional and remote locality of board meetings

9. WRITE-OFFS, POSTPONEMENTS, WAIVER, GIFTS AND EX GRATIA PAYMENTS

There are no write-offs, waivers, postponements, gifts and ex gratia payments approved under the Financial Management Act 1995 or other legislation that the Authority administers that need to be documented for 2023-24 or 2024-2025.

10. CASH AND DEPOSITS

	2025	2024
	\$000	\$000
Cash on hand	0	0
Cash at bank	2,426	2,209
On call or short-term deposits		
Total cash and deposits	2,426	2,209

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.

11. CASH FLOW RECONCILIATION

a) Reconciliation of cash

The total of Authority 'Cash and deposits' of \$2.426 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

	2025	2024
	\$000	\$000
Net surplus/deficit	199	349
<i>Non-cash items:</i>		
Depreciation and amortisation	11	96
<i>Changes in assets and liabilities</i>		
Decrease/increase in receivables	(536)	228
Decrease/increase in other assets	-	-
Decrease/increase in payables	50	(31)
Decrease/increase in provision for employee benefits	(12)	76
Decrease/increase in other provisions	6	13
Decrease/increase in other liabilities	518	(66)
Net cash from/(used in) operating activities	237	665

12. RECEIVABLES

	2025	2024
	\$000	\$000
Current		
Accounts receivable	454	113
Less: loss allowance	-	-
GST receivables	(2)	19
Prepayments	6	36
Other receivables	311	66
Total receivables	770	234

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 20 days and other receivables within 30 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.

In accordance with the provisions of the FMA, receivables are written off when based on demonstrated actions to collect, there is no reasonable expectation of recovery for reasons beyond the Authority's control.

Ageing analysis

	2025				2024			
	Gross Receivables ^(b)	Loss rate	Expected credit losses	Net receivables	Gross receivables	Loss rate	Expected credit losses	Net receivables
	\$000	%	\$000	\$000	\$000	%	\$000	\$000
Internal receivables								
Not overdue	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
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
Total internal receivables	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
External receivables								
Not overdue	386	0	0	0	152	0	0	0
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	68	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total external receivables	454	0	0	0	152	0	0	0

Total amounts disclosed exclude statutory amounts and prepayments as these do not meet the definition of a financial instrument and therefore will not reconcile the receivables note. It also excludes accrued contract revenue where no loss allowance has been provided.

Reconciliation of loss allowance for receivables

	2025	2024
	\$000	\$000
Internal receivables		
Opening balance	0	0
Written off during the year	0	0
Recovered during the year	0	0
Increase/decrease in allowance recognised in profit or loss	0	0
Total internal receivables	0	0
External receivables		
Opening balance	0	0
Written off during the year	0	0
Recovered during the year	0	0
Increase/decrease in allowance recognised in profit or loss	0	0
Total external receivables	0	0

13. PROPERTY, PLANT AND EQUIPMENT

a) Total property, plant and equipment

	2025	2024
	\$000	\$000
Plant and equipment		
At fair value	1,436	1,436
Less: accumulated depreciation	(1,432)	(1,428)
	4	8
Computer Hardware		
At fair value	37	17
Less: accumulated amortisation	(20)	(15)
	16	2
Total property, plant and equipment	20	10

Reconciliation of carrying amount of property, plant and equipment

A reconciliation of the carrying amount of property, plant and equipment at the beginning and end year is set out below:

	Plant and equipment	Computer Hardware	Total
2025			
	\$000	\$000	\$000
Carrying amount as <u>at</u> 1 July	8	2	10
Additions	-	20	20
Depreciation/amortisation expense	(4)	(5)	(10)
Carrying amount as <u>at</u> 30 June	4	16	20
2024			
	\$000	\$000	\$000
Carrying amount as <u>at</u> 1 July	80	5	85
Depreciation/amortisation expense	(72)	(3)	(75)
Carrying amount as <u>at</u> 30 June	8	2	10

Acquisitions

Property, plant and equipment are initially recognised at cost.

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.

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

Revaluation of assets

Subsequent to initial recognition, assets belonging to the following classes of non-financial 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

The above classes of property, plant and equipment include certain new assets initially recognised at cost. Such new assets will continue to be measured at cost, which is deemed to equate to fair value, until the next revaluation for that asset class occurs.

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.

Materially significant non-financial assets are assessed for indicators of impairment annually. If any 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. Impairment loss may only be reversed only if there has been a change in the assumptions used to determine the asset's recoverable amount. The reversal is limited so that the carrying amount of the asset does not exceed the revised estimate of its recoverable amount, nor exceed the net carrying amount that would have been determined had not impairment loss been recognised for the asset in the prior years. Where an asset is carried at a revalued amount, impairment reversal is recognised in the comprehensive operating statement as income to the extent that an impairment loss was previously recognised in the profit or loss, otherwise, 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 2025. No impairment adjustments were required as a result of this review.

Depreciation and amortisation expense

Items of property, plant and equipment, including buildings but excluding land, have limited useful lives and are depreciated using the straight-line method over their estimated useful lives. Assets are depreciated from the date of acquisition or from the time an asset is completed and held ready for use.

The estimated useful lives for each class of asset are in accordance with the Authority's determination as follows:

	2025	2024
Plant and equipment	10 years	10 years
Computer Hardware	5 years	5 years

14. INTANGIBLES

a) Total intangibles

	2025	2024
	\$000	\$000
Intangibles with a finite useful life		
Computer software		
Gross carrying amount	586	586
Less: accumulated amortisation	(586)	(584)
Carrying amount <u>at</u> 30 June	0	1
Total intangibles	0	1

The Authority's intangibles comprise computer software for the Administration, Research and Management System (ARMS) that records, maps and documents sacred sites, genealogies, Aboriginal custodianship and traditional narratives.

The Authority recognises intangible assets only if it is probable that future economic benefits will flow to the Authority and the costs of the asset can be measured reliably. Where an asset is acquired at no or nominal cost, the cost is the fair value as at the date of acquisition.

There is no active market for any of the Authority's intangible assets. As such, intangible assets are subsequently recognised and carried at cost less accumulated amortisation and any accumulated impairment losses.

Intangible assets with finite useful life are assessed for indicators of impairment on an annual basis. If any indicator of impairment exists, the Authority determines the asset's recoverable amount. If the recoverable amount is less than its carrying amount, the carrying amount is reduced to recoverable amount and the reduction is recognised as an impairment loss.

Intangible assets with indefinite useful lives are not amortised but are tested for impairment annually. The assessment of indefinite life is reviewed annually to determine whether the indefinite life continues to be supportable. If not, the change in useful life from indefinite to finite is made on a prospective basis.

The Authority's intangible assets were assessed for impairment as at 30 June 2025. No impairment adjustments were required as a result of this review.

b) Reconciliation of carrying amount of intangibles

2025

	Computer software \$000	Total \$000
Intangibles with a finite useful life		
Carrying amount at 1 July	1	1
Amortisation	(1)	(1)
Carrying amount as at 30 June	-	-

2024

	Computer Software \$000	Total \$000
Intangibles with a finite useful life		
Carrying amount at 1 July	22	22
Amortisation	(21)	(22)
Carrying amount as at 30 June	1	1

15. PAYABLES

	2025 \$000	2024 \$000
Accounts payable	35	37
Accrued salaries and wages	129	95
Other accrued expenses	106	88
Total payables	270	220

Liabilities for accounts payable and other amounts payable are carried at amortised cost, which is the fair value of the consideration to be paid in the future for goods and services received, whether billed to the Authority. Accounts payable are normally settled within 20 days from receipt of valid invoices under \$1 million or 30 days for invoices over \$1 million.

Salaries and wages that are expected to be settled wholly within 12 months after the end of the period in which the employees render the service are recognised and measured at the amounts expected to be paid.

16. PROVISIONS

	2025	2024
	\$000	\$000
Current		
<i>Employee benefits</i>		
Recreation leave	297	306
Leave loading	62	62
<i>Other current provisions</i>	-	2
<i>Other provisions</i>	91	85
Total provisions	449	455

Employee benefits

Provision for employee benefits include wages and salaries and recreation leave accumulated as a result of employees rendering services up to the reporting date. Liabilities arising in respect of 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 of estimated future cash flows, calculated using the appropriate government bond rate and taking into consideration expected future salary and wage levels, experience of employee departures and periods of service.

All recreation leave is classified as a current liability.

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 within these financial statements.

17. OTHER LIABILITIES

	2025	2024
	\$000	\$000
Current		
Unearned contract revenue liability	518	-
Total other liabilities	518	-

(a) Unearned revenue relates to Authority Certificate applications that have not been fully realised in accordance with AASB 15

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 Authority financial statements.

18. FAIR VALUE MEASUREMENT

Fair value is the price that would be received to sell an asset or paid to transfer a liability in an orderly transaction between market participants at the measurement date.

When measuring fair value, the valuation techniques used maximise the use of relevant observable inputs and minimise the use of unobservable inputs. Unobservable inputs are used to the extent that sufficient relevant and reliable observable inputs are not available for similar assets/liabilities.

Observable inputs are publicly available data relevant to the characteristics of the assets/liabilities being valued. Observable inputs used by the Authority include, but are not limited to, published sales data for land and general office buildings.

Unobservable inputs are data, assumptions and judgments not available publicly but relevant to the characteristics of the assets/liabilities being valued. Such inputs include internal Authority adjustments to observable data to take account of particular and potentially unique characteristics/functionality of assets/liabilities and assessments of physical condition and remaining useful life.

All assets and liabilities for which fair value is measured or disclosed in the financial statements are categorised within the following fair value hierarchy based on the inputs used:

Level 1 – inputs are quoted prices in active markets for identical assets or liabilities

Level 2 – inputs are inputs other than quoted prices included within Level 1 that are observable for the asset or liability, either directly or indirectly.

Level 3 – inputs are unobservable.

19. 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.

The Authority's financial instruments include cash and deposits; receivables; advances paid; investment in shares; payables; advances received; borrowings and derivatives. It excludes statutory receivables arising from taxes including tax receivables, GST input tax credits recoverable, and fines and penalties, which do not meet the definition of financial instruments as per AASB 132 Financial instruments: Presentation.

The Authority has limited exposure to financial risks as discussed below.

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 Northern Territory Treasury Corporation 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.

	Category	2025	2024
		\$000	\$000
Cash and deposits	Other	2,426	2,209
Receivables ¹	Amortised cost	770	234
Total financial assets		3,196	2,443
Payables ¹	Amortised cost	270	220
Provisions	Amortised cost	449	455
Advances Received	Amortised cost	518	0
Total financial liabilities		1,238	675

¹Total amounts disclosed here exclude statutory amounts, prepaid expenses and accrued contract revenue

Financial assets at amortised cost

Financial assets categorised at amortised cost are initially recognised at fair value and subsequently measured at amortised cost using the effective interest method, less impairment.

The Authorities 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

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 fair value through profit or loss (FVTPL) 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 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

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

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 17 and advances paid in Note 19.

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.

Sensitivity analysis

ii) Price risk

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

20. 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 dependents
- all public sector entities that are controlled and consolidated into the whole of government financial statements
- any entities controlled or jointly controlled by KMP's 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 Lands, Planning and Environment;, the Chief Executive Officer and the members of the executive team of the Authority are listed below:

- Nicola Jackson, Director Corporate Services (leave from 2 June 2025 to 30 June 2025)
- Shilo Panatos, Acting Director Corporate Services (2 June to 30 Jun 2025)
- Jitendra Kumarage, Director Research (1 July 2024 to 18 June 2025)
- Shannon Tchia, Director Research (parental leave from 1 July 2024 to 18 June 2025)
- Cameron McInerney, Director Policy and Governance.

iii) Remuneration of key management personnel

The details below exclude the salaries and other benefits of the minister 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:

	2025	2024
	\$000	\$000
Short-term benefits	775	814
Post-employment benefits	112	103
Long-term benefits	9	8
Termination benefits	-	-
Total remuneration of key management personnel	896	925

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.

2025

Related party	Revenue from related parties \$000	Payments to related parties \$000	Amounts owed by related parties \$000	Amounts owed to related parties \$000
<i>All NTG Government departments</i>	1,201	319	137	4

2024

Related party	Revenue from related parties \$000	Payments to related parties \$000	Amounts owed by related parties \$000	Amounts owed to related parties \$000
<i>All Territory Government departments</i>	1,248	296	25	1

The Authority's transactions with other government entities are not individually significant.

21. CONTINGENT LIABILITIES AND CONTINGENT ASSETS

a) Contingent liabilities

The Authority had no contingent liabilities as at 30 June 2025 or 30 June 2024.

b) Contingent assets

The Authority had no contingent Assets as at 30 June 2025 or 30 June 2024

22. 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.

23. SCHEDULE OF ADMINISTERED TERRITORY ITEMS

In addition to operating revenues controlled and utilised by the Authority to fund its activities that are included in the financial statements, the Authority also acts on behalf of the Territory Government in the management of administered items. These include the application fees for a Request for Information, Sacred Site Register viewing or an Authority Certificate. The authority is unable to use administered items to further its own objectives without authorization.

Administered items are transferred to and reported by the Central Holding Authority, as the parent entity of government. Administered income and expenses are not recognised in the Authority's operating statement but are reported separately in accordance with Australian accounting standards.

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

	2025	2024
	\$000	\$000
TERRITORY INCOME AND EXPENSES		
Income		
Fees from regulatory services	106	78
Total income	106	78
Expenses		
Central Holding Authority income transferred	106	78
Total expenses	106	78
Territory income less expenses	0	0

24. BUDGETARY INFORMATION

The following tables present the variation between the 2024-25 original budgeted financial statements, as reported in 2024-25 Budget Paper No. 3 Agency Budget Statements, and the 2024-25 actual amounts reported in the financial statements, together with explanations for significant variations.

The variations within these tables do not include changes to budgeted appropriations from 2024-25 original budget to 2024-25 final budget.

Comprehensive operating statement	2025 Actual	2025 Original budget	Variance	Note
	\$000	\$000	\$000	
INCOME				
Appropriation				
Output	3,243	3,243	0	
Sales of goods and services	4,482	2,500	2,088	1
Goods and services received free of charge	971	775	196	2
Other income	8		8	
TOTAL INCOME	8,703	6,518	2,292	
EXPENSES				
Employee expenses	4,737	4,165	572	3
Administrative expenses				
Purchases of goods and services	2,785	1,370	1,383	4
Depreciation and amortisation	11	8	3	
Other administrative expenses	970	775	195	2
TOTAL EXPENSES	8,504	6,318	2,184	
NET SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	199	200	(1)	
COMPREHENSIVE RESULT	199	200	(1)	

Notes:

1. A continuation of service demand above baseline budget.
2. Reflective of increased DCDD services.
3. Increase in expenditure due to additional staff required for project teams directly related to increase in self-generated income and backfilling positions affected by maternity leave.
4. Increase in custodian payments and consultants due to an increase in applications.

Balance Sheet	2025 Actual	2025 Original budget	Variance	Note
	\$000	\$000	\$000	
ASSETS				
Current assets				
Cash and deposits	2,426	1,960	466	1
Receivables	770	449	321	1
Prepayments		13		
Inventories	-	-	-	
Total current assets	3,196	2,422	787	
Non-current assets				
Property, plant and equipment	20	4	16	
Intangibles	-	-	-	
Total non-current assets	20	4	16	
TOTAL ASSETS	3,216	2,426	804	
LIABILITIES				
Current liabilities				
Payables	270	252	18	
Provisions	449	365	84	2
Other liabilities	518	66	452	3
Total current liabilities	1,238	683	554	
TOTAL LIABILITIES	1,238	1,234	4	
NET ASSETS	1,979	1,743	236	
EQUITY				
Capital	(2,379)	(2,379)	0	
Accumulated funds	4,358	4,122	236	
TOTAL EQUITY	1,979	1,743	236	

1. Attributed to a significant increase in revenue and timing of invoices issued.

2. Due to staff leave, leave loading and Superannuation accrual

3. Significantly higher than original budget, this relates to unearned revenue commitments with applicants

Cash flow statement	2025 Actual \$000	2025 Original budget \$000	Variance \$000	Note
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES				
Operating receipts				
Appropriation				
Output	3,243	3,243	0	
Receipts from sales of goods and services	4,591	2,500	2,091	1
Total operating receipts	7,834	5,743	2,091	
Operating payments				
Payments to employees	4,712	4,165	(547)	2
Payments for goods and services	2,884	1,370	(1,514)	3
Total operating payments	7,597	5,535	(2,062)	
Net cash from/(used in) operating activities	237	208	(29)	
Investing payments				
Purchases of non-financial assets	20	0	20	
Total investing payments	20	0	20	
Net cash from/(used in) investing activities	20	0	20	
CASH FLOWS FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES				
Financing payments				
Net increase/(decrease) in cash held	217	208	(9)	
Cash at beginning of financial year	2,209	1,752	457	
CASH AT END OF FINANCIAL YEAR	2,426	1,960	466	

1. Performance above baseline revenue budget demonstrates a continuation of high demand for services
2. Increase in expenditure due to additional staff required for project teams directly related to increase in sales. Continuation of specialist anthropological consultants to meet the demand for services and priority timeframes, increased Board costs due to additional board meetings and remote locations

25. BUDGETARY INFORMATION: ADMINISTERED TERRITORY ITEMS

The following table presents the variation between the 2024-25 original budget for administered items as reported in 2024-25 Budget Paper No. 3 Agency Budget Statements and the 2024-25 actual amounts disclosed in Note 23 of these financial statements together with explanations for significant variations.

Administered Territory items	2025 Actual^(a) \$000	2025 Original budget^(b) \$000	Variance^(c) \$000	Note^(d)
TERRITORY INCOME AND EXPENSES				
Income				
Fees from regulatory services	106	60	46	1
Other income				
Total income	106	60	46	
Expenses				
Central Holding Authority income transferred	106	60	46	1
Total expenses	106	60	46	
Territory income less expenses	0	0	0	

The following note descriptions relate to variances greater than 10 per cent have occurred.

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



Boabab tree at Bullita homestead near
Timber Creek



Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority

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