

Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade

Strategic Plan

2021-2025

LEGACY MINES UNIT

THE TERRITORY



**NORTHERN
TERRITORY**
GOVERNMENT

Legacy Mines

Mission

Mining Remediation Fund (MRF) sustainably used to address legacy mine risks and secures environmental outcomes that minimise mining legacies.

Purpose

In 2013, the *Mining Management Act 2001* was amended to establish the MRF.

A 1% annual levy on mine securities was introduced and the MRF holds this money in trust to be used by the Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade for activities that minimise or rectify environmental harm caused by unsecured mining activities.

'Unsecured mining activities' are defined as mining activities for which no security has been provided or for which any security provided has been expended. Unsecured mining activities are also referred to as legacy mines and legacy mine features.

The MRF may be used to cover costs and expenses incurred to minimise or rectify environmental harm caused by unsecured mining activities, including in relation to:

- identification of environmental harm caused by unsecured mining activities
- the assessment of the risks of that harm
- investigations and scientific studies relating to the harm
- preparation of any necessary remediation plans to address the harm
- carrying out of short and long-term remediation works to address the harm
- engaging persons with appropriate expertise to carry out other activities in relation to the harm.

Legacy Mines Unit

With introduction of the MRF, the Legacy Mines Unit (LMU) was also established. The LMU is a dedicated team within the Mines Branch.

The purpose of the LMU is to administer the MRF to address impacts from legacy mining features in the collective interests of the Territory, including the mining industry. This includes administering the MRF to undertake works to minimise or mitigate the risks from legacy mining features.

The team is responsible for undertaking risk assessments of legacy sites, prioritisation of key sites and identification of any necessary investigations or remediation actions required. The LMU also scopes necessary works, procures technical, specialist and engineering expertise in accordance with Government requirements, and project manages site works.

The Legacy Mines Strategic Plan

This Legacy Mines Strategic Plan outlines the priorities of the LMU over the short to medium-term.



Objectives

The Legacy Mines Unit will be guided by the following principles:

- Risk and cost-benefit based approach to prioritise works to reduce or eliminate risk from legacy mine features
- Consistent and transparent processes for assessing legacy mine impacts, and prioritising and implementing works
- Public confidence in safety and environmental performance of mining industry and associated regulations



VISION

Territory legacy mine features are managed to minimise safety risks and environmental impacts

MISSION

Mining Remediation Fund sustainably used to address legacy mine risks and secures environmental outcomes that minimise mining legacies

OBJECTIVES

- Risk and cost-benefit based approach to prioritising works to reduce or eliminate risks from legacy mine features
- Consistent and transparent processes for assessing legacy mine impacts, and prioritising and implementing works
- Public confidence in safety and environmental performance of the mining industry and associated regulations.

PLAN 2021-2025

FOCUS AREAS

GOVERNANCE

1. Develop and implement policies and guidelines for MRF use
2. Develop decision-making framework for assessing needs and determining priority works to address legacy mine issues
3. Maintain an inventory of legacy mines and legacy mine features
4. Implement transparent and sound financial management procedures, and publish MRF acquittals

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

1. Establish an industry based Advisory Panel to support government decision making
2. Develop a Stakeholder Engagement Plan
3. Publish annual reports on legacy mines program performance
4. Community consultation with key stakeholders for specific projects

REMEDIATION PROGRAM

1. Undertake sound risk assessments of key sites
2. Prioritise works to address and resolve legacy mine features
3. Develop a rolling forecast of work
4. Develop remediation plans for priority mining legacies
5. Undertake remediation activities recognising risks and cost-benefits

ECONOMIC VALUE TO TERRITORY

1. Leverage industry experience and resources, including through the Advisory Panel
2. Maximise regional employment opportunities, including indigenous jobs, training and place based economic investment based on sound commercial, business and project management principles
3. Support achievement of a \$40 billion economy by 2030



Focus areas

Over the term of this Strategic Plan, LMU has 5 focus areas or goals. An overview of how these and the specific deliverables under each are outlined below.

Goal 1 - Strong governance

The funding available to address legacy mines and legacy mine features is disproportionately small relative to the likely total liability if legacy mine related risks are realised. Therefore, it is essential that the MRF be expended prudently, effectively and in the best interests of the Northern Territory. The Legacy Mines Advisory Panel will be given the opportunity for input into key governance documents, including in the development of a standardised risk assessment framework.

Goal 1.1

Governance framework

A strong governance framework is essential for the ongoing management of the LMU and expenditure of the MRF. The framework will address all aspects of LMU's work including financial management.

As part of the governance framework, a clear and transparent definition of a legacy mine and a legacy mine feature is essential. This requires a clear position on legacy mining features and how the MRF can be used.

Key deliverables

- Legacy mines policy
- Updated financial management procedures
- Guidelines for working with industry



Goal 1.2

Standardised risk assessment and prioritisation guidelines

Standardised risk assessment forms the basis for prioritising legacy mines projects.

A consistent and robust approach to identifying, measuring and scoping potential options to manage and mitigate risks is necessary to create confidence and certainty that the MRF is spent appropriately, in a transparent manner and consistent with the requirements of the *Mining Management Act 2001*.

Identified and assessed risks, and associated activities, will then be considered from a works prioritisation perspective.

This step will consider potential environmental benefits, value for Territory, technical feasibility, and stakeholder and community expectations.

Key deliverables

- Risk assessment framework
- Prioritisation guidelines



Goal 2 – Effective stakeholder engagement

Stakeholder engagement is an essential aspect of delivering a successful program of works, from consultation with industry groups regarding the direction of the program through to engagement with traditional Aboriginal owners and impacted landowners.

Goal 2.1 Stakeholder engagement

A program wide stakeholder engagement plan will be developed, along with project specific plans as appropriate. This will consider stakeholders with an interest in legacy mines and reporting of expenditure from the MRF.

Key deliverables

- Program wide stakeholder engagement plan
- Annual reporting of the LMU activities, including acquittal of the MRF

Goal 2.2 Industry and community advice

An Advisory Panel to inform the LMU work program will be established. The Advisory Panel is not a decision making body. It provides a forum for industry views and suggestions to be presented for NT Government consideration.

Decisions in relation to the ultimate work program and how monies from the MRF are expended are the NT Government's to make in its sole discretion and, from an ultimate accountability perspective, cannot be abrogated.

Key deliverables

- Terms of reference for Advisory Panel
- Establishment of the Advisory Panel including appointment of members



Goal 3 – Published inventory of unsecured mining features

There is a significant discrepancy between the potential liability presented by unsecured mining features and the funds available in the MRF. As such, it is essential that works be targeted at addressing areas of greatest risks or exposure, and/or where significant benefits can be achieved. For this reason, a consistent and repeatable risk framework will be developed following consultation with the Advisory Panel.

Goal 3.1 Audit of unsecured mining features on active sites

Ongoing audit of current authorised sites is required to determine which sites have unsecured mining activities, and are therefore considered legacy mines. This represents a considerable body of work and will include consultation with industry on the potential commercial impacts of a publicly

available list of authorised mine sites with legacy features. This work will be the basis for formalising and maintaining an inventory of legacy mines and legacy mine features, which will be a living document, updated as legacy mines or legacy mine features are progressively identified.

Key deliverables

- Continued audit of current authorisations to identify sites with unsecured mining activities
- Maintain inventory of legacy mines and legacy mine features on the basis of the outcomes from the audit.



Goal 4 – An ongoing program of remediation activity

A risk-proportionate and cost-benefit based approach to prioritising works to reduce or eliminate legacy mine and legacy mine feature risk will form the basis of the ongoing program of remediation activity.

Based on the outcome of the risk assessment and works prioritisation process, remediation projects will be identified. Dependent on the project, it is likely this will include undertaking assessments, remediation options assessments, planning and implementation of remediation plans. Stakeholder consultation will be critical in project development.

A high-level rolling program of remediation works will be developed. However, it needs to be recognised that priorities may shift as new information comes to light or circumstances change, and the program of activity needs to be adaptive and flexible to cater for this. Of note, flexibility is required to account for challenges in undertaking remediation projects in often-remote areas with access limitations.

The projects and proposed investigations or activities will be reviewed regularly. Any completed works will be outlined in the LMU annual report, including associated expenditure from the MRF.

Goal 4.1 Risk assessments

Using the standardised risk assessment framework identified in Goal 1.2 above, risk assessments will be completed, initially focused on key sites with known environmental impacts. Risk assessments will be updated as more information regarding a site becomes available.

Key deliverables

- Completion of risk assessments for key sites with known environmental impacts
- Progress risk assessments for sites with unsecured mining activities

Goal 4.2 Prioritisation and a program of works

The highest risk sites and features identified through the risk assessment process will be prioritised and triaged for remediation activities based on the prioritisation guidelines to be delivered under Goal 1.2 above.

The prioritisation guidelines will necessarily consider a range of options to identify the most prudent use of the MRF to achieve the best outcomes for the Territory.

Key deliverables:

- Prioritisation of legacy mines and sites with legacy features
- Rolling program of remediation works

Goal 4.3 The former Redbank mine site

The reputational risk to industry from the former Redbank mine site has been acknowledged, along with the ongoing significant environmental impacts. Given this, the former Redbank mine site has been identified as a key priority.

To address the environmental impacts, a program of works is underway to inform a remediation options analysis. This will allow a rehabilitation plan to be developed with the objective of implementing aggressive but prudent actions to reduce impacts on the environment.

Key deliverables

- Site investigation works
- Remediation planning
- Remediation activities
- Stakeholder engagement





Goal 4.4 **Small mines safety works**

The small mines safety program will continue. These activities are targeted at reducing risks to human safety from legacy mine features, including open shafts and adits, subsidence from underground workings and degraded mine infrastructure. These works are focused on improving public safety and any work on small mines safety undertaken through the MRF will reflect this.

To reduce the safety risks associated with small mine features alternative delivery models will be considered that allow the program to be upscaled to address an increased number of features and to expand the program geographically.

Key deliverables

- Assess alternative delivery models to expand the small mines safety program
- Progress small mines safety works including expanding the program geographically



Goal 5 – Recognise environmental priorities

As part of the proposed environmental reforms currently being progressed, the *Mining Management Act 2001* will be reviewed with respect to the provisions that relate to legacy mine features and the MRF. In particular, consideration will be given to improving definitions and associated management responsibilities and expectations, provisions to streamline remediation, and consideration of retaining the interest from the MRF within the fund to further expand on MRF activities. These amendments will facilitate the implementation of remediation projects and consider ways to encourage industry to play a larger role in addressing legacy issues.

Goal

5.1 Revisions to the Mining Management Act 2001

Key deliverable

- Develop proposed amendments for the *Mining Management Act 2001*, in relation to improved management and effectiveness of the MRF, for government consideration



Implementation and review

The work completed by the LMU will be documented in an annual report, including acquittal of the MRF. In addition, the Advisory Panel will be advised of the proposed work program. The Advisory Panel will meet twice a year as a minimum.

The work program will evolve to allow for consideration of emerging issues and to refine actions as required. This will also allow for flexibility to account for factors outside of the LMU's control. This may include, but not be limited to, the need to consult with impacted stakeholders and for Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority Certificates to be granted.



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For more information, go to industry.nt.gov.au

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