

Legacy Mines

Why is there a new Legacy Mines Remediation Act?

As part of the regulatory reform process, it is proposed that the *Mining Management Act 2001* (MMA) be repealed and the regulation of mining transferred to the Department of Environment, Parks and Water Security.

The legacy mine legislation is being moved out of the MMA and into its own standalone act.

Why are legacy mines important?

Legacy mines and legacy mine features have the potential to pose a risk to the environment and public safety.

Hazards associated with legacy mine features may include safety risks from open workings or pits, or degraded infrastructure.

Environmental impacts include poor water quality, erosion, weed infestation and damage from acid metalliferous drainage.

While there may be a large number of potential legacy sites, the majority are associated with old workings and relatively few are large complex sites.

The Northern Territory Government is committed to minimising safety risks and environmental impacts from legacy mine sites and legacy mine features, for the benefit of all Territorians.

What is a legacy mine?

A legacy mine is an area where mining activities happened in the past, but there is no security in place. This means that the area was either never secured or the previous security has been fully spent.

Operators carrying out mining activities in the Northern Territory must now lodge a security to cover costs if the government needs to take action to prevent, minimise or rectify environmental harm caused by the mining activities or complete rehabilitation work.

What is a legacy mine feature?

A legacy mine feature is a single feature like a headframe, open shaft or a waste rock dump that was associated with a mining activity for which there is no security.

Due to the long history of mining in the Territory, and the introduction of the requirement for security in the early 2000s, some currently operating mine sites have legacy mine features.

While a legacy mine site is made up of a number of legacy mine features, a legacy mine feature may occur within an active mine site that are not the responsibility of the new mining operator.

Who is liable of legacy mine features on authorised mines?

Currently, mine operators are not liable for the remediation of legacy mine features that are not part of their mining activities. This will not change.

Are legacy mines safe?

Legacy mines may present a risk to public safety and the environment. A majority of legacy mines are located in remote areas that are difficult to access.

Some legacy features are located in more accessible areas. To address the safety risks from open mine workings, the Legacy Mines Unit has commissioned the inspection of over 600 mine features across the Territory. The results of these inspections will be used to plan safety works.

Work is underway to remediate approximately 85 small mines, including over 200 legacy mine features, in the vicinity of Tennant Creek.

What is remediation?

Remediation is a normal part of mining and is undertaken progressively throughout a mine life. Mine remediation is the process of repairing the impacts of mining activity on the environment.

The long-term objectives of remediation can vary from simply making the site safe and stable condition, to creating a landscape that can support future uses of the land. These include returning it to agricultural land or identifying new beneficial uses.

Mining that occurred many years ago may not have been remediated to the high environmental standards we expect today. Therefore, even if there was some remediation, more work may be required to bring it up to today's environmental standards.

How many legacy mines are there in the NT?

To date, over 900 legacy mine features and legacy mines have been identified across the Territory.

While there may be a large number, a majority are associated with old workings and relatively few are large complex sites.

What is a mining security?

In the Northern Territory, all mining operators must pay a [security](#).

The mining security is a type of safeguard mechanism.

It covers anticipated costs if the government needs to take action to:

- prevent, minimise or rectify environmental harm caused by mining activities on or off the mining site or
- complete rehabilitation work.

What is the mining levy?

To fund projects that address the [legacy mines](#) liability, operators must also pay an annual levy.

The levy is 1% of the mining security and is non-refundable.

The levy is used to support the Mining Remediation Fund.

Does this reform change the levy?

No, the levy remains 1% of the security. The levy is paid annually and is non-refundable.

What is the Mining Remediation Fund and how are the funds used?

The NT Government manages the Mining Remediation Fund (MRF) and uses it to address the impacts of legacy mines.

The MRF holds money in trust to be used by the government to:

- minimise or rectify environmental harm caused by legacy mines
- address risks from legacy mining to minimise the liability to the NT.

How does the government decide on how the funds are used?

The government follows a risk-based prioritisation approach for decision-making.

They consider the following principles:

- protect the public and the environment from legacy mine impacts
- use a risk-based approach with robust data and scientific integrity
- engage relevant stakeholders and affected communities, exploring partnerships
- provide value and benefits for the entire Territory
- ensure strong governance and transparency in decisions.

What does the Legacy Mines Unit do?

The Legacy Mines Unit is within the Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade. The Legacy Mines Unit administers the Mining Remediation Fund to address the impacts from legacy mine features, in the collective interests of the Territory.

The Legacy Mines Unit is responsible for:

- undertaking risk assessments of legacy sites
- prioritisation of key sites
- identification of any necessary investigations or remediation actions required
- procurement of technical, specialist and engineering expertise
- project management of site works

Further information

Read more about legacy mines in the [Legacy Mines Strategic Plan and Policy](#)

For more information, please contact the Legacy Mines Unit at lmu.ditt@nt.gov.au or visit the [Northern Territory Government Website](#)