

**Department of Defence
Annual Environmental Compliance Report 2016**

EPBC Act Approval 2004/1458
Urban Operations Training Facility (UOTF)
Mount Bunday Training Area (MBTA), Darwin, NT

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Declaration of Accuracy

Signed



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Department of Defence

Date

1 December 2016

1. Summary

The construction and operation of an Urban Operations Training Facility (UOTF) by the Department of Defence (DoD) at Mount Bunday Training Area (MBTA) in the Northern Territory (NT) was assessed under the EPBC Act (the Act) in 2005 (referral number 2004/1458). The Project was determined to require approval by the Minister for the Environment under Section 28 of the Act – *Protection of the Environment from Commonwealth Actions*.

The action was approved, subject to conditions of approval issued by the (now) Department of the Environment and Energy (DoEE) on 16 December 2005.

A condition of approval was the preparation and submission of an annual compliance certificate.

2. Description of Activities

The action as approved in 2005 was for the construction of a UOTF comprising an urban village setting (including a CBD, shanty towns, a community area, a residential area, an industrial area and open spaces) to allow military training in an urban environment. The proposed schedule was for the immediate construction of the CBD, with additional stages to be constructed later, as required. As of December 2016, only the first stage, the CBD and access roads have been constructed.

The UOTF was booked by user units on 18 separate occasions during 2016 for minor activities. Post activity inspections by Range Control Officers confirmed activities were conducted in accordance with Defence Range Standing Orders (RSOs). No environmental incidents were reported during the 2016 training period.

3. Compliance Table

The following table identifies each condition of approval and evidence of compliance.

Table 1 – Compliance against EPBC Act Conditions of Approval

Condition Number	Condition	Compliant / Non-Compliant / Not Applicable	Evidence / Comments
1	The person taking the action must submit to the Minister for approval, at least two months prior to construction, a revised Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) to manage the impacts of the construction activities on the environment. The CEMP must include:	Not Applicable	Complete.
1. (a)	No construction activities involving the use of earth moving machinery to be undertaken during the wet season from beginning December to early March;	Not Applicable	Complete.
1. (b)	No parking of vehicles in sensitive environments, including water courses and drainage lines;	Not Applicable	Complete.
1. (c)	Measures to mitigate impacts on the environment during construction activities, including: i. Erosion of soil from wind and water ii. Revegetation of disturbed areas using endemic grass species	Not Applicable	Complete.

Condition Number	Condition	Compliant / Non-Compliant / Not Applicable	Evidence / Comments
1.(d)	Measures to address the occurrence of fire including the following: i. A protocol for reporting occurrences of fire and ii. Steps to be taken to control and extinguish fires	Not Applicable	Complete.
-	Construction must not commence before the CEMP is approved. The approved CEMP must be implemented.	Not Applicable	Complete.
2.	The person taking the action must submit to the Minister for approval, two months prior to operation, a program to ensure the maintenance of the existing soil, water and vegetation qualities on the UOTF area. The program shall include:	Compliant	Monitoring methods undertaken in accordance with the <i>Environmental Monitoring Manual for Defence Training Areas in the NT/K Region</i> . A revised Environmental Monitoring Manual for MBTA will be prepared in 2017 with consideration of the specific EPBC Conditions of Approval. Requirements for soil, water and vegetation monitoring, including sites to capture potential impact from the UOTF, are stipulated within MBTA HEMP (2010). The MBTA HEMP (2010), along with 26 other HMPs was subject to a public review process from 20 October 2009 – 30 April 2010. DoE was notified of the review however it was not submitted separately for approval. Environmental Monitoring Program FY 10/11 – 23 February 2012.
2.(a)	Soil, water and vegetation monitoring sites within the UOTF area and water quality monitoring sites within Craig Creek;	Compliant	There are 28 permanent monitoring plots on MBTA. Requirements for soil, water and vegetation monitoring (including Craig Creek) stipulated within MBTA HEMP (2010). Annual monitoring between FY02/03, FY07/08 and in FY10/11 provides 6 years of data. Land Condition Assessment FY06/07, Mount Bunday Training Area.

Condition Number	Condition	Compliant / Non-Compliant / Not Applicable	Evidence / Comments
			MBTA Weed Management Plan 2014-2019 (August 2014) The MBTA Monitoring Program is under review (ongoing). A revised Environmental Monitoring Manual for MBTA will be prepared in 2017.
2.(b)	Establishment of baseline indicators for soil, water and vegetation using the information derived from the monitoring sites; and	Compliant	New trigger values have been established for water quality using ANZECC guideline methods for establishing SSTVs. SSTVs are included in the Northern Territory Water Quality Monitoring Manual 2016. Monitoring site (MBTA WAT-14) captures runoff from UOTF. Six years of data established baseline indicators for soil and vegetation. The Monitoring Program is currently under review with implementation to re-commence in 2017 (ongoing). A revised Environmental Monitoring Manual for MBTA will be prepared in 2017.
2.(c)	Monitoring frequencies appropriate for measuring change in the quality of water, soil and vegetation.	Compliant	Due to the limited use of the UOTF surrounds and stable water quality results, monitoring frequencies are considered appropriate. Soil and vegetation monitoring programs were conducted from the commencement of construction to 2011. Water quality is continuing to be monitored annually, and vegetation is monitored on an ad-hoc basis in response to long-term stable trends. A focused land condition monitoring program is to be reinstated at MBTA during 2017. Post wet season water quality and sediment monitoring was undertaken during 2016. All results were below SSTVs and all metals except iron were below detection limits. Explosives were analysed in this monitoring round and not detected. Sediment samples were also collected for the first time at MBTA. Sediment cores from monitoring site WAT-14 were analysed for metals, hydrocarbons and explosives. All results were well below the lower limits of the ANZECC Sediment Quality Guidelines.

Condition Number	Condition	Compliant / Non-Compliant / Not Applicable	Evidence / Comments
			Weed monitoring was conducted during January - March 2016 and revealed several small sites affected by hypts and annual mission grass at the UOTF. Infestations were mapped and treated with herbicide.
3.	The person taking the action must submit to the Minister for approval, at least two months prior to operation, a revised Operation Environmental Management Plan (OEMP) to manage environmental impacts of the operational activities in the UOTF area. The OEMP must identify:	Compliant	Interim approval was issued by DoE in August 2007 under the provision that a more detailed OEMP would be submitted in 2008. A revised OEMP was submitted in December 2008.
3. (a)	A protocol that outlines the parameters for operational activities that will be permitted during the wet and dry seasons, thresholds for unacceptable environmental impacts, resulting from those activities, and strategies or measures to address those impacts;	Compliant	MBTA is now closed for the 2016/17 wet season. MBTA is closed to user units during the wet season. RSO Ch.26 details what operational activities are permitted at the UOTF. RSO also outlines the process for booking the UOTF which includes a march out inspection by the RCO and/ or EO. Unacceptable environmental impacts will be dealt with as an environmental incident and user units made to repair or pay for the repair of any damage. Thresholds for potential impacts are detailed in the OEMP (Table 10.2).
3. (b)	Human waste management for the different scales of training activities (eg from platoon to battalion level and above);	Compliant	Port-a-loos are utilised on MBTA, along with a number of composting toilets (two located at UOTF) situated in key locations to reduce the requirement for field drop toilets or latrines. If drop toilets are required locations must be approved by Range Control.
3.(c)	Assembly areas for vehicles which must be located so as not to damage sensitive environments, including watercourses and drainage lines.	Compliant	Vehicles are to only use formed roads unless approval is granted by RCO and EO. This requirement stipulated in RSO and OEMP (Sections 3.6 and 4.6). Site inspections throughout 2016 did not reveal any vehicle related damage in areas surround the UOTF.

Condition Number	Condition	Compliant / Non-Compliant / Not Applicable	Evidence / Comments
4.	The person taking the action must revise the Mount Bunder Training Area (MBTA) Environmental Management Plan within 2 years and the Plan must include:	Compliant	The MBTA HEMP was updated in 2010 to incorporate several developments and changes in use including: - UOTF construction - New military platforms (Abrams tanks, tiger helicopters etc.). The update also incorporated findings and recommendations from natural and cultural heritage studies, audit and inspection reports and monitoring reports prepared since 2006.
4.(a)	The OEMP approved under paragraph 3	Compliant	The revised HEMP incorporates the requirements of the OEMP.
4.(b)	The monitoring program to be developed and approved under paragraph 2 including the baseline indicators for the quality of the natural environment;	Compliant	Monitoring requirements listed in the OEMP are included as management actions in the user guides of the HEMP. Land condition and vegetation monitoring completed annually from FY02/03 to FY10/11. Program under review (ongoing). Aerial land condition surveys undertaken pre and post training season (when funding available). A gap analysis and risk assessment prioritising monitoring actions for MBTA has been completed. Information from the gap analysis is now being used to formulate the revised Environmental Monitoring Manual.
4.(c)	A program of measures to respond to and mitigate adverse impacts as a result of the use of the UOTF area;	Compliant	The HEMP refers to the requirement to implement RSO, including Ch. 26 which is specific to the UOTF. Thresholds and management action interventions are detailed in the OEMP. The UOTF was booked by user units on 18 separate occasions during 2016 for minor activities. Post activity inspections confirmed that all activities were conducted in accordance with Range Standing Orders. No environmental incidents were reported. Vegetation surrounding the UOTF was not impacted during these activities. Minor erosion along a drainage channel was noted and will be remediated during routine dry season road maintenance. This will involve clearing out drainage channels and minor reshaping of the drainage batter.

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4. (d)	Actions to establish the rate of sustainable bore water extraction, and monitoring to ensure usage does not exceed that rate;	Compliant	One bore is located near the UOTF, with an associated water storage tank. During the dry season, bore water is used to fill a small dam near the UOTF for fire fighting purposes. The bore is also used to fill flushing tanks for the two toilets at the UOTF facility. Due to the very low extraction and usage rates, no further assessment has been completed regarding the sustainability of bore water use.
4. (e)	Annual monitoring of the impact of controlled burns and wildfire on different vegetation communities in the Mount Bundery Training Area and a fire management regime that implements appropriate fire regimes for each vegetation community identified in the Commonwealth Heritage values;	Compliant	This requirement is referred to in the HEMP. MBTA Bushfire Management Plan (2014) was developed to guide the implementation of the fire program. This plan considers sensitive habitats and vegetation types. Mosaic burn targets are set for areas accordingly. The programs burn methodology involves early dry and wet season burns to minimise adverse impacts to vegetation. Fuel load assessments of the area were undertaken in accordance with the BMP. A late wet season, cool burn was conducted in the asset protection zone surrounding the UOTF. Visual inspections were performed to ensure the burn achieved the planned outcome. The area was not affected by late dry season fires.
4. (f)	The identification of sensitive areas, habitats and Commonwealth Heritage values of the MBTA and measures to protect those environments including identifying 'no go' areas.	Compliant	Sensitive areas, habitats and heritage values were defined in the MBTA HEMP (2010). 'No-Go' areas identified on Range Control maps, communicated in user range briefs and conditioned in RSOs. Revised core habitat maps were produced for MBTA in April 2016 to assist with upcoming targeted threatened species surveys. Areas of <i>Eucalyptus tintinnans</i> and <i>Eucalyptus dichromophloia</i> (potential Gouldian Finch breeding habitat) were mapped adjacent to the UOTF and targeted biodiversity surveys are scheduled to occur in this area. A revised environmental monitoring manual for MBTA will be produced in 2017.

Condition Number	Condition	Compliant / Non-Compliant / Not Applicable	Evidence / Comments
5.	The person taking the action must prepare and submit for the Minister's approval a plan to address the decommissioning and rehabilitation of UOTF area. The plan must be submitted 12 months prior to decommissioning commencing. The plan must address:	Not Applicable	There are no plans to decommission the facility. The following conditions are not relevant at this point in time.
5.(a)	The timeframe and milestones for decommissioning;	Not Applicable	N/A
5.(b)	Criteria to determine when decommissioning works will cease or be suspended during wet periods;	Not Applicable	N/A
5.(c)	Methods used to decommission the UOTF;	Not Applicable	N/A
5.(d)	Measures to control erosion and sedimentation of watercourses;	Not Applicable	N/A

Condition Number	Condition	Compliant / Non-Compliant / Not Applicable	Evidence / Comments
5.(e)	Controls to prevent the spread of weeds and pathogens; and	Not Applicable	N/A
5.(f)	Rehabilitation of the UOTF area.	Not Applicable	N/A
-	Decommissioning cannot commence until the plan is approved. The approved plan must be implemented.	Not Applicable	N/A
6.	The person taking the action must provide the Minister with a report detailing compliance with the plan required under paragraph 5 within three months of completion of decommissioning	Not Applicable	N/A
7.	If the person taking the action wishes to carry out any activity otherwise than in accordance with a program or plan referred to in paragraphs 1,2,23,4 and 5 the person taking the action should submit for the Minister's approval a revised version of any such program or plan. If the Minister approves any revised program or plan so submitted, the person taking the action must implement the program or plan instead of the program or	Not Applicable	N/A

Condition Number	Condition	Compliant / Non-Compliant / Not Applicable	Evidence / Comments
	plan as originally approved.		
8.	If the Minister believes that it is necessary or desirable for the better protection of the environment to do so, the Minister may request the person taking the action to make specific revisions to a program or plan approved pursuant to paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, and to submit the revised program or plan for the Minister's approval. The person taking the action must comply with any such request. If the Minister approves any revised program or plan pursuant to this condition, the person taking the action must implement the program or plan instead of the program or plan as originally approved.	Not Applicable	N/A
9.	On 1 December each year, the person taking the action must provide a certificate stating that the person taking the action has complied with the conditions of approval.	Compliant	Department of Defence Annual Environmental Compliance Report 2016 submitted to DoEE prior 1 December 2016.
10.	If, at any time after five years from the date of this approval, the Minister notifies the person taking the action in writing that the Minister is not satisfied that there has been substantial commencement of construction of the UOTF, construction must not thereafter commence.	Not Applicable	N/A. The Action commenced in 2006.

