

Department of Defence
Annual Environmental Compliance Report 2017

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

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Document Version Control

Version	Date	Approved by	Details / Reason for Change
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Declaration of Accuracy

In making this declaration, I am aware that sections 490 and 491 of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth) (EPBC Act) make it an offence in certain circumstances to knowingly provide false or misleading information or documents. The offence is punishable on conviction by imprisonment or a fine, or both. I declare that all the information and documentation supporting this compliance report is true and correct in every particular. I am authorised to bind the approval holder to this declaration and that I have no knowledge of that authorisation being revoked at the time of making this declaration.

Signed



Full name (please print)

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Director Defence Environmental Protection
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Department of Defence
ABN 68706814312

Date

1 December 2017

1. Description of Activities

The approved action involved the construction and operation of an Urban Operations Training Facility (OUTF) at Defence's Mount Bunday Training Area (MBTA) in the Northern Territory to allow military training in an urban environment.

The project proposed the construction of an urban village setting, including a Central Business District (CBD), shanty towns, a community area, a residential area, an industrial area and open spaces. The original proposed schedule was for the immediate construction of the CBD, with additional stages to be constructed later as required. As at December 2016, the first stage, the CBD and access roads had been constructed.

The UOTF was booked by user units on 9 separate occasions during 2017 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 2017 training period.

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

Condition 9 of the EPBC approval requires the publication of annual compliance reports by 1 December of each year.

2. Conditions of Approval

Table 1 – Compliance Table

Condition Number	Condition	Is the project compliant with this condition?	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:	Compliant	CEMP submitted to (now) Department of Environment and Energy (DoEE) January 2006. Construction commenced 10 July 2006. Letter to (then) Compliance and Enforcement Branch advised project completion July 2007. Defence Capital Facilities confirmed compliance with all approval conditions for construction phase of project. Post construction compliance report submitted to DoEE in September 2008.
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;	Compliant	Complete. Approved CEMP addressed this requirement.
1 (b)	No parking of vehicles in sensitive environments, including water courses and drainage lines;	Compliant	Complete. Approved CEMP addressed this requirement.
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	Compliant	Complete. Approved CEMP addressed this requirement.
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	Compliant	Complete. Approved CEMP addressed this requirement.
-	Construction must not commence before the CEMP is approved. The approved CEMP must be implemented.	Compliant	Complete. CEMP approved April 2009. Construction commenced 10 July 2006. Approved CEMP was implemented.

Condition Number	Condition	Is the project compliant with this condition?	Evidence / Comments
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	Requirements for soil, water and vegetation monitoring on UOTF area stipulated in MBTA HEMP (2006). August 2007, the then Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA) issued interim approval for Defence to proceed with operation of the UOTF, subject to approval of Operational Environmental Management Plan (OEMP). OEMP, December 2008 established environmental management regime for UOTF to accord with HEMP. Monitoring methods have been undertaken in accordance with the <i>Environmental Monitoring Manual for Defence Training Areas in the NT/K Region</i>. A Monitoring Manual for MBTA incorporating the UOTF is being revised. Monitoring to inform the manual has been undertaken, including targeted Gouldian Finch, Partridge Pigeon and Northern Quoll surveys. Gouldian Finch waterhole counts exceeded previous surveys (2016). No records of Northern Quoll or Partridge Pigeon were made despite significant survey effort. Reports are currently being finalised, due in March 2018. The 2017 wet season water quality monitoring event did not detect any exceedances of SSTVs. A post training season aerial survey conducted in November 2017 did not detect any significant changes in vegetation coverage.

2.(a)	Soil, water and vegetation monitoring sites within the UOTF area and water quality monitoring sites within Craig Creek;	Compliant	Approved document addressed this requirement. 28 permanent monitoring plots on MBTA. Requirements for soil, water and vegetation monitoring (including Craig Creek) stipulated in updated 2010 MBTA HEMP. The MBTA Monitoring Program is under review and will be finalised in March 2018.
2.(b)	Establishment of baseline indicators for soil, water and vegetation using the information derived from the monitoring sites; and	Compliant	Approved document addressed this requirement. 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. The 2017 wet season water quality monitoring event did not detect any exceedances of SSTVs. Monitoring site (MBTA WAT-14) captures runoff from the UOTF. Six years of data established baseline indicators for soil and vegetation. The Monitoring Program is currently under review and will be finalised in March 2018.

2.(c)	Monitoring frequencies appropriate for measuring change in the quality of water, soil and vegetation.	Compliant	Approved document addressed this requirement. Due to the limited use of the UOTF surrounds and stable water quality results, existing monitoring frequencies are considered appropriate. Monitoring frequency is risked based and collected for the purpose of detecting trends. 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. Post wet season water quality and sediment monitoring was undertaken during 2017. The 2017 wet season water quality monitoring event did not detect any exceedances of SSTVs. 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. Weed monitoring was conducted during January - March 2017, and revealed small infestations, primarily annual mission grass, along the roadsides. Follow up treatment will occur throughout 2018.
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 issued by DoEE in August 2007 under the provision that a more detailed OEMP would be submitted. 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	Requirements addressed in approved OEMP. MBTA will be closed from 8 December 2017 and reopened when ground conditions are suitable. Higher ground is typically suited for certain activities by April/May 2018. 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 (e.g. from platoon to battalion level and above);	Compliant	Requirements addressed in approved OEMP. Port-a-loos are utilised on MBTA, along with a number of composting toilets (two located at the 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	Requirements addressed in approved OEMP. 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). A post training season aerial survey was conducted in November 2017. No significant changes in vegetation coverage were detected.

4.	The person taking the action must revise the Mount Bunday Training Area (MBTA) Environmental Management Plan within 2 years and the Plan must include:	Compliant	MBTA HEMP updated in 2010 to incorporate several developments and changes in use including: - UOTF construction - New military platforms (tanks, helicopters etc.). HEMP 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	Approved HEMP incorporates OEMP (December 2009).
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	Approved HEMP addresses this requirement. Monitoring requirements listed in the OEMP 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	Approved HEMP addresses this requirement. The program consists of the HEMP and the OEMP, which 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 and the HEMP. The UOTF was booked by user units on 9 separate occasions during 2016 for minor activities. The program is implemented through a number of measures, primarily through post activity inspections, which 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.
4.(d)	Actions to establish the rate of sustainable bore water extraction, and monitoring to ensure usage does not exceed that rate;	Compliant	Approved HEMP addresses this requirement. 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 firefighting 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. Monitoring of bore water extraction rates was therefore unnecessary, due to the very low extraction and usage rates

4.(e)	Annual monitoring of the impact of controlled burns and wildfire on different vegetation communities in the Mount Bunday Training Area and a fire management regime that implements appropriate fire regimes for each vegetation community identified in the Commonwealth Heritage values;	Compliant	Approved HEMP addresses this requirement. 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	Approved HEMP addresses this requirement. Sensitive areas, habitats and heritage values identified in 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. Gouldian Finch, Partridge Pigeon and Northern Quoll targeted surveys were subsequently undertaken in 2017. Gouldian Finch waterhole counts exceed previous surveys. No records of Northern Quoll or Partridge Pigeon were made despite significant survey effort. These reports are currently being finalised. A revised environmental monitoring manual for MBTA will be produced in March 2018.

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	
5.(b)	Criteria to determine when decommissioning works will cease or be suspended during wet periods;	Not Applicable	
5.(c)	Methods used to decommission the UOTF;	Not Applicable	
5.(d)	Measures to control erosion and sedimentation of watercourses;	Not Applicable	
5.(e)	Controls to prevent the spread of weeds and pathogens; and	Not Applicable	
5.(f)	Rehabilitation of the UOTF area.	Not Applicable	
-	Decommissioning cannot commence until the plan is approved. The approved plan must be implemented.	Not Applicable	
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	
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 plan as originally approved.	Not Applicable	

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	
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	Annual Environmental Compliance Report 2017 submitted to DoEE 1 December 2017.
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	The Action commenced in 2006.

3. Correcting Non-Compliances

There were no non-compliances apparent for the approved action.

4. New Environmental Risks

There were no new environmental risks observed for the approved action.