



Australian Government
Defence

Annual Compliance Report 2025

EPBC No 2004/1458
Urban Operations Training Facility (UOTF)
Mount Bunday Training Area (MBTA), Darwin, NT



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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:	Matthew Plunkett
Position (please print)	Acting Director, Environmental Planning, Assessment and Compliance
Organisation (please print including ABN/ACN if applicable)	Department of Defence ABN: 68 706 814 312
Date	December 2025

1. Description of Activities

The approved action (2004/1458) involved the construction and operation of an Urban Operations Training Facility (UOTF) at Defence's Mount Bunday Training Area (MBTA) in the Northern Territory. The UOTF allows military training in a simulated urban environment. The approval has effect until 31 December 2030.

The project proposed the construction of an urban village setting, including a central business district (CBD), shantytowns, 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 November 2025, only the first stage (the CBD and access roads) has been constructed.

The construction and operation of the UOTF at the MBTA was approved under the EPBC Act, subject to conditions of approval issued by the (now) Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) on 16 December 2005.

Condition 9 of the EPBC Act approval requires the submission of a certificate stating that Defence has complied with the conditions of approval by 1 December of each year. This annual compliance report provides compliance information for the period 08 November 2024 to 14 November 2025.

Summary of usage for the 2024/2025 reporting period

The UOTF was booked by user units on nine (9) separate occasions between 08 November 2024 and 14 November 2025. All of these bookings were 'all areas' bookings and sectors that included the UOTF. Seven of the bookings were for large exercises involving multiple nations and units. The UOTF was booked for contractor activities twelve (12) times.

Range Control Officers from Defence's Directorate of Operations and Training Area Management (the designated Training Area Operational Authority for Mount Bunday) undertook post activity inspections around general repair, maintenance, and replacement issues and outcomes after training activities.

No environmental incidents were reported for the 08 November 2024 to 14 November 2025 reporting period.

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	The final CEMP was submitted to the Department in January 2006. Construction commenced 10 July 2006 and was completed in July 2007.
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	The approved CEMP addressed this requirement.
1 (b)	No parking of vehicles in sensitive environments, including water courses and drainage lines;	Compliant	The 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 Revegetation of disturbed areas using endemic grass species	Compliant	The approved CEMP addressed this requirement.

Condition Number	Condition	Is the project compliant with this condition?	Evidence Comments
1 (d)	Measures to address the occurrence of fire including the following: i. A protocol for reporting occurrences of fire and Steps to be taken to control and extinguish fires	Compliant	The approved CEMP addressed this requirement.
-	Construction must not commence before the CEMP is approved. The approved CEMP must be implemented.	Compliant	The 2006 CEMP was implemented during the construction phase. A post-construction compliance report was submitted to the Department in September 2008.
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	The UOTF became operational in August 2007. In August 2007, the then Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts issued interim approval for Defence to proceed with the operation of the UOTF subject to finalisation of the Operation Environmental Management Plan (OEMP). The final OEMP was approved in December 2008.
2 (a)	Soil, water and vegetation monitoring sites within the UOTF area and water quality monitoring sites within Craig Creek;	Compliant	The program includes soil, water and vegetation monitoring sites within the UOTF area and water quality monitoring sites within the Craig Creek catchment. Soil and vegetation condition monitoring occurs at site MBTA07, which is approximately 800 metres south of the UOTF. Surface water quality monitoring occurs at site MBTA WAT-14, which is located on a stream that feeds into Craig Creek.

Condition Number	Condition	Is the project compliant with this condition?	Evidence Comments
2 (b)	Establishment of baseline indicators for soil, water and vegetation using the information derived from the monitoring sites; and	Compliant	The 2008 OEMP identifies baseline indicators for soil, water, and vegetation monitoring. Six years of data established baseline indicators for soil and vegetation. Water quality monitoring uses ANZECC guidelines as the baseline indicators.
2 (c)	Monitoring frequencies appropriate for measuring change in the quality of water, soil and vegetation.	Compliant	The approved OEMP includes monitoring frequencies for measuring change in water, soil, and vegetation quality.
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 the Department in August 2007 under the provision that a more detailed OEMP would be submitted. A final OEMP was submitted, and approved by the Minister, in December 2008.

Condition Number	Condition	Is the project compliant with this condition?	Evidence Comments
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	Defence adopts a combination of formal and indicative thresholds to guide the implementation of environmental management strategies at MBTA. MBTA is closed to user units during the wet season. MBTA will usually close in early December and reopen when ground conditions are suitable. Higher ground is typically suitable for use by April / May. Training Area Standing Orders (TASOs) detail operational activities permitted at the UOTF. TASOs also outline the process for booking the UOTF, which includes a march out inspection by the Range Control Officer and/or Environmental Sustainment Manager. Any unacceptable environmental impacts are dealt with as an environmental incident and user units repair or pay for repair of any damage. No unacceptable environmental impacts were reported for the period 22 November 2024 to 14 November 2025.
3 (b)	Human waste management for the different scales of training activities (e.g. from platoon to battalion level and above); and	Compliant	Requirements addressed in the 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 Officer and/or Environment & Sustainability Manager.

Condition Number	Condition	Is the project compliant with this condition?	Evidence Comments
3 (c)	Assembly areas for vehicles which must be located so as not to damage sensitive environments, including watercourses and drainage lines.	Compliant	The approved OEMP and TASOs (Sections 3.6 and 4.6).both stipulate that vehicles must use formed roads unless approval is granted by RCO and ESM.
-	Operations must not commence before the OEMP is approved. The approved OEMP must be implemented.	Compliant	The OEMP was approved by the Department in 2008 and is being implemented.
4	The person taking the action must revise the Mount Bunday Training Area Environmental Management Plan within 2 years and the Plan must include:	Compliant	The MBTA Heritage and Environmental Management Plan (HEMP) was updated in 2010 to provide guidance on the management of heritage and environment at MBTA and incorporate: - UOTF construction; - New military platforms (tanks, helicopters etc.); and - 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 2010 HEMP embeds key elements of the 2008 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 2008 OEMP are included as management actions in the user guides of the HEMP.

Condition Number	Condition	Is the project compliant with this condition?	Evidence Comments
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 approved HEMP and the OEMP refer to TASOs to respond to and mitigate potential impacts as a result of the use of the UOTF. Thresholds and management action interventions are detailed in the OEMP and the HEMP. There were no adverse environmental impacts reported for the period between 22 November 2024 and 14 November 2025 inclusive.
4 (d)	Actions to establish the rate of sustainable bore water extraction, and monitoring to ensure usage does not exceed that rate;	Compliant	Extraction and usage of bore water at MBTA UOTF is minimal. No changes to bore water extraction or usage were noted in the reporting period.
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	The HEMP includes requirements for managing and monitoring fire at MBTA. These requirements meet Defence policy and guidance, and are implemented via regional bushfire management plans and the site specific MBTA Bushfire Management Plan (BMP). The MBTA BMP (2018) was developed to guide implementation of the fire program. The BMP considers sensitive habitats and vegetation types and sets mosaic burn targets accordingly. The BMP's burn methodology involves early dry and wet season burns to minimise adverse impacts to vegetation.

Condition Number	Condition	Is the project compliant with this condition?	Evidence Comments
			Whilst fire management at MBTA has been effective in general, Defence has identified several mechanisms to increase BMP compliance with policy: • Increased remote surveillance via high resolution fire scar satellite imagery to increase assurance over contractor performance; • Taken steps to improve Bushfire Mitigation Works planning by working with the estate management contractors. • Updated the BMP in collaboration with other stakeholders including neighbours and Bushfires NT. • Undertaken monitoring in accordance with the Defence Land Management Manual policy. In 2025 there were no non-conformances with the BMP identified.
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 are identified in the approved MBTA HEMP (2010). 'No-Go' areas are identified in TASOs and on Range Control maps, and communicated in user range briefs. Revised core habitat maps were produced for MBTA in April 2016 to inform threatened species surveys. Areas of <i>Eucalyptus tintinnans</i> and <i>Eucalyptus dichromophloia</i> (potential Gouldian Finch breeding habitat) were previously mapped adjacent to the UOTF. Gouldian Finch, Partridge Pigeon and Northern Quoll targeted surveys were undertaken

Condition Number	Condition	Is the project compliant with this condition?	Evidence Comments
			in 2017, 2021 and 2023. No new sensitive areas were identified in 2025. Vertebrate Biodiversity and Overabundant Native Species (VBONS) surveys were conducted in 2024 as part of the broader Northern Territory Training Area and Ranges environment studies. No threatened species were observed within the UOTF footprint. The following EPBC listed fauna have been observed at MBTA : • Yellow-snouted Gecko (<i>Lucasium occultum</i>); • Partridge Pigeon (Eastern) (<i>Geophaps smithii smithii</i>); and • Gouldian Finch (<i>Erythrura goludiae</i>) habitat is located outside the project footprint, no individuals were observed within the UOTF footprint. There are no threatened ecological communities within the project area. Management and mitigation measures, such as early dry season prescribed ground burning; and feral cat monitoring, support protection of the above mentioned species.
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 applicable at this point in time.

Condition Number	Condition	Is the project compliant with this condition?	Evidence Comments
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, 3, 4 and 5 the person taking the action should submit for the Minister's approval a	Not triggered	

Condition Number	Condition	Is the project compliant with this condition?	Evidence Comments
	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.		
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 triggered	
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	This report details Defence's compliance with the conditions of approval to 14 November 2025.

Condition Number	Condition	Is the project compliant with this condition?	Evidence Comments
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

No non-compliances have been identified by the project.

4. New Environmental Risks

No new environmental risks were observed for the approved action.