

Appendix A: CLC Summary table of updates on NT compliance with NWI since 2024 Inquiry

Reform priorities and findings for NT from 2020-2024	Update since 2024 Inquiry	Summary of NT progress / CLC position
PC Reform priorities for NT:		
1. Progress its planned safe drinking water legislation and continue to improve water quality in remote communities	Territory Water Plan commitment to develop safe drinking water legislation abandoned.	Commitment abandoned
	<u>Water quality improvements:</u>	
	Alpurrurulam project agreed and commencing this year, with NT Government, Power and Water, CLC and NIAA.	Positive, supported
	Project to provide Nyirripi with safe water (high levels of fluoride) still in planning stage.	Limited
	Latest drinking water report data (2024-2025) released 30 April 2026 shows uranium above ADWG levels in Willowra without solution outlined.	Worsening
	Remote Water Team has held community forums in some remote communities with water quality concerns to share information, which is supported by CLC.	Positive & supported but relates only to information sharing; not material improvement.
	No indication of budget or planning to address aesthetic concerns in remote communities.	No progress
	<u>Water security (not included in finding, CLC has added as important consideration)</u>	
<p>NT Government has continued investment through National Water Grid for critical water security concerns in some remote communities, which is supported by CLC.</p> <p>The CLC and NLC have also established a Water Sub-group within the Remote Essential Services Working Group with the NT Government and Power and Water in order to discuss the NT Government’s proposed applications to the National Water Grid. This has improved transparency and collaboration for National Water Grid submissions. However,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) The NT Government’s reliance on the National Water Grid to fund essential maintenance and upgrades for ageing infrastructure demonstrates that need far outweighs the funding available. b) Land Councils do not have any visibility over the broader program of works and remote water security needs. 	Positive, supported. CLC provided letters of support for applications.	

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	No improvement in transparent data sharing for remote communities' water security and essential services needs more broadly.	No progress
2. Strengthen the voice of First Nations peoples in water management and enhance access to water for Aboriginal peoples within its Strategic Aboriginal Water Reserves	<u>Strengthen voice of First nations people in water management</u>	
	Territory Water Plan commitment to establish Aboriginal Water Advisory Council abandoned	Commitment abandoned
	In December 2024 the NT Government unilaterally revoked the Western Davenport WAP agreed on with the Water Advisory Committee 3 months prior and replaced it with the previous version that the WAC and TOs had rejected without any consultation and dissolved the WAC with immediate effect.	Worsening
	Draft Alice Springs Water Allocation Plan drafted without a Water Advisory Committee or any consultation with Traditional Owners or community, despite commitments to do so for over 10 years (see case study).	Worsening
	<u>Enhance access to water for Aboriginal peoples within its Strategic Aboriginal Water Reserves</u>	
	The NT Government abandoned co-designed regulations with Land Councils and unilaterally amended the Water Act to remove the need to consult with Land Councils on land eligible for the Reserve and the need for regulations around consent. In doing so, they made Aboriginal Water Reserve available now, however gave the NT Government complete discretion over Aboriginal peoples' consent. The lack of regulations gives rise to risks.	Mixed, concerning government led approach to making Reserve available
Aboriginal Water Reserves available in most Water Allocation Plans; but still not provisioned in Ti Tree WAP and calculated inconsistently for draft Alice Springs WAP.		
3. More clearly specify environmental and cultural outcomes in its water allocation plans, ensuring these outcomes are informed by high quality engagement and science.	Water allocation plans remain non-binding on decision makers in the NT, which means water for the environment and other public benefit outcomes do not have the same level of security as consumptive uses	No progress
	Water Allocation Plans renewed since 2024 in CLC region (Western Davenport and Alice Springs) have weakened protections for cultural values, and only vaguely refer to 'considering' and 'accounting for' cultural values.	Worsening
	Water Allocation Plans continue to be based on lack of evidence. CLC sought independent expert hydrogeological review of the Western Davenport and Draft Alice Springs WAPs and found significant knowledge gaps in	No progress

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	hydrogeological data and monitoring that were not adequately addressed by the Implementation Actions and did not support precautionary planning.	
PC 2024 Inquiry findings RE NT's compliance with the NWI:		
PC found NT Backsliding in:		
1. First Nations peoples' representation in water planning	As above, Aboriginal Water Advisory Council abandoned	Commitment abandoned
	As above, two WAPs renewed since 2024 Inquiry (Western Davenports and Alice Springs) developed without WAC or consultation with Aboriginal people.	Worsening
2. Water planning	Water plans remain non-binding on decision-makers	No progress
	Territory Water Plan commitment to review and replace the Water Act with community and stakeholder input abandoned. Instead, NT Government have made piecemeal amendments without consultation that largely further reduce transparency and accountability.	Commitment abandoned and worsening
	Territory Water Plan commitment to reform the NT Water Allocation Planning Framework abandoned	Commitment abandoned
	NT Government has continued practice of splitting WAPs into three documents, which limits information and accountability for water licencing decisions and removes technical information, risk assessments, implementation and monitoring removed to non-statutory documents.	No progress
	Merits review removed for decisions made under the Water Act	Worsening
	WAPs are reviewed by the NT Government or NT Government funded consultants. They are not reviewed independently.	No progress
3. Identification of specific environmental and public benefit outcomes	As above.	No progress
4. Community and stakeholder engagement	The NT Government split the Western Davenport & Ti Tree Water Advisory Committee into two WACs and dissolved them both just prior to the review of the Ti Tree Water Plan, so the review was undertaken without a Water Advisory Committee.	Worsening
	No Water Advisory Committees active in CLC region or set up over Inquiry period, despite two WAPs renewed (Western Davenport and Draft Alice Springs) and one reviewed (Ti Tree).	Worsening

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	Stakeholder engagement for Alice Springs WAP did not meet best practice standards (see case study).	No progress
	Commitments in Territory Water Plan to set up Aboriginal Water Advisory Council and Strategic Water Advisory Council (which intended ‘to ensure Territorians have a voice’) both abandoned.	Commitments abandoned
PC found no improvement/progress in:		
5. Incorporating First Nations peoples’ objectives and strategies for achieving them in water plans	Water plans only mention cultural values within vague objective statements. Plans do not identify cultural values in specific or meaningful terms (which should only be done through agreement with TOs) and continue to weaken protections. Implementation Actions are vague.	Worsening
6. First Nations peoples’ access to water, including through native title rights to water	See case studies in submission	Limited
7. Water for environmental and other public benefit outcomes	See points regarding environmental and other public benefit outcomes above	No progress
8. Addressing overallocated and overused systems	AWR remains unprovisioned in Ti Tree WAP. See case study.	Limited
9. Addressing barriers to trade	CLC recommends caution regarding trade in NT context. Further research and consultation is required. See submission.	CLC recommend caution on this commitment
10. Regulation of water utilities	There have not been any material changes since the PC’s 2024 Inquiry relating to the regulation of water utilities in remote communities and homelands. The NT Government released a reform directions paper and is developing a framework for reform that has not been shared publicly yet. See submission for further detail.	Limited
11. Drinking water quality regulation	See Part B for more detailed information on current arrangements and economic reform of drinking water services.	Limited