



Media Release:

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Protecting our Environment and Wildlife

More than 70 staff from the Department of Natural Resources, Environment, The Arts and Sport (NRETAS) are completing a nationally accredited course to strengthen their role in protecting the Northern Territory's wildlife, natural resources and environment.

Acting Director of Wildlife Management Brett Easton said gaining a Certificate IV in Government (Investigations) would give rangers and officers more authority in conducting investigations through collecting evidence, taking witness statements and preparing prosecution briefs.

"NRETAS has more than 50 pieces of environmental legislation to administer and it's vitally important to ensure there is a strong consistency in approaches to law enforcement, whether it is enforcing fire breaks, illegal wildlife smuggling, weed control or waste management and pollution control," Mr Easton said.

"For instance previously if there were suspected wildlife smugglings only a small unit of wildlife officers were equipped with the training to conduct searches and seize any illegal wildlife in possession.

"Now a wide range of wildlife officers and rangers throughout the Territory, including remote areas, will be certified to conduct the investigations on the spot, and by putting together a more comprehensive prosecution brief this will ensure more effective prosecutions of breaches under the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act*."

Mr Easton said NRETAS legislative power in protecting the environment extended beyond native wildlife.

"Bushfires NT staff will be able to enforce the maintenance of firebreaks with landowners under the *Bushfires Act* to help reduce the prospects of damaging wildfires destroying properties and native wildlife.

"Staff from our Vegetation and Land Management unit will be able to better regulate land clearing whilst Water Management staff will be able to strengthen the enforcement of compliance required under the *Water Act*."

The course, developed by the Australian Environmental Law Enforcement and Regulators Network (AELERT), is designed to improve investigative methods, assessment and authorisations, administrative processes and resources for effective enforcement.

"This is the first time so many of NRETAS staff have had the opportunity to obtain these qualifications specifically targeting environmental regulation," Mr Easton said.

"Not only will this help to fulfil legislative requirements for cases but it also allows us to undertake joint agency investigations with other Northern Territory Government agencies, as well as Federal Government agencies.

"This course is particularly beneficial to remotely located staff because they are often in a better position to ensure land management and environmental compliance is happening right across the Territory."

The Commonwealth Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA) funded the development of the Certificate IV Government (Investigations) specifically for environmental agencies across Australia.

Ends

Media Note – for more information contact Brett Easton on 8995 5038

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