

Department of LOGISTICS AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Land Access Policy

Territory Energy Link



Glossary of Terms

Term/Acronym	Full form
AAPA	Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority
DLI	Department of Logistics and Infrastructure
Feasibility stage	The current stage of the project. This includes activities such as technical studies, environmental and cultural surveys and ongoing stakeholder engagement.
Landholder	An owner or lessee of the land, which may be the holder of an NT freehold title, Native Title interests, Pastoral lease or a Crown lease or other interested party.
NLC	Northern Land Council
NT	Northern Territory
NTG	Northern Territory Government
Occupier	The holder of a short term commercial lease or sublease over an existing NT freehold title, pastoral or Crown lease.
Preliminary alignment	A 130 metre corridor alignment identified through the Project's pre-feasibility study.
Study area	An approximately 530 metre wide corridor identified for route assessment purposes during the feasibility phase of the Project, within which the 130 metre wide final corridor will be located.
Territory Energy Link or Project	Territory Energy Link is a proposed 130 metre wide multi-user, multi-asset buried services corridor spanning 670 km from near Elliott to Darwin, designed to carry gas, water, optical fibre, and other pipelines/services. The project anticipates up to four high pressure, large diameter (42 inch nominal diameter) gas pipelines within 100 metres of the 130 metre wide buried services pipeline corridor. The remaining 30 metres is reserved for combined general utilities such as water or optical fibre services.
UXO	Unexploded Ordnance

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Introduction

Background

The Northern Territory Government, through DLI is investigating Territory Energy Link; a multi-user, multi-asset infrastructure corridor as part of its commitment to rebuilding the Territory economy.

Territory Energy Link will extend approximately 670 km from near Elliott to Darwin. It will support buried services including gas, water and optical fibre. Other services may also be contemplated in the future. Territory Energy Link will connect major energy projects in the Beetaloo Basin and other strategic infrastructure in the Darwin region.

In 2024, DLI completed the desktop prefeasibility study to inform the preliminary alignment of the 530m wide study area. Investigations during this stage considered connections to existing infrastructure, identified known constraints and sought to minimise the potential for environmental and cultural impacts.



Why is access required?

Territory Energy Link is now in the feasibility stage which is focused on refining the 530m wide study area and identifying the preferred 130m wide corridor alignment. On-ground investigations will help to refine the alignment, including through technical, environmental, and cultural surveys alongside landholder and stakeholder feedback.

Purpose of this document

The purpose of this Land Access Policy (the Policy) is to establish principles for DLI and its contractors to guide access and site activities during the feasibility stage. The Policy is designed to ensure that all activities undertaken by DLI and its contractors are conducted in a manner that is safe; respectful of landholders, Traditional Owners and Site Custodians, occupiers and the broader community; and legally compliant.

Different tenure types, legal rights, land interests, cultural and environmental values exist throughout the study area. These factors require careful consideration to ensure that access to land is carried out with minimal impact or disruption to landholders and project stakeholders. The overarching principles that will guide access to land are set out below.

Method for land access

DLI has statutory powers to access land along the Territory Energy Link alignment under an authorisation issued pursuant to section 29 of the *Lands Acquisition Act 1978*. This provides authorised persons to enter land, including land subject to Native Title, for the minimum period necessary to undertake surveys or technical studies, in accordance with the conditions of the authorisation. Access to Aboriginal land within the corridor will use a different method.

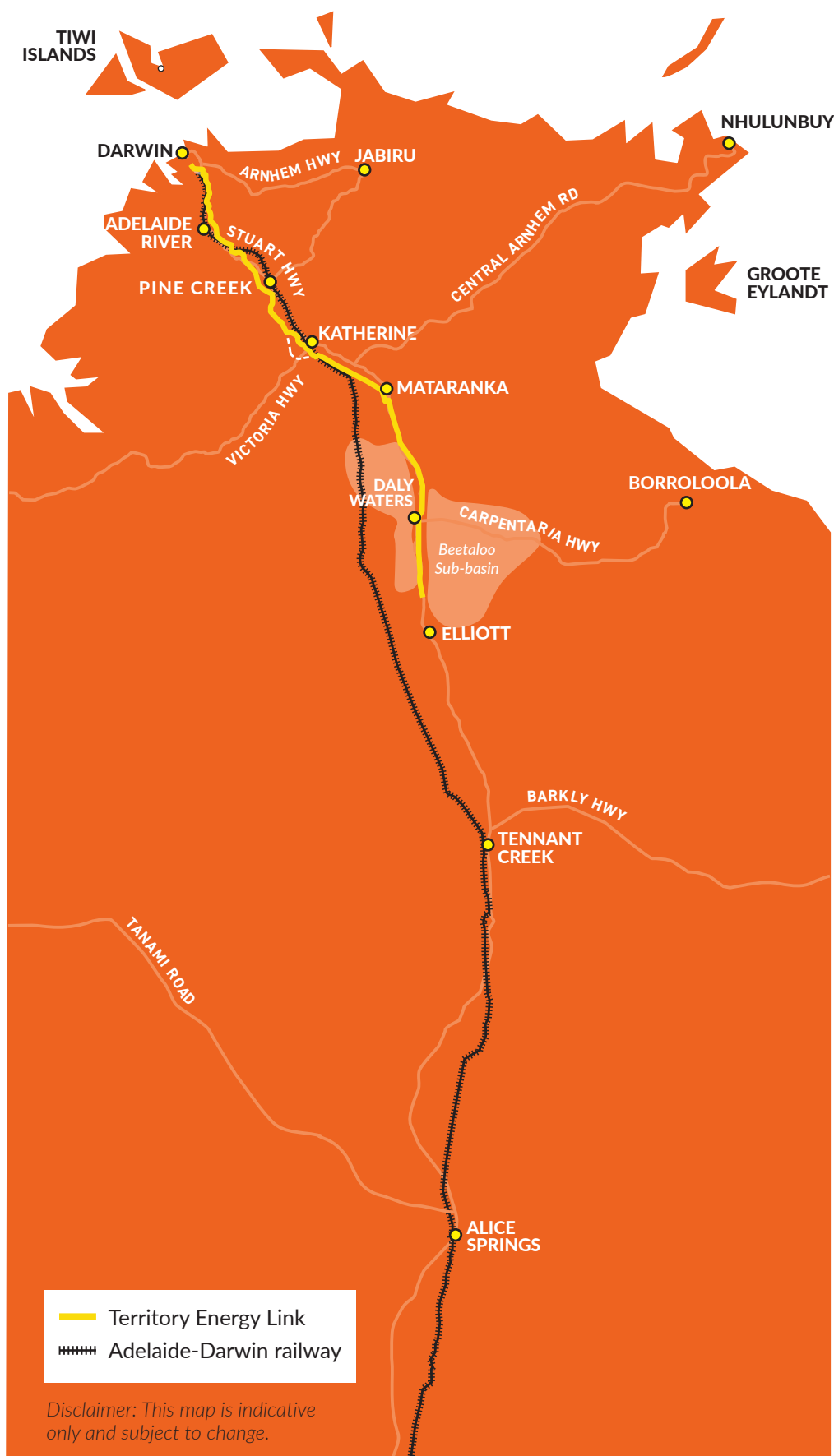


Figure 1: Preliminary Territory Energy Link corridor alignment (yellow line). The existing rail corridor is also shown (black line)

Guiding principles for land access

Access to land will be guided by the following principles.

General principles

DLI acknowledges that land within the study area is subject to various Territory and Commonwealth legislative requirements and legal interests. Where access to land is required, DLI staff and its contractors will identify the relevant landholders and interest holders to ensure that access requirements and site activities are communicated appropriately and do not prejudice existing rights or interests.

DLI will remain on the land for the minimum period necessary to carry out activities and will ensure that the investigations have as little impact as possible on the land and operations. DLI will leave the land, as closely as possible, in the same condition as it was prior.

Landholders and/or Traditional Owners should communicate to the DLI project team site-specific access requirements, including radio channels, use of repeater stations, cultural activities, gate access, and seasonal or mustering requirements. DLI will document site-specific access requirements and adjust investigation activities wherever possible, to reduce impact.

Communication with landholders will include advance notice of planned activities, contractors and/or government agencies that require access, accurate descriptions of the types of activities and the anticipated duration of each access period.

Respect and transparency

All DLI staff and contractors are expected to behave respectfully and professionally when on any land associated with the project and provide clear and transparent communication with landholders and project stakeholders on investigation activities.

Many landholders operate existing businesses from their properties. DLI will make enquiries on current operations to adjust investigations activities where possible, to reduce impact on landholders.

DLI staff have carried out land access and cultural awareness training to promote respectful behaviour and increase awareness of cultural practices.

Work health and safety

DLI staff and its contractors will adhere to remote work safety protocols and be appropriately trained to undertake site activities. This includes training in emergency response measures to ensure that the project team is prepared and capable to respond in an emergency, if required.

In some instances, specialist equipment may be required for site investigations such as four-wheel drive vehicles, drones, geo-technical/plant equipment, heavy vehicles, all-terrain vehicles and helicopters. Specialist training will be required in instances such as working in proximity to the railway. DLI will ensure its staff and its contractors hold the required licenses and that seasonal variations in weather are factored into land access.

Heritage and cultural monitors

DLI is undertaking sacred site surveys and heritage investigations across the study area to identify and protect areas of cultural significance and to inform project planning and decision-making.

DLI acknowledges the importance of protecting Aboriginal heritage and respecting the cultural values, knowledge and practices of Traditional Owners and Site Custodians. Where appropriate, cultural monitors may be engaged to support land access and site activities within the study area. Cultural monitors provide guidance and advice to assist in identifying and avoiding impacts to areas of cultural significance and support the application of appropriate cultural protocols during site investigations.

Cultural monitors may be engaged directly or through representative organisations, including NLC or AAPA, in accordance with legislative requirements and established cultural protocols.

DLI staff and contractors will work cooperatively and respectfully with cultural monitors and will consider their advice when undertaking site activities to minimise the risk of disturbance to heritage values and culturally significant areas.

All Aboriginal and Macassan archaeological places and objects are protected under the *Heritage Act 2011*. The project team has an unexpected finds procedure in the event any unanticipated historical or Aboriginal places, objects, or suspected human remains are identified during field investigations. The procedure requires work to stop immediately, followed by notification, assessment and clearance, in consultation with relevant authorities and Traditional Owners as appropriate.

Biosecurity and weeds

DLI will work with landholders prior to access to understand any site-specific risks and implement mitigations as required.

DLI staff and its contractors are familiar with weed hygiene practices and biosecurity requirements to monitor and ensure activities on pastoral properties do not impact operations or present biosecurity risks. DLI staff and contractors will comply with property specific site inductions including, where necessary, declarations relating to weed hygiene and biosecurity, and in biosecurity management areas.

If a property has a registered biosecurity management plan, this will form part of the entry requirements for that property. DLI is requesting all biosecurity management plans relevant to the land from landholders. Where properties do not hold a registered biosecurity management plan, entry protocols relating to biosecurity will be negotiated with impacted landholders and recorded for any future access requirements.

Weather conditions, fire and other risks

Landholder and project team safety is paramount. All DLI staff and contractors must follow relevant procedures and take appropriate precautions when working in conditions affected by extreme heat, cyclones, flooding, fire or other severe weather events.

The project team and contractors undertaking land access, survey and field activities will take all reasonable measures to prevent the ignition of bushfires and minimise fire risk. This includes complying with all applicable fire restrictions, monitoring fire danger conditions, maintaining vehicles and equipment to prevent ignition sources, carrying appropriate firefighting equipment, and avoiding activities that may generate sparks or flames during periods of elevated fire danger. Personnel must immediately report any fire incidents, maintain emergency communications, and follow bushfire response and evacuation procedures to protect landholders, property and the environment.

The project team and contractors will assess and manage risks associated with extreme weather and environmental conditions during land access activities. Work activities may be modified, suspended or postponed where conditions present an unacceptable risk to the project team, contractors, landholders, property, or the environment. Relevant weather forecasts, warnings and emergency advice will be monitored, and appropriate controls implemented for hazards including extreme heat, flooding, severe storms, lightning, cyclones, high winds and reduced visibility conditions. Any helicopters used during site surveys will also be required to ensure that potential fire risk from landing/taking off is managed accordingly.

DLI has carried out a desktop risk assessment for UXO within the study area and will provide UXO field safety support for geotechnical works in areas of risk. In the event a UXO is detected and disposal required, UXO contractors will engage with the Australian Defence Force.

Land access

This section explains how and why access is required and describes the types of activities that DLI staff and its contractors may need to undertake.

Who may enter the land?

Land will be accessed by DLI staff, contractors, and invitees undertaking work to support the feasibility stage of Territory Energy Link. Staff from NLC and AAPA may also enter land with Traditional Owners and site custodians to undertake cultural surveys. Additionally, cultural monitors may also be employed through NLC to assist with technical studies and field surveys undertaken by contractors.

What activities will occur?

DLI will undertake further investigations within the study area to determine the 130m wide preferred corridor alignment. The activities will vary by location, but may involve:

- Heritage surveys
- Ecological surveys (flora and fauna)
- Technical studies (hydrological, geotechnical, geophysical etc)
- Topographical surveys
- Incidental vegetation clearing to facilitate access and/or technical studies
- Site visits to assist with constructability assessment and land feature verification.

DLI and contractors will ensure that investigations have as little impact as possible on the land, including anything growing on the land or other interests identified by landholders. At the end of any investigation, all equipment and waste will be removed from the land. Ground conditions will be stabilised following the completion of all survey-related activities involving ground disturbance. The land will, as far as practicable, be reinstated to its original condition.

DLI staff can escort and supervise contractors on individual properties as required. Where there is a higher risk of impacting existing infrastructure, DLI can prepare condition reports, including photographic records of pre and post investigation site conditions.

AAPA is also carrying out sacred site surveys with Traditional Owners and Site Custodians for the Project study area.

Where will be accessed?

Land within the study area requiring access includes privately owned freehold parcels including Aboriginal land, pastoral leases, Territory owned freehold parcels, vacant Crown land and Crown leases, including land subject to Native Title.

The investigations will focus on the 530m study area and allow access from a public road. Broader access beyond the 530m study area will be required if areas of cultural or environmental significance are found through surveys. The extent of the investigation area will be different for each property.

When is access required?

The timing of access will vary depending on the location and contractor schedule, and most surveys will commence in 2026. In some regions, wet season flora and fauna surveys may also be required to verify the presence/absence of certain species. Technical studies and surveys are expected to continue throughout 2026 and 2027.

Working hours will usually be between 6am to 6pm on weekdays. On occasion, surveys or investigation works may be required outside of regular working hours such as on weekends. This will be discussed with landholders on a case-by-case basis.

DLI will aim to provide 1 – 2 weeks' notice prior to access.

Communications

The majority of landholders and stakeholders with interests within the study area have already been contacted by the DLI project team. Where access to land is required for technical investigations or surveys, DLI will engage with the landholder to discuss access arrangements to minimise impact to property operations and ensure safety for DLI staff and contractors.

When discussing access, DLI will seek the following information from landholders:

- Preferred access routes including gate locations and communication methods while on the land (mobile numbers or UHF radio channels)
- Timing of any planned activities or seasonal events that may impact access (mustering, dry season burning etc)
- Any property inductions that need to be completed prior to access
- Site features, biosecurity measures and/or particularly important issues that require consideration.

DLI will ensure that landholders receive specific information about investigations on their land, including the activities and equipment, expected duration, and contact details.

Where Native Title exists, DLI will work with NLC to ensure that access to land is carried out in a culturally appropriate manner. For sacred site surveys, AAPA will contact landholders directly to discuss access requirements. Where a property is leased, it will be the responsibility of the landholder to notify the occupier or connect DLI with relevant person(s) occupying the land to facilitate access.



Property damage

DLI staff and its contractors will endeavour to access land in line with the guiding principles as set out in this document. In keeping with a best practice approach, DLI acknowledges that instances may arise where accidental damage may occur to a property and landholders may wish to provide feedback.

If DLI staff or its contractors inadvertently damage or have an adverse impact to a landholder's property or operations, the project team will:

- Record information to verify the nature of the damage (including accidental injury or death of livestock) to inform the type and extent of remediation that may be required
- Promptly notify the landholder and provide information on the damage
- Arrange for the damage or remediation works to be completed as agreed with the landholder.



Any damage caused to physical infrastructure will be remediated, so far as is reasonably possible, to a standard equivalent to the pre-damage condition or as agreed with the landholder. The project team have controls to ensure no damage to places of cultural significance and sacred sites.

Should any instances occur where unreported property damage has been identified (or suspected), landholders should contact the DLI project team as soon as reasonably practicable after becoming aware of the damage.

Where DLI and its contractors access land under an authorisation issued pursuant to section 29 of the *Lands Acquisition Act 1978*, they are required to comply with conditions of the authorisation and, in accordance with section 30(2), must:

- ensure that any work performed for the purposes of a survey or investigation has as little impact as possible on the land and on anything on or growing on the land;
- subject to any agreement entered into with the owner of the land or the registered Native Title body corporate, at the end of the survey or investigation, remove from the land anything that person brought onto the land; and
- leave the land, as nearly as possible, in the same condition as it was immediately before entering onto the land.

Under section 61 of the *Lands Acquisition Act 1978*, a landholder or Native Title holder may recover loss they have sustained, or cost they have incurred, by reason of any action taken under a section 29 authorisation from the Northern Territory.

Compliance

DLI staff are trained in remote first aid, land access, remote 4WD, and weed hygiene training, and ensure that contractors are appropriately qualified. Contractor compliance with legislative and work requirements are managed through contract conditions and project work instructions.

This Policy will be reviewed periodically and updated as required.

Feedback

DLI welcomes all types of feedback, including complaints, compliments and suggestions. Feedback will help DLI improve the way we operate.

In the first instance, feedback is welcome to the DLI project team at territoryenergylink.dli@nt.gov.au. The DLI project team is committed to addressing complaints in good faith.

Feedback can also be provided as detailed: dli.nt.gov.au/about-us/provide-feedback-to-dipl





WEB infrastructure.nt.gov.au/project/territory-energy-link

EMAIL territoryenergylink.dli@nt.gov.au

