A new Environment Protection Commission headed up by an independent Commissioner will be central to a new regime and structure for environmental protection to be developed in the Northern Territory by a future CLP Government.

The new Environment Protection Commission and new Commissioner initiatives were contained in another CLP position paper released by Leader Terry Mills today.

Mr Mills said the independent Commissioner, who will be a parliamentary appointment, will make recommendations and deliver reports to Government and the Sustainable Development Authority.

The CLP leader said that during discussions he has had with members of the environmental lobby that the biggest issue was independence.

"While I recognise that the organs for environment protection already exist in the Territory, I agree that there is a real need for independent advice to be given to parliament on environmental issues," Mr Mills said.

"Under the CLP, the Environment Commissioner will have unfettered access to Northern Territory Government data, similar to the powers of the Ombudsman.

"The Commissioner's first function will be an audit of current legislation and departmental practices regarding environmental and heritage protection.

"His functions will include conducting environment assessments; providing policy advice to Government; investigate issues of environmental consequence; providing recommendations to Parliament; setting environmental standards and guidelines."

Mr Mills said the current Office of Environment and Heritage will become the Environment Protection Commission and its functions will include investigating matters referred to it by Government; heritage matters; acting on any reference from the Executive Government and or the Commissioner; acting on matters from third parties after referral from the Environmental Commissioner; and setting environmental standards and guidelines.
In another significant change Mr Mills announced that the Development Consent Authority will become the Sustainable Development Authority and will be given broader powers to include all development applications, such as mining.

It's functions will include: conducting development assessments; deciding on development approvals; monitoring compliance under the planning Act; providing policy recommendations; education and raising public awareness in conjunction with the EPC; ensuring heritage protection with regards to proposed developments; and conducting assessments on any public development in accordance with existing powers of the Development Consent Authority for granting permits for land development.

"The new model will broaden the powers and functions of the SDA by legislation to deal with all public development applications in the Northern Territory," Mr Mills said.

"This will specifically include major developments with potential for significant environmental impact."

***Media Opportunity
1pm today
Charles Darwin National Park (viewing platform)
CLP Leader Terry Mills and Shadow Environment Minister Sue Carter

**Note: Terry will also discuss the Asbestos Register to include all NTG properties.

Ends