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CHAPTER 283

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION

Act 12 of 2002
Act 2 of 2010
Act 28 of 2010
Act 24 of 2017
Act 6 of 2019

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ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND CONSERVATION

An Act to provide for the conservation, sustainable development and management of the environment of Vanuatu, and the regulation of related activities.

PART 1 – PRELIMINARY

1. Application

This Act applies to the extent of Vanuatu's territory in accordance with the Maritime Zones Act No. 6 of 2010.

2. Interpretation

In this Act, unless the contrary intention appears:

“authorised officer” means a person appointed under section 5;

“biodiversity significance” means the ranked significance of an area according to the specified biological diversity values to account for ecological concepts such as rarity, diversity, fragmentation, habitat condition, resilience, threats and ecosystem processes;

“biological diversity” means the variability among living organisms from all sources including terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part, including diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems;

“biological resources” includes genetic resources, organisms or parts thereof, populations, or any other biotic component of ecosystems with actual or potential use or value for humanity;

“bioprospecting” means any activity undertaken to harvest or exploit all or any of the following:

- (a) samples of genetic resources;
- (b) samples of any derivatives of genetic resources;
- (c) the knowledge, innovations, and customary practices of local communities associated with those genetic resources;

“business day” means every day of a week, excluding Saturday, Sunday and a public holiday as prescribed or declared by the President under the Public Holidays Act [CAP 114];

for purposes of research, product development, conservation or industrial or commercial application, and includes investigative research and sampling, but does not include customary uses of genetic resources and derivatives;

“climate change” means a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods;

“community” means a social group of any size whose members reside in a specific locality, share government, and often have a common cultural and historical heritage including but not limited to a group of individuals, family group, tribe or village;

“conservation” includes the preservation and protection of natural resources and heritage;

“conservation area” means an area of land or sea especially dedicated to the protection, maintenance and sustainable use of biological diversity, and of natural and associated cultural resources, and managed through legal or other effective means;

“Council” means the Biodiversity Advisory Council established under section 29;

“Department” means the Department responsible for the environment;

“Director” means the Director of the Department;

“EIA review committee” means the committee appointed by the Director in accordance with the regulations;

“endemic” means native to Vanuatu and not occurring naturally anywhere else;

“enforcement officer” means an officer of the Department of Environmental Protection and Conservation and any other person approved by the Director from time to time;

“environment” means the components of the earth and includes all or any of the following:

- (a) land and water;
- (b) layers of the atmosphere;
- (c) all organic and inorganic matter and living organisms including ecosystem services and processes;
- (ca) weather and climatic systems;
- (d) the interacting natural, cultural and human systems that include components referred to in paragraphs (a) to (ca);

“environmental impact assessment” means the environmental impact assessment process as provided in Part 3, and “EIA” has a corresponding meaning;

“environmental permit” means a permit granted under section 17;

“Environmental Registry” means the registry established under section 6;

“foreign organism” includes all stages of any life form not endemic or normally found in Vanuatu;

“genetic material” means any material of plant, animal, microbial or other origin containing functional units of heredity;

“genetic resources” means genetic material of actual or potential value;

“land” includes land covered by water;

“management committee” means the entity that is responsible for the implementation, management and enforcement of the Community Conservation Area;

“management plan” means a comprehensive document that describes how, who, what, where, when and why a Community Conservation Area is managed;

“management rules” means the rules implemented for the purpose of managing the Community Conservation Area;

“Minister” means the Minister responsible for the environment;

“natural resources” includes all living and non-living, finite and renewable resources found within Vanuatu but does not include resources lawfully maintained for domestic or commercial purposes;

“person” includes any statutory body, company or association or body of persons corporate or unincorporate;

“principal consultant” means a consultant with the appropriate qualifications, experience and knowledge to prepare and manage the development of an EIA report and EMMP;

“regulation” means a regulation made under this Act;

“sustainable use” means the human use of biotic and abiotic resources that does not contribute to their long-term degradation, overuse or destruction;

“traditional knowledge” means any knowledge:

- (a) that is created, acquired or inspired for traditional economic, spiritual, ritual, narrative, decorative or recreational purposes; and
- (b) whose nature or use of which has been transmitted from generation to generation; and
- (c) that is regarded as pertaining to a particular indigenous person or people in Vanuatu;

“water” means all or any of the following:

- (a) water flowing or situated upon the surface of any land;
- (b) water flowing or contained in:
 - (i) any river, stream, creek or other natural course for water; or
 - (ii) any sea, lake, lagoon, bay, swamp, marsh or spring;whether or not it has been altered or artificially improved;
- (c) groundwater, including geothermal water;
- (d) any estuarine or coastal sea water.

PART 2– ADMINISTRATION

Division 1 – Powers and functions

3. Director appointed

- (1) A Director of the Department is to be appointed under the Public Service Act [Cap. 246].
- (2) The Director is accountable to the Public Service Commission for the efficient and effective administration of this Act.
- (3) The Director must advise and assist the Minister in all matters relating to this Act.

4. Functions of the Director

- (1) The Director is responsible for the development, co-ordination and, where appropriate, implementation of the Government’s environmental policies and programs.
- (2) In carrying out the functions outlined in subsection (1), the Director must do the following:
 - (a) administer the Environmental Registry established under section 6;
 - (b) prepare State of the Environment Reports under section 7;
 - (c) prepare National Policies and National Plans under section 8;
 - (d) administer the Environmental Impact Assessment procedure under Part 3;
 - (e) prepare guidelines, standards, codes of practice and procedures;
 - (f) prepare advice on international environmental treaties and instruments, including implementation strategies;
 - (g) undertake environmental research, assessment, monitoring, and inspection generally;
 - (h) undertake such other duties and responsibilities as may lawfully be required by the Minister.
- (3) The Director may carry out any duty, function or responsibility under this Act in association with any other Ministry, Constitutional Entity, Statutory Entity, local government or municipal council.

5. Powers of the Director

- (1) The Director has the powers conferred by this Act, and such other powers as may be necessary or convenient for the performance of the Director's functions under this Act, including:
- (a) the appointment of persons not employed by the Department as authorised officers for the purpose of administering this Act; and
 - (b) the establishment of committees for the purpose of ensuring better inter-departmental and inter-agency co-ordination on particular environmental matters.
- (2) The Director must consult with the Public Service Commission and such local government or municipal council as is appropriate before appointing any authorized officer under subsection (1)(a).
- (3) The Director must consult with the Minister before establishing any committee under subsection (1)(b).
- (4) The powers, duties and responsibilities of any person appointed under subsection (1)(a) or any committee established under subsection (1)(b) must be stated in any instrument of appointment or establishment.
- (5) The Director may delegate to officers of the Department and any authorised officers appointed under subsection (1)(a), such powers and functions as he or she considers appropriate, with the exception of this power of delegation.

5A. Application of the precautionary principle

- (1) Notwithstanding the provisions of any other Act, all persons and agencies having responsibilities under this Act, or whose functions and powers may relate to any matter or thing involving the environment, are to apply the precautionary principle when discharging their responsibilities and functions, or exercising their powers.
- (2) For the purposes of this section, the precautionary principle is applied if, in the event of a threat or damage to the environment or human health exists in Vanuatu, a lack of full scientific certainty regarding the extent of adverse effects of the threat or damage is not to be used to prevent or avoid a decision being made to minimise the potential adverse effects or risks of environmental damage or degradation.
- (3) Any decision making made under the terms of this Act must be guided by consideration of climate change adaptation and mitigation issues.

Division 2 – Instruments

6. Establishment of Environmental Registry

- (1) The Director must establish, operate and maintain an Environmental Registry of all records relating to:
- (a) environmental impact assessment documentation provided under Part 3; and
 - (b) applications, permits and approvals required or issued under this Act; and
 - (c) regulations, standards, guidelines or codes of environmental practice established under this Act; and
 - (d) National State of the Environment Reports prepared under section 7; and
 - (e) National Policies and National Plans prepared under section 8; and
 - (f) Community Conservation Areas registered under section 37; and
 - (g) international environment and conservation treaties and instruments to which Vanuatu is a party; and

- (ga) climate change database in joint coordination with the National Advisory Committee on Climate Change; and
 - (h) such other matters as may be prescribed by regulation.
- (2) All material entered in the Environmental Registry must be lodged with the Department in a physical or electronic form, and be available for public inspection during normal working hours.
- (3) If the Director determines that any registered material is commercially or culturally sensitive, he or she may classify that material, including any part of any material, as confidential and stipulate the terms and conditions, if any, on which any person can access that material.
- (4) The Minister on the advice of the Director may, by order, prescribe a system of fees and charges for the purpose of recovering any operational costs arising from requests for copies of material held in the Environmental Registry.

7. Preparation of National State of the Environment Reports

- (1) The Director must prepare and publish a National State of the Environment Report at least once every 10 years following the commencement of this Act.
- (2) A National State of the Environment Report must include all of the following:
- (a) an assessment of the state of all natural resources;
 - (b) a review of the current use of natural resources;
 - (c) an assessment of the quality of Vanuatu's environment;
 - (d) an assessment of social and economic development trends and their likely impact upon the environment;
 - (e) a summary of government and private sector policies, programs and initiatives to address and monitor environmental management and conservation issues;
 - (ea) a description of national climate change activities, impacts and issues;
 - (f) such other matters as the Minister considers appropriate.
- (3) A National State of the Environment Report must be submitted to the Minister for approval, and a copy of any such report must be lodged in the Environmental Registry.

8. Development of National Policies and National Plans

If the Minister determines that a National Policy or National Plan is required for the conservation, sustainable development and management of the environment, the Director must prepare the National Policy or National Plan.

9. Purpose of National Policies and National Plans

- (1) The purpose of a National Policy is:
- (a) to promote the environmentally sound and safe management and conservation of the natural resources and environment of Vanuatu; and
 - (b) to provide for the co-ordination of related activities.
- (2) The purpose of a National Plan is:
- (a) to provide for the implementation of the National Policy; and
 - (b) to provide for the conservation and/or sustainable management and development of particular natural resources and environment of Vanuatu.
- (3) A National Policy must include all of the following:

- (a) an evaluation of the current state of the particular matter that is the subject of the Policy;
 - (b) an evaluation of the social, human health, custom, climatic, economic and ecological considerations and issues in respect of that matter;
 - (c) a description of any relevant national priorities;
 - (d) an outline of the objectives to be achieved by the Policy;
 - (e) specific actions, initiatives or activities required to give effect to the objectives of the Policy, including any specific legal, financial and institutional aspects that need to be addressed;
 - (f) mechanisms for monitoring and reviewing the implementation of the Policy.
- (4) A National Plan must contain details of all the operational matters that are necessary to implement the National Policy.
- (5) National Policies and National Plans must be developed through appropriate public consultation, and be submitted by the Director to the Minister for approval.
- (6) Once approved by the Minister, a National Policy or National Plan must be referred to the Council of Ministers for approval. A National Policy or National Plan takes effect on the date of its publication in the *Gazette*.

10. Variation of National Policy or Plan

- (1) The Minister may instruct the Director to prepare a variation to any National Policy or National Plan.
- (2) A variation must be prepared, notified and consulted upon in accordance with this Act and the regulations.
- (3) A variation must be approved by the Council of Ministers, and takes effect on the date of its publication in the *Gazette*.

PART 3 – ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Division 1 – Preliminary

11. Definitions

For the purposes of this Part:

“custom impact” means an impact on indigenous custom, culture and tradition, and includes the following:

- (a) affecting a taboo site; or
- (b) affecting sites declared as a national heritage under the Preservation of Sites and Artifacts Act [CAP 39];

“environmental impact” means an impact on the natural environment, and includes the following:

- (a) altering the physical geography of an area, which includes:
 - (i) changing the characteristics of a geographical area; or
 - (ii) affecting coastal or fluvial dynamics; or
 - (iii) causing erosion, or
- (b) generating pollution, which includes:
 - (i) polluting water resources; or

- (ii) affecting air quality; or
- (iii) the contamination of land; or
- (iv) generating hazardous waste; or
- (c) impacting on ecosystem functions and services, which includes:
 - (i) introducing or removing foreign organisms or species; or
 - (ii) affecting conservation areas or proposed conservation areas; or
 - (iii) affecting threatened or endemic species and their habitat; or
 - (iv) affecting mangroves;

“environmental, social or custom impact” includes the following impacts:

- (a) positive or negative; or
- (b) direct or indirect; or
- (c) primary or secondary; or
- (d) short, medium or long term; or
- (e) permanent or temporary; or
- (f) cumulative;

“Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report” means a detailed document prepared in accordance with terms of reference that describes:

- (a) the project; and
- (b) the likely environmental, social and custom impacts of the project; and
- (c) the consequences and significance of those impacts; and
- (d) ways to modify, mitigate and manage different aspects of the project so as to avoid or lessen negative impacts and enhance positive impacts;

“Environmental Management and Monitoring Plan (EMMP)” means a document describing how the impacts identified in the application for a permit will be mitigated, minimised, reduced or eliminated by the project proponent and includes an environmental monitoring and surveillance program of action to ensure compliance with any environmental permit granted by the Director;

“natural environment” includes landforms, land, soil, water resources, plants, animals, the atmosphere, the climate and the links between these elements;

“Preliminary Environmental Assessment (PEA)” means an assessment of an application to determine if an EIA report and EMMP is required for the project;

“project” includes a project, proposal or development activity and may consist of a number of stages or phases such as design, site preparation, construction, operation, decommissioning and post closure;

“project proponent” means the person whose signature appears, or is otherwise nominated, on any application form as being responsible for any project;

“social impact” means an impact on the livelihood of people and the services the natural environment provides to people, and includes the following:

- (a) requiring people to resettle; or
- (b) the loss of assets or land; or
- (c) the loss of gardens; or

- (d) affecting health and safety; or
- (e) the unsustainable use of natural resources; or
- (f) using a resource in a way that may conflict with the existing use of that resource; or
- (g) affecting the ability of people to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change; or
- (h) generating noise; or
- (i) generating foul odour.

11A. Projects subject to EIA

Any project that causes or is likely to cause environmental, social or custom impacts by virtue of its type, size or location must comply with this Part.

12. (Repealed)

13. Projects not subject to EIA

The following projects are exempt from the requirements of this Part:

- (a) the construction of any single family residential building in an approved residential development area, however, such construction must be at least 30 metres from any river, stream, or from the line of mean high water spring tide of the sea;
- (b) any additions to an existing residential dwelling, being additions that are used only for residential purposes and are at least 30 metres from any river, stream, or from the line of mean high water spring tide;
- (c) the construction of traditional or custom structures fabricated from traditional materials, however, any natural rock, sand, coral, rubble or gravel that is used must not be taken from within 20 metres of the line of mean high water spring tide;
- (d) emergency action to protect the lives and property of people where there is not enough time to follow the requirements of this Act;
- (e) any other activity prescribed by regulation.

13A. Costs for EIA

- (1) A project proponent is responsible for all costs associated with EIA.
- (2) Without limiting subsection (1), the project proponent is responsible for the following costs:
 - (a) costs associated with any site visit by the Department upon receiving an application; and
 - (b) if applicable, costs associated with a consultant carrying out a PEA on behalf of the Director; and
 - (c) costs to prepare an EIA report; and
 - (d) costs to prepare an EMMP; and
 - (e) costs for consultation; and
 - (f) if applicable, costs for a consultant to review an EIA report and EMMP; and
 - (g) if applicable, costs to convene an EIA review committee and any work to be done by an EIA review committee.
- (3) Any dispute as to costs is to be resolved by the EIA review committee.
- (4) Any dispute associated with the cost of an EIA review committee is to be resolved by the Minister.

Division 2 – (Repealed)

14. Application for an environmental permit

- (1) The project proponent for any project not exempted under section 13, must apply to the Director for an environmental permit.
- (2) An application under subsection (1) must:
 - (a) be submitted to the Director in a form approved by the Director; and
 - (b) be accompanied by the prescribed application fee.
- (3) After receiving an application under subsection (1), the Director may require the project proponent to provide additional information about the project within a reasonable time.
- (4) Without limiting subsection (3), the Director may require the project proponent to:
 - (a) consult with people who are likely to be affected by the project and submit the results of the consultation to the Director; or
 - (b) submit an EIA report and EMMP.
- (5) If the project proponent fails to comply with a request made under subsection (3), within the reasonable time, the application will be taken to be withdrawn.
- (6) To avoid doubt, once additional information requested under subsection (3), is provided to the Director, the information forms part of the application and the application is considered to be a complete application.

Division 3 – EIA Report and EMMP

15. Amending an application

- (1) The project proponent may, before a final decision is made on a complete application, apply to amend the application.
- (2) An application made under subsection (1) must:
 - (a) include a detailed description of the proposed amendment; and
 - (b) include a detailed description of how the amendment will change or is likely to change the environmental, social and custom impacts of the project; and
 - (c) explain why the proposed amendment is necessary; and
 - (d) include sufficient information to enable the Director to determine the application.
- (3) Upon receiving an application under subsection (1), the Director may:
 - (a) accept the proposed amendment and decide the application as amended, observing any relevant timetable; or
 - (b) refuse to amend the application and require the project proponent to make a new application pursuant to section 14 if the proposed amendment is likely to:
 - (i) cause a negative environmental, social or custom impact; or
 - (ii) result in a change to the terms of reference for the EIA report and EMMP.

16. Withdrawing an application

- (1) The project proponent may, at any time, give written notice to the Director to withdraw his or her application for an environmental permit.
- (2) After receiving written notice under subsection (1), the Director must cease the EIA for the project.

- (3) The Director may require the project proponent to reimburse reasonable costs incurred by the Department in the EIA for the project to the date of withdrawal.
- (4) A dispute as to the reasonable cost under this section is to be resolved by an EIA review committee.

17. Granting of an environmental permit

- (1) The Director, upon receiving a complete application under section 14, may:
 - (a) grant an environmental permit with or without conditions; or
 - (b) refuse to grant an environmental permit.
- (2) The Director, in making a decision under subsection (1), must consider the following:
 - (a) the results of any consultation undertaken by the project proponent; and
 - (b) written comments under subsection (7); and
 - (c) whether the project is likely to cause any environmental, social or custom impact; and
 - (d) the significance of any environmental, social or custom impact; and
 - (e) whether any proposed actions are likely to effectively mitigate, minimise, reduce or eliminate any identified significant impact; and
 - (f) whether any residual impacts will remain after measures to mitigate, minimise, reduce or eliminate any significant impact have been implemented; and
 - (g) whether the project is controversial; and
 - (h) the degree to which a precedent for future action is created; and
 - (i) the potential for cumulative impacts; and
 - (j) the degree to which unique or unknown risks are taken; and
 - (k) such other matters as the Director considers necessary or appropriate in the circumstances, or as required under this Act or prescribed by its Regulations.
- (3) The Director, in making a decision under subsection (1), must comply with the process set out under this section.
- (4) The Director is to carry out a PEA of the project or in writing authorise a consultant registered under the Regulations to carry out a PEA on his or her behalf.
- (5) The Director must, in making an authorisation under subsection (4), request the project proponent to confirm the authorisation in writing within a reasonable time.
- (6) If the project proponent fails to provide confirmation within a reasonable time, the complete application is deemed to have been withdrawn.
- (7) The Director may seek comments on the complete application from any Ministry, Department, Provincial Government Council, Municipal Council, Statutory Authority, Non-Government Organisation or any person who in the opinion of the Director has a direct interest in the subject matter of the complete application.
- (8) The Director is to consider the recommendations made by the EIA review committee under section 22.
- (9) The Director is to notify the project proponent, in writing, of his or her decision within 30 business days after receiving the complete application.
- (10) The Director in making a decision, if necessary, may extend the timeframe prescribed in subsection (9) and must advise the project proponent in writing and provide reasons for the extension of time.

- (11) If the Director refuses to grant an environmental permit under paragraph (1)(b), he or she must provide the reasons for refusing to grant the environmental permit.

17A. Expiry of an environmental permit

- (1) If the holder of an environmental permit fails to substantially commence development of the project within 12 months of the date the environmental permit was granted, the environmental permit will be invalid and a new application must be submitted.
- (2) Despite subsection (1), within 12 months of the date the environmental permit was granted, the holder of the environmental permit may apply to the Director for an extension of time in which to substantially commence development of the project.
- (3) An application made under subsection (2) must:
- (a) include a detailed explanation of why development of the project has not substantially commenced; and
 - (b) include a schedule outlining the proposed timing for development of the project; and
 - (c) include a detailed description of any changes to the surrounding natural, social and custom environment at the project location and surrounding areas that have occurred since the environmental permit was granted; and
 - (d) be accompanied by the prescribed fee.
- (4) The Director, upon receiving an application under subsection (2), may:
- (a) extend the time in which development of the project must substantially commence, by not more than 12 months; or
 - (b) refuse to extend the time in which development of the project must substantially commence.
- (5) If the Director refuses to grant an application for extension under subsection (2), he or she must notify the applicant of the reasons within 21 working days after making the decision.
- (6) The Director prior to making a decision under subsection (4), may:
- (a) seek comments on the application from any Ministry, Department, Provincial Government Council or Municipal Council, Statutory Authority, Non-Government Organisation or any person who in the opinion of the Director has a direct interest in the subject matter of the application; or
 - (b) require the applicant to provide additional information about the application; or
 - (c) authorise a consultant to review the application and make a recommendation about the application.
- (7) If the environmental permit was granted following the submission of an EIA report and EMMP, before making a decision under subsection (4), the Director must convene an EIA review committee to consider the application.
- (8) An extension granted under subsection (4) is final and any subsequent application made under this section in relation to the project is invalid.

18. Application

This division applies if the Director determines under subsection 14(3), that an EIA report and EMMP is required.

18A. EIA Report and EMMP

- (1) If the Director determines under subsection 14(3) that an EIA report and EMMP is required, the EIA report and EMMP must be prepared by a principal consultant registered under the Regulations.
- (2) An EIA report and EMMP must be prepared as follows:
 - (a) according to the terms of reference approved under section 19; and
 - (b) as prescribed under the Regulations; and
 - (c) consistent with the guidelines issued by the Director; and
 - (d) in consultation with interested parties.
- (3) The project proponent must submit to the Director an EIA report and EMMP, accompanied by the prescribed fee.
- (4) The Regulations may prescribe the format and number of copies of an EIA report and EMMP to be submitted.

19. Terms of reference for EIA report and EMMP

- (1) The Director must within 10 business days of notifying the project proponent that an EIA report and EMMP are required, develop a terms of reference for any work that is to be undertaken for an EIA report and EMMP, including a description of the scope of work required.
- (2) In developing the terms of reference, the Director must give special consideration to the need for consultation, participation and involvement of custom landowners, chiefs and other interested parties, and may consult with the Malvatumauri Council of Chiefs for that purpose.
- (3) The Director must refer the terms of reference for the EIA report and EMMP to the project proponent for written comment within business days or such longer period as the Director specifies.
- (3A) If no comment is received within the period specified under subsection (3), the terms of reference is final.
- (4) Within 15 business days after receiving any written comments from the project proponent, the Director must make such revisions as are considered appropriate, and issue the final written terms of reference for the EIA report and EMMP to the project proponent. A copy of the terms of reference must be lodged in the Environmental Registry at the same time.

20. Deficiencies in EIA Report and EMMP

- (1) After receiving and reviewing the EIA report and EMMP, the Director may, by notice in writing, require the project proponent to:
 - (a) correct any deficiencies in the EIA Report and EMMP; and
 - (b) pay the prescribed resubmission fee,
within a reasonable time.
- (2) If the project proponent fails to correct any deficiencies under subsection (1) within the reasonable time, the application is deemed to have been withdrawn.

21. (Repealed)

22. Review of application

- (1) If the Director determines that an EIA report and EMMP is required, an EIA Review Committee must be appointed to review the complete application.

- (2) The EIA Review Committee is to provide in writing the recommendations to the Director on the complete application.
- (3) The Director, in making a decision under section 17, may impose, if necessary, any conditions necessary to address any environmental, social or custom impacts.
- (4) In making a decision under section 17, the Director must ensure that the decision is consistent with the written recommendation of the EIA Review Committee.

Division 4 – Environmental permits

23. Application to amend environmental permit

- (1) The holder of an environmental permit may apply to the Director to amend his or her environmental permit.
- (2) An application made under subsection (1) must:
 - (a) be submitted to the Director in a form approved by the Director; and
 - (b) include sufficient information to enable the Director to determine the application including any plans, maps and specifications as the Director may require; and
 - (c) be accompanied by the prescribed fee.
- (3) After receiving an application under subsection (1), the Director, may require the applicant to provide additional information about the application within a reasonable time.
- (4) If the applicant fails to comply with a request made under subsection (3), within the reasonable time, the application will be taken to be withdrawn.
- (5) To avoid doubt, once additional information requested under subsection (3) is provided to the Director, the information forms part of the application and the application is considered to be a complete application.
- (6) The Director, upon receiving a complete application may:
 - (a) amend the environmental permit; or
 - (b) refuse to amend the environmental permit; or
 - (c) refuse to amend the environmental permit and require the applicant to make a new application for an environmental permit pursuant to section 14.
- (7) The Director, in making a decision under subsection (6) must comply with the process set out under this section and considers the matters listed under section 17.
- (8) The Director may seek comments on the complete application from any Ministry, Department, Provincial Government Council or Municipal Council, Statutory Authority, Non-Government Organisation or any person who in the opinion of the Director has a direct interest in the subject matter of the application.
- (9) The Director may refer the complete application to a consultant to review and make a recommendation about the complete application.
- (10) The Director, in making a referral under subsection (9), must request the applicant to confirm the referral in writing within a reasonable time.
- (11) If the applicant fails to provide confirmation within a reasonable time, the complete application is deemed to have been withdrawn.
- (12) If the environmental permit was granted following the submission of an EIA report and EMMP, before making a decision under subsection (6), the Director must convene an EIA review committee to consider the complete application.

- (13) The Director is to notify the applicant, in writing, of his or her decision within 15 business days after receiving the complete application.
- (14) The Director in making a decision, if necessary, may extend the timeframe in subsection (13), and must advise the applicant in writing and provide reasons for the extension of time.
- (15) If the Director refuses to amend the environmental permit or amends the environmental permit in a way other than that applied for, the notification given under subsection (13) must include the reasons for the decision.

24. Transfer of environmental permit

- (1) If the holder of an environmental permit intends to transfer the environmental permit to another person, the environmental permit holder and the person the permit is intended to be transferred to, must make a joint application in writing to the Director to transfer the environmental permit.
- (2) An application made under subsection (1), must:
 - (a) contain details about the transferor and transferee; and
 - (b) contain evidence of a change of ownership of the project; and
 - (c) be accompanied by the prescribed fee.
- (3) The Director, within 21 working days of receiving an application to transfer the environmental permit, must grant the application.
- (4) The Director in granting an application under subsection (3), will re-issue the environmental permit with the name and details of the transferee.
- (5) To avoid doubt, in transferring an environmental permit, the Director may only change the name on the environmental permit and not the description of the project or any other terms and conditions of the environmental permit.

25. Director to amend environmental permit

- (1) The Director may amend an environmental permit, by giving notice in writing to the holder of the environmental permit, if:
 - (a) there is an error or mistake in the environmental permit; or
 - (b) the Director obtains new information that was not known to the Director at the time the environmental permit was granted; or
 - (c) there is a significant change in the circumstances relevant to the project; or
 - (d) the environmental, social or custom impacts of the project are of such significance that revised or new conditions are required; or
 - (e) the project has resulted in unforeseen or unintended environmental, social or custom impacts; or
 - (f) a review of the environmental permit has identified that the permit must be amended; or
 - (g) it is necessary to amend the environmental permit to respond to a problem or breach of the permit; or
 - (h) it is necessary to amend the environmental permit to comply with any other Act; or
 - (i) it is subject to any circumstances prescribed by the Regulations.
- (2) Prior to amending an environmental permit under subsection (1), the Director may obtain the advice of:

- (a) a consultant registered under the Regulations; or
 - (b) an EIA review committee.
- (3) The Director in providing a notice under subsection (1), must inform the holder of the environmental permit of the following:
- (a) the amendment to the environmental permit; and
 - (b) the 21 days opportunity to response to the Director.
- (4) To avoid doubt, the 21 days commences on the day the holder of the environmental permit receives the notice.

25A. Director may cancel environmental permit

- (1) The Director may cancel an environmental permit and require the area to be restored if satisfied that:
- (a) an environmental permit was influenced by false or misleading information or by deceit on behalf of the holder of the environmental permit; or
 - (b) the environmental conditions of the site have changed to such an extent as to render the environmental permit inappropriate; or
 - (c) the holder of the environmental permit has repeatedly or significantly breached the permit; or
 - (d) the holder of the environmental permit fails to comply with any direction issued under section 26.
- (2) The Director must prior to cancelling an environmental permit under subsection (1), give notice in writing to the holder of the environmental permit.
- (3) Prior to cancelling an environmental permit under subsection (1), the Director may obtain the advice of:
- (a) a consultant registered under the Regulations; or
 - (b) an EIA review committee.
- (4) The Director in providing a notice under subsection (2), must inform the holder of the environmental permit of the following:
- (a) the amendment to the environmental permit; and
 - (b) the 21 days opportunity to response to the Director.
- (5) To avoid doubt, the 21 days commences on the day the holder of the environmental permit receives the notice.
- (6) The cost of restoration undertaken under subsection (1) is to be met by the holder of the environmental permit.

Division 5 – Miscellaneous

26. Directions

- (1) The Director may issue a notice in writing if:
- (a) an activity for which an environmental permit is required is undertaken without an environmental permit; or
 - (b) a breach of a term or condition of an environmental permit occurs.
- (2) The notice may require any or all of the following:
- (a) the stopping of any specified activity for such period of time as is stated in the notice;

- (b) such actions as specified in the notice necessary to remedy the violation or breach to be taken;
 - (c) the restoration of any area affected.
- (3) An activity that is subject to a notice must not restart until the Director cancels the notice and notifies the project proponent in writing.
27. (Repealed)
28. (Repealed)

PART 4 – BIODIVERSITY AND PROTECTED AREAS

Division 1 – Bioprospecting

29. Establishment of Biodiversity Advisory Council

- (1) The Biodiversity Advisory Council is established.
- (2) The Director is the Chairperson of the Council, and the Department is to provide administrative support to the Council.
- (3) The Minister, in consultation with the Director, may appoint up to 5 additional members to the Council, on merit and for such terms, not exceeding three years, as he or she determines, taking into account:
- (a) the scientific, custom and technical needs of the Council; and
 - (b) the nature of the legal and commercial issues likely to be involved; and
 - (c) the volume of relevant bioprospecting applications; and
 - (d) any other relevant matters.
- (4) The Council is to meet as the Director requires but must meet at least twice every year.
- (5) The Council is to regulate its own procedures.
- (6) Members of the Council may be reappointed for a further term or terms.

30. Other terms and conditions

The Minister is to determine, on the recommendation of the Director, the other terms and conditions of appointment of the additional members of the Council.

31. Functions of the Council

The Council is responsible for advising the Minister, through the Chairperson, on any matter relating to the implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity and, in particular, on matters relating to commercial bioprospecting.

32. Bioprospecting to require permit

A person who:

- (a) undertakes or attempts to undertake any biodiversity prospecting without a bioprospecting permit; or
- (b) exports or attempts to export any specimen obtained from biodiversity prospecting without a bioprospecting permit; or
- (c) imports or attempts to import any foreign organism that may have a significant adverse impact on Vanuatu's native flora or fauna without a bioprospecting permit; or
- (d) contravenes any law relating to the protection of Vanuatu's native flora and fauna;

is guilty of an offence punishable on conviction to a fine of not more than VT50,000,000 or to imprisonment for a period of not more than 5 years, or both.

33. Application for bioprospecting permit

- (1) Any person wanting to undertake bioprospecting must apply in writing to the Director and pay:
 - (a) an application fee of VT50,000; and
 - (b) a bioprospecting information bond of VT100,000.
- (2) The application must be in such form as is approved by the Director and include the following:
 - (a) the name and particulars of the applicant, including that of any associate, affiliate or party that may benefit or share in the research or obtain any benefit from such research;
 - (b) a full and accurate description of the nature and extent of the research that is to be undertaken, and the area where such research will take place;
 - (c) a description of the nature of any biological resource or traditional knowledge that is to be investigated;
 - (d) a statement concerning the nature of the research to be undertaken, including an outline of the investigation and sampling methods to be used;
 - (e) an outline of the nature, duration and extent of any expected commercial research and development plan that may result from the biodiversity prospecting;
 - (f) a statement indicating whether any information in the application should be regarded as confidential;
 - (fa) an undertaking that any preliminary information gathered during the bioprospecting, will be provided to the Director within 4 weeks after the bioprospecting is undertaken, and that a final report will be provided to the Director within 12 months after the bioprospecting is undertaken;
 - (fb) an endorsement from the community concerned indicating that the applicant had carried out consultations with that community;
 - (g) and such other matters as the Director considers appropriate in the circumstance.
- (2A) The Director must consult with the custom landowners and community concerned regarding the application.
- (2) If the Director is satisfied that the application is complete, he or she must refer the application to the Council for determination.
- (4) Despite subsection (3), the Director may only refer the application to the Council for determination if the land owners and community concerned are in support of the application.

34. Determination of application

- (1) The Council must meet within 21 business days after receiving an application from the Director for the purpose of determining that application.
- (2) The Chairperson and at least 3 Council members must determine the application.
- (3) The Council must do one of the following:
 - (a) approve the application with or without terms and conditions;

- (b) refer the matter back to the Director for further assessment or additional information;
- (c) reject the application.
- (4) The Director must advise the applicant in writing of the Council's decision within 14 business days of the determination.
- (5) If the Council refers the matter back to the Director or rejects the application, the written advice must state the reason for this.
- (6) Before making its decision, the Council must satisfy itself that:
 - (a) a legally binding and enforceable contract is concluded with custom landowners, or any owner of traditional knowledge, concerning:
 - (i) rights of access; and
 - (ii) rights of acquisition of any biological resource or traditional knowledge; and
 - (iii) appropriate fees, concessions or royalties that will be charged for any research, or the acquisition of any biological resource or traditional knowledge, or for any commercial benefit that may be obtained; and
 - (aa) the relevant custom landowners and community have been consulted; and
 - (b) a research and investigation plan is completed by the applicant which outlines the nature of the research to be undertaken, the investigation and sampling method, and any specimens to be taken; and
 - (c) a monitoring and auditing system is established to verify all activities undertaken by the applicant; and
 - (d) any bond arrangements for damage or harm that may result from any non-compliance with the Government of Vanuatu are properly in place; and
 - (e) the decision is consistent with all other Acts.

34A. Bioprospecting information bond

- (1) A bioprospecting information bond is a bond deposited into the Environmental Trust Fund for the purposes of ensuring that all the information gathered from bioprospecting is provided to the Director.
- (2) A bioprospecting information bond may be made in any of the following form:
 - (a) by cash; or
 - (b) as an indemnity; or
 - (c) as an insurance; or
 - (d) as a guarantee; or
 - (e) in any other form approved by the Director in any particular case with the consent of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Management.
- (3) Money payable under a cash bond must be paid to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Management which is to be transferred into the Environmental Trust Fund.
- (4) The nature and amount of a bioprospecting information bond is as agreed between the Director and the applicant, and the wording will be as settled in each case by the Department.
- (5) A bioprospecting information bond is retained, and any indemnity or insurance or guarantee subsists until:

- (a) in the case of an application that is approved under paragraph 34(3)(a) – the requirement to provide information to the Director under paragraph 33(2)(fa) is satisfied; or
- (b) the Council rejects the application under paragraph 34(3)(c),
and the bond must then be returned in whole or in the case of an indemnity, insurance or guarantee, the bond is to be cancelled.

Division 2 – Community Conservation Areas

34B. Definitions

In this Division:

“applicant” means the entity that applies for registration of a community conservation area and may include one or more of the following:

- (a) customary landowner;
- (b) customary resource steward;
- (c) recognized community leader;
- (d) village governing body;
- (e) chief;
- (f) family group;
- (g) tribe;
- (h) organisation or body;
- (i) private individual;
- (j) any other entity;

“governing body” means any entity that is recognised as having the right to make decisions on behalf of the populous whose composition may include but not limited to the paramount or high ranking chief, council of chiefs, village council, conservation area committee, or provincial office.

35. Identification of sites having national biodiversity significance

The Director may after acquiring the consent of the custom land owners, negotiate with the applicant for the protection and registration of any site as a Community Conservation Area where he or she is satisfied that the site:

- (a) possesses unique genetic, cultural, geological or biological resources; or
- (b) constitutes the habitat of species of wild fauna or flora of unique national or international importance; or
- (ba) provides critical ecosystem services such as (but not limited to) watershed management and climate mitigation; or
- (c) merits protection under the *Convention Concerning the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritage* and any other relevant International or Regional Conventions.

36. Director may provide assistance

If the applicant agrees to establish a Community Conservation Area, the Director may consult with and provide assistance to the landowners, chiefs and other interested parties to do all or any of the following:

- (a) review and evaluate the nature of any proposed Community Conservation Area;

- (b) accurately identify the area to be included in any proposed Community Conservation Area;
- (c) verify rights and interests in land that is to be included in the proposed Community Conservation Area;
- (d) identify and evaluate the conservation, protection and management options proposed.

37. Registration of Community Conservation Areas

- (1) If the applicant agrees to the formal protection of areas of biodiversity significance, these areas may be registered by the Director as Community Conservation Areas.
- (2) Before registering a Community Conservation Area, the Director must ensure that:
 - (a) the objectives of the proposed Community Conservation Area are identified, and are in accordance with sound conservation practices; and
 - (b) the boundaries of any proposed Community Conservation Area are accurately identified; and
 - (c) consent and approval are obtained from all persons having rights and interests in any land that is to be included in the proposed Community Conservation Area; and
 - (d) an appropriate management plan is developed for the area to ensure the achievement of identified conservation objectives.
- (3) If the Director is satisfied that the requirements of subsection (2) have been met, he or she may register the proposed Community Conservation Area as a Community Conservation Area in the Environmental Registry, and issue a certificate of registration to the applicant.

38. Amendment to registered areas

- (1) An applicant may, at any time, apply in writing to the Director for a determination to do all or any of the following:
 - (a) cancel the registration of a Community Conservation Area, or any part of such area;
 - (b) amend any established Community Conservation Area management plan;
 - (c) modify any area of the registered Community Conservation Area.
- (2) Upon receiving an application from the applicant, the Director must consult with the landowners, community concerned and other interested parties before determining the application.
- (3) If the registration of the Community Conservation Area is cancelled, the Environmental Registry must be amended accordingly.
- (4) If any amendment is made to a Community Conservation Area management plan, the Environmental Registry must be amended accordingly.
- (5) Before modifying any Community Conservation Area, the Director must ensure that:
 - (a) the boundaries of any area to be added to or removed from a registered Community Conservation Area are accurately identified; and
 - (b) agreement is obtained from all persons having rights and interests in any land to be added to the registered Community Conservation Area.

39. Effect of registration

- (1) A management committee is responsible for:

- (a) the development, implementation and enforcement of the management plan established for a registered Community Conservation Area; and
 - (b) ensuring that procedures are followed for solving disputes over breaches of Community Conservation Area management rules under any alternative dispute resolution process provided for in the management plan; and
 - (c) providing annual reports to the Department.
- (2) The Director may provide technical or financial support to the management committee for the purpose of developing, implementing or enforcing the management plan.
- (3) If a registration is cancelled under sections 38 or 40, the Director is not obliged to provide further technical or financial support to the landowners.

40. Deregistration if plan not implemented

If the management plan for a Community Conservation Area is not implemented within the time agreed at the time of registration, the Director may, by notice in writing, cancel the registration of that Community Conservation Area and must remove it from the Environmental Registry.

PART 5 – OFFENCES

41. Offences

- (1) A person who:
- (a) provides false or misleading information, including any false or misleading report, under any requirement of this Act or its Regulations; or
 - (b) hinders or obstructs an officer or any person empowered to carry out any function or duty under this Act or its Regulations; or
 - (c) fails to give all reasonable assistance to any officer or any person empowered to carry out any function or duty under this Act or its Regulations; or
 - (ca) carries out an activity without the relevant permit or approval required under this Act or its Regulations;
 - (d) contravenes a term or condition of an approval, permit or notice issued under this Act or its Regulations; or
 - (e) contravenes or fails to comply with any regulation, direction or order made under this Act; or
 - (f) contravenes any term or condition of a management plan for a registered community conservation area,
- commits an offence.
- (2) A person who contravenes paragraph (1)(a), (b), (c), (ca), (d), (e) or (f), is guilty of an offence punishable on conviction:
- (a) if the person is an individual – by imprisonment for not more than 5 years or a fine not exceeding VT5,000,000 or both; or
 - (b) if the person is a body corporate – by a fine not exceeding VT50,000,000; or
 - (c) in the case of an individual who has previously committed an offence against this section – by imprisonment for not more than 10 years or a fine not exceeding VT10,000,000, or both; or
 - (d) in the case of a body corporate that has previously committed an offence against this section – by a fine not exceeding VT100,000,000.

- (3) If a body corporate commits an offence under this Act, any officer, director or agent of the corporation who:
- (a) authorised, assented to or participated in; or
 - (b) by his or her neglect or omission, contributed to,
- the commission of the offence, is a party to and may be found guilty of the offence, and is to be liable to the penalty provided for the offence.

42. Continuing offence

Where an offence under this Act is committed or continues on more than one day, the person who committed the offence is liable to be convicted for a separate offence for each day on which the offence is committed or continues.

42A. Enforcement provisions

- (1) For the purposes of implementing, enforcing and ensuring compliance with the provisions of this Act and its regulations, an enforcement officer may:
- (a) enter any land; and
 - (b) enter private premises after notifying the owner of his or her intention to do so; and
 - (c) examine any plant, facility, substance or thing; and
 - (d) take or remove samples of any matter, substance or thing required for testing and analysis; and
 - (e) take possession of any machinery, equipment, plant or other thing for further examination or testing or for use as evidence; and
 - (f) take pictures, photographs or measurements or make sketches or recordings in any form; and
 - (g) require the production of records and information relevant to the requirements of this Act and its regulations, and to make and take copies of such records and information; and
 - (h) order that the operation of whole or part of a Ministry, department, statutory authority, local authority, plant or facility be stopped for the purposes of inspection; and
 - (i) interview any person for the purposes of inspection; and
 - (ia) seize or impound any vehicle, plant or object in any form used or believed to be used to breach any Regulations, Direction, Notice or Order made under this Act or Regulations; and
 - (j) exercise any other powers conferred to him or her under this Act or any other Act.
- (2) If an enforcement officer takes possession of a matter, substance, plant machinery or other item or thing from a Ministry, department, statutory authority, local authority or facility, the Ministry, department, statutory authority, local authority or facility may request the Director to make a decision for the return of the matter, substance, plant machinery or other item or thing.
- (3) Any document or information collected under paragraph (1)(g) must not be disclosed unless the document or information is disclosed:
- (a) for official purposes; or
 - (b) with the consent of the person who provided the document or information or to whom the information relates; or

- (c) in a court or tribunal; or
 - (d) in the public interest.
- (4) A civil or criminal liability action is not to be taken against an enforcement officer or observer in respect of anything done or omitted to be done by the officer in good faith in the execution or purported execution of his or her powers and duties under this section.
- (5) An employee of a Ministry, department, statutory authority or local authority or the owner, occupier or employer of a facility in respect of which an enforcement officer is exercising powers under this Act, must:
- (a) give the enforcement officer any assistance to enable the enforcement officer to exercise powers and functions under this Act; and
 - (b) provide any document or information required by the enforcement officer for the purpose of this Act.
- (6) A person who knowingly or deliberately, conceals the location or existence of any matter, substance, plant machinery, document or information from an enforcement officer, is guilty of an offence punishable on conviction by imprisonment of not more than 12 months, or a fine not exceeding VT250,000, or both.
- (7) A person who fails to comply with a request or direction of an enforcement officer under this section is guilty of an offence punishable on conviction by imprisonment of not more than 12 months, or a fine not exceeding VT250,000, or both.
- (8) For the purposes of this section, unless the context otherwise provides:
- “facility” includes a building or place that provides a particular service or is used for a particular industry;
- “plant” includes any machinery, equipment, tool or any of its components.

42B. Activity to cease

- (1) If a person is charged with an offence under this Act, the activity for which that person is charged must cease immediately.
- (2) A person who fails to comply with subsection (1) is guilty of an offence punishable on conviction:
- (a) if the person is an individual – by a fine not exceeding VT5,000,000; or
 - (b) if the person is a body corporate – by a fine not exceeding VT10,000,000.

42C. Additional Court Orders

- (1) The Court may, when convicting a person for an offence under this Act and having regard to the nature of the offence and the circumstances surrounding its commission, in addition to any penalty imposed, make an order:
- (a) to prohibit the person from doing any act or engaging in any activity or undertaking that may result in the continuation or repetition of the offence; or
 - (b) directing work to stop temporarily or permanently, on any activity or undertaking on a proposed development; or
 - (c) directing the person to undertake the restoration of the area on which any activity is taking place, to as near to its original condition with the cost to be borne by the proponent; or
 - (d) directing the person to carry out improvement or remediation work on the area, with the cost to be borne by the proponent; or

- (e) directing the person to pay into the Trust Fund, costs and other expenses associated with any inspection, audit or investigation undertaken in respect of the offence; or
 - (f) directing the person to pay into the Trust Fund, a refundable security for costs to ensure compliance with an order made under this section; or
 - (g) directing the person to pay a specified amount into the Trust Fund for the purposes of restoring the area on which the activity is taking place, to as near to its original condition; or
 - (h) directing the seizure and forfeiture of any vessel, aircraft or thing used in the commission of an offence; or
 - (i) directing the person to carry out a specified environmental audit of the activities the person has carried out; or
 - (j) requiring the person to comply with any other condition the court considers appropriate in the circumstances.
- (2) If a person is convicted of an offence under this Act, the Court may when sentencing the offender and on the application by a person aggrieved, order the convicted person to pay to the person aggrieved:
- (a) compensation for loss or damage to property or income proved to have been suffered by that person as a result of the commission of the offence; or
 - (b) the cost of any preventative or remedial action proved to have been reasonably taken or caused to be taken by that person as a result of the act or omission that constituted the offence.
- (3) An order under paragraph (1)(a) or (b) is enforceable as if it were an injunction.
- (4) An order under this section relating to payment of money is enforceable as if it were a judgment debt and recoverable in a court.
- (5) If a person fails to comply with a Court order made under this section relating to restoration, improvement or remedial action of an area, the Department may undertake the restoration, improvement or remediation of the area, and the cost is to become a debt recoverable in the court (including using the security for costs deposited in the Fund).

42D. Civil claims and damages

- (1) A person who has suffered loss which includes contracting health-related problems as a result of any activity that is found to be in breach of this Act, may institute a civil claim for damages in Court, which may include a claim for any or all of the following:
- (a) economic loss resulting from the activity or from activities undertaken to prevent, mitigate, manage, clean up or remedy any damage to the environment;
 - (b) loss of earnings arising from damage to any natural resource;
 - (c) loss to or of any natural environment or resource;
 - (d) costs incurred in any inspection, audit or investigation undertaken to determine the nature of any pollution incident or to investigate remediation options.
- (2) A claim under this section may be set off against any compensation paid under subsection 42C(2).

PART 6 – MISCELLANEOUS

43. Appeal to the Supreme Court

- (1) A person may appeal to the Supreme Court against any decision made by the Minister, Council or Director to do all or any of the following:
 - (a) to grant an environmental permit under section 17;
 - (b) to reject an application under section 17 or section 34;
 - (c) to impose terms and conditions on any approval given under section 17 or section 34;
 - (ca) to extend the expiry of an environmental permit under section 17A;
 - (cb) to amend an environmental permit under section 23 or section 25;
 - (cc) to cancel an environmental permit under section 25A;
 - (d) to issue a direction under section 26;
 - (e) to make a decision prescribed by the regulations as a decision in respect of which an appeal can be made.
- (2) An appeal must be brought, by originating application, not more than 28 days after the date on which the appellant is notified of the decision appealed against, or within such further period as the Supreme Court may allow.
- (3) The Supreme Court may:
 - (a) confirm, reverse or modify the decision appealed against, and make such orders and give such directions to the Minister, Director or Council as may be necessary to give effect to the Court's decision; or
 - (b) refer the matter back to the Minister, Director or Council with directions to reconsider the whole or any specified part of the matter.

44. Protection of officers, etc.

An individual is not liable to an action or other proceeding for damages for or in respect to an act done or omitted to be done in good faith in the exercise or performance, or purported exercise or performance, of a power, function or duty conferred on him or her by this Act.

44A. Penalty notice

- (1) An enforcement officer may serve a penalty notice on a person if it appears to the officer that the person has committed an offence under any provision of this Act or the regulations.
- (2) A penalty notice is a notice to the effect that, if the person served does not wish to have the matter determined by a court, the person may pay within a time and to a person specified in the notice the amount of penalty prescribed by the regulations for the offence if dealt with under this section.
- (3) Payments made under this section are to be made at the Ministry of Finance and Economic Management which is then to be transferred into the Environmental Trust Fund.
- (4) A penalty notice may be served personally or by post.
- (5) If the amount of penalty prescribed for the purposes of this section for an alleged offence is paid under this section, no person is liable to any further proceedings for the alleged offence.

- (6) Payment under this section is not to be regarded as an admission of liability for the purpose of, nor in any way affect or prejudice, any civil proceeding arising out of the same occurrence.
- (7) The regulations may:
 - (a) prescribe an offence for the purposes of this section by specifying the offence or by referring to the provision creating the offence; and
 - (b) prescribe the amount of penalty payable for the offence if dealt with under this section; and
 - (c) prescribe different amounts of penalties for different offences or classes of offences.
- (8) The amount of a penalty prescribed under this section for an offence must not exceed the maximum amount of penalty which could be imposed for the offence by a court.
- (9) This section does not limit the operation of any other provision of, or made under, this or any other Act relating to proceedings that may be taken in respect of offences.

44B. Environmental Trust Fund

- (1) The Environmental Trust Fund is established.
- (2) There is to be paid into the Trust Fund:
 - (a) money appropriated by Parliament; or
 - (b) any environmental bond; or
 - (c) any contribution or donation; or
 - (d) fines of fixed penalties; or
 - (e) any environmental protection fee; or
 - (ea) any fees prescribed under this Act and its Regulations; or
 - (f) any other money required under this Act or Regulations or any other written law to be paid into the Trust Fund.
- (3) The Department is to administer the Trust Fund for the following purposes:
 - (a) to pay for necessary expenses incurred in the negotiation, monitoring (including the retention of technical experts), investigation or analysis of any matter or the undertaking of any environmental monitoring or audit programme; and
 - (b) to pay for environmental rehabilitation work; and
 - (c) to pay for research programmes; and
 - (d) for the management of community conservation areas; and
 - (e) if necessary, to pay for refund of environmental bonds and security of costs; and
 - (f) as required for the protection and conservation of the environment.

44C. Proving matters relating to environmental impact

- (1) In any prosecution under this Act and its Regulations, if evidence is given by an enforcement officer that there has been, or may be, a harmful or adverse effect on the environment, the Court is to accept that evidence as prima facie evidence of the matters alleged.
- (2) If a prosecution relates to chemical or other similar substance, the Court may have regard to any information disclosed on the packaging of the chemical or substance to determine whether there is a danger to health or to the public.

- (3) This section does not limit or affect the manner in which any matter may be proved to the satisfaction of a Court.

44D. Transitional arrangement

For applications made immediately before the commencement of this Act, the Director is to make a decision on those applications in accordance with the provisions and processes that existed immediately before the commencement of this Act.

45. Regulations

- (1) The Minister may make regulations to give effect to the purposes and provisions of this Act, including for all or any of the following:
- (a) to establish criteria for the licensing of environmental practitioners and environmental laboratories or analytical facilities;
 - (b) to prescribe and promote standards, guidelines or codes of environmental practice to give effect to any requirement under this Act;
 - (c) to establish alternate dispute resolution processes for resolving environmental disputes, including the prescribing of criteria for the appointment of qualified persons to act as a mediator, arbitrator or facilitator;
 - (d) to provide for the variation of any environmental assessment procedure;
 - (e) to prescribe fees and charges in respect of any application made or service provided under this Act, including for the purpose of expert review of applications;
 - (f) to control the taking or use of specified species;
 - (g) to provide for the registration of Community Conservation Areas;
 - (h) to establish conditions or model agreements for bioprospecting.
- (2) The Minister may make regulations with other Ministers, including for the purpose of any or all of the following:
- (a) regulating the environmental effects of:
 - (i) the importation and transportation of hazardous substances;
 - (ii) the proposed introduction of foreign organisms;
 - (iii) pests and weeds;
 - (iv) waste management;
 - (v) air and water pollution;
 - (b) regulating the harvesting of natural resources;
 - (ba) upholding obligations under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change for climate change adaptation and mitigation;
 - (c) providing for the containment, isolation, seizure, transportation, safe-keeping or disposal of any species of wild flora or fauna.

Table of Amendments

<i>Title of Act</i>	<i>Amended by Act 28 of 2010</i>	<i>23 – 25A</i>	<i>Inserted by Act 6 of 2019</i>
1	<i>Substituted by Act 24 of 2017</i>	24	<i>Repealed by Act 24 of 2017</i>
1	<i>Amended by Act 6 of 2019</i>	24(1)(a)	<i>Amended by Act 28 of 2010</i>
2	<i>Amended by Acts 28 of 2010, 24 of 2017</i>	24(3)	<i>Substituted by Act 28 of 2010</i>
4(3)	<i>Amended by Act 2 of 2010</i>	25	<i>Repealed by Act 24 of 2017</i>
5A	<i>Inserted by Act 28 of 2010</i>	25	<i>Amended by Act 28 of 2010</i>
6(1)(ga)	<i>Inserted by Act 28 of 2010</i>	Division 5 of Part 3	<i>Inserted by Act 6 of 2019</i>
7(2)(ea)	<i>Inserted by Act 28 of 2010</i>	26(1)	<i>Substituted by Act 24 of 2017</i>
9(1)(a)	<i>Amended by Act 28 of 2010</i>	26(1)(a)	<i>Amended by Act 28 of 2010</i>
9(2)(b)	<i>Amended by Act 28 of 2010</i>	26(2)	<i>Amended by Act 24 of 2017</i>
9(3)(b)	<i>Amended by Act 28 of 2010</i>	26(2)(a), (b)	<i>Amended by Act 28 of 2010</i>
Division 1 of Part 3	<i>Amended by Act 24 of 2017</i>	26(2)(b)	<i>Amended by Act 24 of 2017</i>
11	<i>Substituted by Act 24 of 2017</i>	27	<i>Repealed by Act 24 of 2017</i>
11	<i>Amended by Act 6 of 2019</i>	28	<i>Repealed by Act 6 of 2019</i>
12 and 12A	<i>Repealed by Act 24 of 2017</i>	28 (heading)	<i>Amended by Act 24 of 2017</i>
12(2)(c)	<i>Amended by Act 28 of 2010</i>	28(1) and (2)	<i>Amended by Act 24 of 2017</i>
12A	<i>Inserted by Act 28 of 2010</i>	32	<i>Amended by Act 28 of 2010</i>
13 (heading)	<i>Amended by Act 24 of 2017</i>	33(1)	<i>Amended by Act 28 of 2010</i>
13	<i>Amended by Act 24 of 2017</i>	33(2)(fa), (fb)	<i>Inserted by Act 28 of 2010</i>
13A	<i>Inserted by Act 24 of 2017</i>	33(2A)	<i>Inserted by Act 28 of 2010</i>
13(A)(4)	<i>Amended by Act 6 of 2019</i>	33(4)	<i>Inserted by Act 28 of 2010</i>
Division 2 of Part 3	<i>Amended by Act 24 of 2017</i>	34(1)	<i>Amended by Act 28 of 2010</i>
Division 2 of Part 3	<i>Repealed by Act 6 of 2019</i>	34(4)	<i>Amended by Act 28 of 2010</i>
14	<i>Substituted by Acts 28 of 2010, 24 of 2017</i>	34(6)(aa)	<i>Inserted by Act 28 of 2010</i>
14(1)-(4)	<i>Amended by Act 2 of 2010</i>	34A – 34B	<i>Inserted by Act 28 of 2010</i>
14(4)	<i>Amended by Act 6 of 2019</i>	35	<i>Amended by Act 28 of 2010</i>
14A	<i>Repealed by Act 6 of 2019</i>	35(ba)	<i>Inserted by Act 28 of 2010</i>
15 – 17	<i>Repealed by Act 28 of 2010</i>	35(c)	<i>Amended by Act 28 of 2010</i>
15 – 17A	<i>Inserted by Act 6 of 2019</i>	36	<i>Amended by Act 28 of 2010</i>
15(1)	<i>Amended by Act 2 of 2010</i>	37(1)	<i>Amended by Act 28 of 2010</i>
15(3)	<i>Amended by Act 2 of 2010</i>	37(2)(d)	<i>Amended by Act 28 of 2010</i>
16(1)	<i>Amended by Act 2 of 2010</i>	37(3)	<i>Amended by Act 28 of 2010</i>
Division 3 of Part 3	<i>Inserted by Act 24 of 2017</i>	38(1)	<i>Amended by Act 28 of 2010</i>
Division 3 of Part 3	<i>Amended by Act 24 of 2017</i>	38(1)(b)	<i>Amended by Act 28 of 2010</i>
18	<i>Substituted by Act 24 of 2017</i>	38(2)	<i>Amended by Act 28 of 2010</i>
18(1)	<i>Amended by Act 28 of 2010</i>	38(4)	<i>Amended by Act 28 of 2010</i>
18A(1)	<i>Amended by Act 6 of 2019</i>	39(1)	<i>Substituted by Act 28 of 2010</i>
18A(2)(b)	<i>Amended by Act 6 of 2019</i>	39(2), (3)	<i>Amended by Act 28 of 2010</i>
19 (Heading)	<i>Amended by Act 24 of 2017</i>	40, 41	<i>Substituted by Act 28 of 2010</i>
19(1)	<i>Amended by Act 24 of 2017</i>	41(1)(a) – (d)	<i>Amended by Act 24 of 2017</i>
19(2)	<i>Amended by Act 6 of 2019</i>	41(1)(ca)	<i>Inserted by Act 24 of 2017</i>
19(3)	<i>Amended by Acts 28 of 2010, 24 of 2017</i>	42(2)(ca)	<i>Inserted by Act 24 of 2017</i>
19(3A)	<i>Inserted by Act 24 of 2017</i>	42A(1)(ia)	<i>Inserted by Act 24 of 2017</i>
19(4)	<i>Amended by Acts 28 of 2010, 24 of 2017</i>	42A – 42D	<i>Inserted by Act 28 of 2010</i>
19(5)	<i>Repealed by Act 24 of 2017</i>	43(1)	<i>Amended by Act 28 of 2010</i>
19A	<i>Inserted by Act 24 of 2017</i>	43(1)(a)	<i>Substituted by Act 24 of 2017</i>
19A	<i>Repealed by Act 6 of 2019</i>	43(1)(b) and (c)	<i>Amended by Act 24 of 2017</i>
20	<i>Substituted by Act 24 of 2017</i>	43(1)(a) – (c)	<i>Amended by Acts 28 of 2010, 6 of 2019</i>
21	<i>Repealed by Act 24 of 2017</i>	43(1)(ca) – (cc)	<i>Inserted by Act 6 of 2019</i>
22	<i>Substituted by Acts 28 of 2010, 24 of 2017</i>	44A - 44B	<i>Inserted by Act 28 of 2010</i>
22(1) – (4)	<i>Amended by Act 6 of 2019</i>	44B(2)(ea)	<i>Inserted by Act 24 of 2017</i>
Division 4 of Part 3	<i>Inserted by Act 6 of 2019</i>	44B(2)(ea)	<i>Amended by Act 6 of 2019</i>
23	<i>Repealed by Act 28 of 2010</i>	44B(2)(f)	<i>Amended by Act 24 of 2017</i>
		44C – 44D	<i>Inserted by Act 24 of 2017</i>
		45(2)(b)	<i>Amended by Act 28 of 2010</i>
		45(2)(ba)	<i>Inserted by Act 28 of 2010</i>