

Ms Kylie Fitzpatrick  
Department of Environment, Parks and Water Security  
PO Box 3675  
DARWIN NT 0801

Dear Ms Fitzpatrick

**Re: Draft Terms of Reference for an Environmental Impact Statement - Fortune Agribusiness Funds Management Pty Ltd - Singleton Horticulture Project**

The Department of Environment, Parks and Water Security (DEPWS) has assessed the information contained in the above draft Terms of Reference (TOR) and provides the following comments:

**Flora and Fauna Division**

In response to the Singleton Horticultural Project referral, the Flora and Fauna Division raised concerns in relation to the operational aspect of the project. The Flora and Fauna Division is satisfied that these concerns are adequately addressed by the TOR. Specifically, there is a requirement in Section 2.2.1 Operations for the proponent to provide a clear, updated description of the proposal and the full scope of works for which approval is sought; this includes clear documentation of any changes, amendments or refinements to the proposal or its components since submission of the referral; and a clear explanation of the approach to resolving uncertainty in the detailed design, footprint, capacity, lifespan of the proposal or its components.

The Flora and Fauna Division raised further concern about the uncertainty whether the proponent had taken account of the existing groundwater extraction wells in the region, in their modelling of the regional scale environmental impacts. The Flora and Fauna Division is satisfied that this issue is addressed by the TOR, Table 3, as the proponent is required to quantify the significance and extent of impacts at the proposal level and cumulatively with other approved and proposed water extraction in the Western Davenport Water Control District.

The Flora and Fauna Division is satisfied that the TOR sufficiently addresses the minimum information required for the assessment of impacts on inland water environmental quality, terrestrial environmental quality and terrestrial ecosystems.

## Water Resources Division

The draft TOR adequately reflects what the proponent should address in an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), and appears aligned with previous comments; however, the exception relates to Section 2.5.1 *Hydrological processes* and Table 3 - *Minimum information required for the assessment of Hydrological processes*.

*Potential significant impacts and risks* in Table 3 states that the proponent updates the groundwater model using a 'methodology ..... developed in consultation with the Water Resources Division of the Department of Environment, Parks and Water Security'; however, the Groundwater Modelling Guidelines (Barnett et. al 2012) should provide guidance as the national consistent framework for the development of groundwater models. It is noted that the class structure of the guideline is used earlier in the table as a target for model reliability.

*Avoidance, mitigation and management* in Table 3, refers to a robust analysis of impacts for the new or alternative borefield design configuration and referencing environmental impacts. It is not explicit as to whether this includes impacts on other users of water (e.g. licensed users and/or stock users at Neutral Junction Station). This needs to be considered.

It is noted that varying the borefield design configuration would require an update to the water extraction licence (WEL), for which relevant factors under section 90(1) of the *Water Act 1992* would need to be considered (e.g. 90(1)(c) - Any adverse effects likely to be created as a result of the activities under the [licence] on the supply of water to which any other person other than the applicant is entitled under the *Water Act 1992*).

## Bushfires NT Division

Bushfires NT recommends bushfire related impacts to the environment be considered within the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Additionally, the owner/lessee is advised that the property falls within the Barkly Fire Management Zone, with specific conditions within the *Bushfires Management Act 2016*. The proponents and their neighbours are responsible to prevent or inhibit fire spreading from their land on to other land. As such, Bushfires NT is recommending that the development of a Bushfire Management Plan (BMP) is the best way to manage this risk, and should be included within the EIS.

A BMP is central to best practice bushfire management and should cover preparedness, mitigation and response actions. A BMP should be operationally focused and must include:

- Site specific analysis of bushfire risks, including terrain, placement of fire trails and fire history;
- How you will collaborate with neighbouring landholders to ensure adequate cross-boundary fire management, including how many resources are available for fire suppression on site (tankers, fire units, water trucks etc.);
- A map which identifies bushfire management zones on the landholding, including access tracks, fire breaks and neighbouring land use;
- Site specific bushfire management objectives and actions to address identified risks in each fire management zone delegated in the BMP; and
- Awareness of and reference to trigger points within the plan for the Australian Fire Danger Rating System (AFDRS) and Fire Danger Ratings (FDR) exceeding EXTREME or CATASTROPHIC ratings, or enacted fire ban days (which can occur even if the AFDRS has a lower FDR than EXTREME

(e.g. HIGH) due to other high-risk conditions e.g. high wind gusts. For more information, please refer to the AFAC website<sup>1</sup> regarding the AFDRS.

### **Rangelands Division**

#### **Land Assessment Branch**

The Land Assessment Branch has previously provided advice on various aspects of this project. The Land Assessment Branch has no further comment on this assessment process.

#### **Land Management Unit**

The Land Management Unit have provided advice on this development through the original referral. The Land Management Unit has no further comment to that previously provided.

#### **Weed Management Branch**

The Weed Management Branch provided comment for this project for the Referral under the *Environment Protection Act 2019*. The Weed Management Branch have no further comment for this project.

Should you have any further queries regarding these comments, please contact the Development Coordination Branch by email [DevelopmentAssessment.DEPWS@nt.gov.au](mailto:DevelopmentAssessment.DEPWS@nt.gov.au) or phone (08) 8999 4446.

Yours sincerely



Maria Wauchope  
Executive Director Rangelands  
14 September 2023

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.afac.com.au>