



Department of
**Primary Industries and
Regional Development**

Our reference: A14646961
Enquiries: Gordon Verrall
Contact: gordon.verrall@dpird.wa.gov.au
0428 721 178

Ms Mandy Trueman
Manager Environmental Assessment
Environment Division
Department of Lands, Planning and Environment
Northern Territory Government
PO Box 3675, Darwin, NT 0801

Dear Ms Trueman,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proponent-referred Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Sweetwater Agricultural Development Stage 1 (Sweetwater Development), referred by Southern Cross Agri Pty Ltd (Southern Cross) in accordance with the *Environment Protection Act 2019* (NT) (EP Act) and the *NT Environment Protection Regulations 2020*.

The Western Australian (WA) Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) currently holds the approval for the Weaber Plain Development Project (commonly referred to as the 'Goomig Project') (EPBC 2010/5491) located upstream of Sweetwater in WA. DPIRD intends to transfer the approval to the state-appointed developer, Kimberley Agricultural Investment Pty Ltd (KAI) in 2026, subject to the Minister's consent and meeting of conditions precedent.

DPIRD considers the Sweetwater Development has the potential to significantly impact environmental values, including on threatened species that inhabit the Keep River. Specifically, impacts from agricultural run-off, including nutrients, pesticides and other constituents, from the development area and impacts on groundwater baseflow have the potential to impact the sawfish species, *Pristis pristis* and *Pristis clavate*.

The proposed Sweetwater Development presents significant risk and impacts to Keep River environmental quality and values additional to, and cumulative with, the neighbouring Goomig and Knox developments. The risks to ground and surface waters and dependent environmental values are more acute with closer proximity to the river proper.

The risks and impacts, monitoring and management issues are complex to adequately consider and communicate. However, a self-referral and formal Environmental Impact Assessment process will enable these complexities to be navigated by Southern Cross in consultation with the Northern Territory Government and WA stakeholders.

The referral document states the intent to integrate with existing Keep River water quality monitoring and management activities; that is, monitoring and management activities undertaken in accordance with the approvals for the neighbouring irrigation developments in WA (Ref: EPBC 2010/5491 and EPBC 2014/7143). A consistent, integrated and collaborative effort will be critical to meeting the water quality standards for the Keep River and protecting threatened species and other environmental values. Assessment of the Sweetwater Development presents an opportunity to progress an integrated catchment management approach irrespective of the state/territory border.

OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL
1 Nash Street, Perth, Western Australia 6001
Telephone (08) 9368 3221 enquiries@dpird.wa.gov.au
www.dpird.wa.gov.au

ABN: 18 951 343 745

DPIRD would welcome Southern Cross and the Northern Territory Government pursuing this in parallel with, and complementary to, the formal Environmental Impact Assessment process under the EP Act. DPIRD looks forward to Southern Cross engaging with WA stakeholders in these regards.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Paul Isaachsen". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underlining the name.

Paul Isaachsen
DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL
INDUSTRY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

25 September 2025