


NOTICE OF DECISION AND STATEMENT OF REASONS

Section 55 of the *Environment Protection Act 2019* (EP Act)
Regulations 57(2)(b) and 63 of the *Environment Protection Regulations 2020* (EP Regulations)

Proposed action name	Little Paradise Development
Proponent name	Groote Holdings Aboriginal Corporation (GHAC)
NT EPA reference	EP2024/036
Nature of proposed action	Coastal and marine, Aquaculture, Infrastructure and services
Description of proposed action	<p>The proposed action is to construct and operate infrastructure and facilities at Little Paradise on Groote Eylandt on NT Portion 1632 (Aboriginal land), 3.8 km north-east of Alyangula. The infrastructure and facilities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • marina and wharf to provide harbour facilities for ferry, barge and recreational boats • biosecurity facility to support the marina and wharf • a logistics hub and base camp including residential accommodation, office and storage infrastructure • aquaculture facilities (for research and development) including breeding areas, hatchery and cold storage • workers accommodation. <p>The construction is estimated to take five years.</p>
Person authorised to make decision	<p>Dr Paul Vogel AM, Chairperson Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority (NT EPA) Delegate of the NT EPA under section 36 of the Northern Territory <i>Environment Protection Authority Act 2012</i></p>
Decision	<p>Standard environmental impact assessment is required in accordance with section 55 of the EP Act and regulation 57 (2) (b) (i) of the EP Regulations</p> <p>The method of environmental impact assessment to be by supplementary environmental report in accordance with regulation 57 (2) (b) (ii).</p>
Signature	
Date of decision	22 October 2024
Matters considered under EP Regulation 56	<p>The NT EPA has considered the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the accepted referral (including the referral form, referral report and appendices) • submissions received in relation to the referral

Consultation

The proponent advises it has consulted Traditional Owners on 14 occasions between February 2021 and March 2022 to facilitate the identification of restricted works areas, and to obtain s19 leases under the *Aboriginal Land Rights Act 1976*.

Public and government agencies were invited to comment on the Referral between 28 August 2024 and 24 September 2024, and seven submissions were received from government agencies.

Government authority submissions have identified uncertainty about the potentially significant impacts and risks from the proposed action to terrestrial ecosystems, marine environmental quality, marine ecosystems, and culture and heritage.

Submissions are available on the NT EPA website.

Statement of Reasons

Overview

The NT EPA considers that the proposed action has the potential to have a significant impact on environmental values associated with four environmental factors¹ as outlined below.

Land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Terrestrial ecosystems - The proposed action has a potential to introduce pests and invasive species to the Groote Eylandt. The introduction of the Cane toad would have major consequences for a range of threatened species including the Northern quoll and Northern blue-tongued lizard. There is uncertainty about the effective implementation of the mitigation measures in the proponent’s biosecurity management plan.
Sea	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marine environmental quality - The proposed action has the potential to significantly impact marine water quality through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ increased sedimentation and turbidity during the construction and operation of the marina and wharf, ○ discharge of wastewater from the aquaculture facility, and ○ spills of contaminants including hydrocarbons. <p>The magnitude and extent of the potential impacts to the marine environmental quality are uncertain.</p> • Marine ecosystems - Marine ecosystems may be significantly impacted due to construction and operation of the marina and wharf, with altered coastal processes driving impacts on sensitive receptors including benthic communities and habitat. The extent of the potential impacts is uncertain.
People	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture and heritage - The proposed action may significantly impact known and unknown cultural heritage, sacred sites and objects. The information provided in the referral is not sufficient to conclude that potential direct and indirect impacts (including from changes to coastal processes) to the cultural heritage, sacred sites and objects could be avoided.

The NT EPA considered other environmental factors during its consideration of the referral; however, the impact on those factors was not considered to be significant.

¹ [NT EPA Environmental factors and objectives](#)

Justification

A standard assessment by supplementary environmental report is required because of:

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| Regulation 59 (a) | the significance of the potential impact of the proposed action as described above. |
| Regulation 59 (b) | the need to improve the NT EPA's level of confidence in predicting potential significant impacts of the proposed action taking into account the extent and currency of existing knowledge, particularly in relation to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• marine environmental quality and marine ecosystems, and• cultural heritage and sacred sites. |
| Regulation 59 (c) | the need to develop measures to avoid, mitigate or manage potential significant impacts, and increase the NT EPA's confidence in the effectiveness of the proposed measures, with respect to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• threatened species and terrestrial ecosystems,• marine environmental quality and marine ecosystems, and• cultural heritage and sacred sites. |
| Regulation 59 (d) & (e) | community engagement that has occurred in relation to the scope, construction and operation of the proposed action. However, the availability of information specific to the current scope of the proposal at the time of consultation and the capacity of the community and individuals likely to be affected to access and understand information about the proposed action and its potential significant impacts is likely to be limited. This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the proponent's consultation with Traditional Owners prior to the referral,• the proponents consultation with government authorities prior to the referral, and• the government authority and public consultation on the referral by the NT EPA. |

Conclusion

The NT EPA considers that the proposed action has potential for significant impacts on four environmental factors, and that environmental impact assessment is required. The method of assessment will be SER.

In making its decision under EP Regulation 57, the NT EPA has considered:

- the objects of the Act in section 3 of the EP Act
- the purpose of the environmental impact assessment process in section 42 of the EP Act
- the matters under regulation 56 of the EP Regulations
- the matters relevant to a consideration of the method of environmental impact assessment in regulation 59 of the EP Regulations.