

Appendix L

Assessment of Species with Indigenous Conservation Values and Related Environmental Cultural Values in the Vicinity of the Proposed Blacktip Gas Pipeline and Processing Plant near Wadeye in the Northern Territory prepared by Smyth and Bahrdt Consultants



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ENVIRONMENTAL CULTURAL VALUES AT WADEYE

Assessment of species with Indigenous conservation values and related environmental cultural values in the vicinity of the proposed Blacktip gas pipeline and processing plant near Wadeye in the Northern Territory

Prepared for Woodside Energy Ltd

By Smyth and Bahrdt Consultants

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Dermot Smyth
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1 BACKGROUND

1.1 Summary of the Blacktip proposal

Woodside Energy Ltd (Woodside) is developing a proposal to bring gas and condensate from the Blacktip gas field 107 km offshore via a pipeline to a processing plant to be located approximately 2.5km inland, and about 12km west of Wadeye Aboriginal Community. The intention is to transport the gas via an underground pipeline about 940 km to Nhulunbuy in northeast Arnhemland to fuel an aluminium processing plant. The condensate will be piped back out to sea for removal by ship.

1.2 Meeting Environmental Impact Assessment (EIS) Guidelines

EIS Guidelines set by the Australian and Northern Territory governments require Woodside to undertake a range of assessment studies, including baseline descriptions and assessments of the potential impact of the proposal on the biophysical and social environments in the Wadeye region.

Section 4.4.1 of the EIS Guidelines requires a baseline assessment of the ecology of the area to be undertaken, including a description of the fauna, flora and biological communities (including marine, estuarine, terrestrial and aquatic). This Section also states that:

Species with Indigenous conservation values should also be described.

Smyth and Bahrtdt Consultants were commissioned to specifically address this aspect of the EIS. In discussions between representatives of Woodside, the Northern Land Council (NLC) and the consultant it was decided to address this EIS requirement within the broader context of considering environmental cultural values held by Traditional Owners in the area. This broadening of the project objective arose from recognition that "Indigenous conservation values" apply not only to individual species but also to the biological communities, habitats and environments in which those species live. It was further decided to consider the potential impact of the Blacktip proposal not only on species and environments with Indigenous conservation values, but also on the Indigenous conservation values themselves. A methodology was therefore developed to address the following objectives:

1. To describe species with Indigenous conservation values;
2. To gain an understanding of the nature and scope of those values;
3. To assess potential impacts (positive and negative) on species with Indigenous conservation values; and
4. To assess the potential impact (positive and negative) on environmental values held by Traditional Owners.

1.3 Interpretation of “*Indigenous conservation values*”

The term “Indigenous conservation values” is not commonly used in EIS documentation or as a component of general environmental planning jargon. Representatives of the NLC and Woodside explained that the term had been introduced to the EIS to ensure that species of importance to Traditional Owners for cultural, economic, nutritional, medicinal or other reasons were considered in the environmental assessment process. The term is therefore used in this report to mean species about which Traditional Owners hold values which give the species significance to Traditional Owners over and above the significance of the species as members of biological communities, or as rare, threatened or endangered etc.

This approach allows species of particular interest to Traditional Owners to be considered as a subset of the values that make up the relationship between Aboriginal people and their traditional Country. That relationship is based on inherited rights and responsibilities of particular groups of people to particular areas of land and sea, combined with complex culture-specific knowledge, kinship and belief systems. While this project was initiated to address a component of the ecological requirements of the EIS, the broadening of the objectives means that the project also contributes to aspects of the *Historic and Cultural Heritage Values* (Section 4.10.2.1), which states in part:

Identify Indigenous and non-Indigenous places of historic or contemporary cultural significance, including:

- *Areas of special values to indigenous and non-indigenous people (e.g. **traditional land use, landscape**, visual environment, recreational, commercial, **fisheries**, scientific, **educational**, marine archaeological sites) (emphasis added).*

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Preparation prior to field visit

Preparation prior to visiting Wadeye and the project site included:

- Familiarisation with anthropological literature for the area (Ward 1983);
- Familiarisation with ethnobiological literature for relevant ecological regions in the NT (Raymond et al 1999, Blake et al 1998);
- Reading relevant sections of the Draft EIS for the Blacktip project, in particular those sections dealing with ecology, fauna, flora, cultural heritage, archaeology and social impact assessment.

2.2 Collaboration with Traditional Owners

The primary tool for assessing environmental cultural values is collaboration with Traditional Owners, who are the holders of the values under

consideration (Smyth 2002). With the assistance of NLC Field Officers and anthropologist, Traditional Owners from Yak Maninh and Yak Dimininh clans were invited to collaborate in the assessment of environmental cultural values for their respective traditional areas (clan estates) potentially affected by the Blacktip proposal.

Field work for this aspect of the EIS took place over four consecutive days. While this was sufficient time to visit each of the key locations potentially impacted by the Blacktip proposal with representatives of the appropriate clan groups for each location, it was not possible or intended to undertake a detailed study of Aboriginal environmental knowledge and values in the region. Rather, the intention was to undertake a scoping study to explore the spectrum of cultural values associated with key environments and species, to gain an understanding of potential impacts and to propose appropriate management responses.

Collaboration with Traditional Owners involved the following activities:

- Discussing the project with individuals and small groups at various locations (including Traditional Owners' houses/camps, Woodside camp, Thamarrurr Ranger base);
- Discussing Aboriginal use, knowledge and significance of particular species, habitats and environments during visits on Country – including the identification (language names, English names and scientific names) of some animals and plants at each location;
- Discussing the preservation, transmission and presentation of Aboriginal cultural information about plants and animals;
- Looking through existing ethnobiological publications (including Blake *et al.*, 1998; Nambatu *et al.*, 2004; and Raymond *et al.*, 1999).

2.3 Consultation with Thamarrurr Rangers

The Thamarrurr Rangers were established in Wadeye in 2001 as an outcome of the Top End Aboriginal Land Management and Employment Strategy (TEALMES). TEALMES is a multi-agency agreement to develop land management activities and create employment opportunities within the Daly River / Port Keats Aboriginal Land Trust. TEALMES seeks to formalise Indigenous land management through operational and financial support from the NLC, the NT Dept of Business, Industry and Resource Development, the Indigenous Land Corporation, the Dept of Workplace relations and the NT Dept of Employment, Education and Training.

Discussions were held with Thamarrurr Rangers and their co-ordinator (Scott McIntyre) to gain an understanding how species, habitats and environments of significance to Aboriginal people are currently being managed in the Wadeye region, and the role of the Ranger program in the protection and transmission

of associated environmental cultural values these issues are currently being addressed within the Thamarrurr region.

2.4 Wadeye Aboriginal Languages Centre

Discussions were held with the coordinator of the Wadeye Aboriginal Languages Centre (Mark Crocombe) to gain an understanding of current initiatives to document, protect and transmit environmental Aboriginal knowledge of plants, animals and associated environmental cultural values in the Wadeye region.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Cultural values and connection to Country

Yak Maninh and Yak Dimininh Traditional owners, and the other Aboriginal groups of the Wadeye region, have a holistic view of their traditional country, in which all elements (land, sea, estuaries, rivers, animals, plants, people etc.) are linked through creation stories, tracks of creation ancestors, kinship systems, traditional knowledge, subsistence use and other cultural mechanisms (Ward 1983). In this broad sense, therefore, all species and other elements of country potentially have “Indigenous conservation values”.

Visits were made with Traditional Owners to discuss the cultural significance of country and species at the following locations:

With Yak Maninh Traditional Owners

- Coastal area in vicinity of proposed pipeline shore crossing;
- Proposed route of pipeline corridor between the shore and gas plant;
- Proposed gas plant site;
- Proposed route of all-weather access road.

With Yak Dimininh Traditional Owners

- Proposed route of all-weather access road.

Within these locations Traditional Owners identified distinct environment types in the local Murrinh Patha language. Traditional Owners from both clan groups have a detailed knowledge of the names, properties, seasonality, ecological relationships, cultural attributes and uses of a large number of animals and plants in each of these environments. Each of the environments visited contain species that are used for food, medicines, implements or other cultural purposes, but country is valued by traditional owners for more than just the usefulness of particular species that live there. Traditional owners expressed a strong sense of responsibility to country, to look after it, to keep it healthy and to protect it for the generations to come. Some of the key resources for each environment category are summarised in Table 1, though, as noted above, the cultural significance of these environments is not limited to these resources.

Detailed information about the languages names, uses and other cultural significance of plants and animals in the Wadeye region has been recorded by

the Wadeye Aboriginal Languages Centre. Some of this information has been transcribed into a draft report on Aboriginal knowledge of flora and fauna from the Wadeye and Kuy regions (Nambatu et al 2004).

To date the Wadeye Aboriginal Languages Centre has collected Aboriginal language names, uses and other associated cultural information for 206 plant species and 434 animal species. While it is not appropriate to report details of this Aboriginal knowledge in a public EIS document, Tables 2 and 3 provide an indication of the scope of Aboriginal knowledge and cultural significance of plants and animals in the Wadeye region. The attributes listed in these tables are based on information collected by the Wadeye Aboriginal Languages Centre, supplemented by information provided by Yak Maninh and Yak Dimininh Traditional Owners during consultations for this report. To protect intellectual property associated with this knowledge, no attributes or language names are identified with individual species.

Environment (English name)	Environment (Murrinh Patha name)	Key resources*
Deep sea	<i>Langarr</i>	Dugong, turtles (several species), fish (many species)
Beach	<i>Darrimun</i>	Turtle eggs & some food plants
Mangrove	<i>Dara</i>	Molluscs, crustaceans, fish & mangrove worms
Rocky shelf	<i>Kalpa</i>	Fish, crabs, oysters
Jungle (notophyll vine forest)	<i>Da Dulpungu</i>	Yams and other food plants, fibre, dyes, shade trees
Dune woodland	<i>Da Pangkin</i>	Yams and other food plants, fibre, dyes
High ridge (open woodland)	<i>Da Bengkunh</i>	Food plants, honey, mammals, birds, reptiles, invertebrates
Pandanus / Mellaleuca community	<i>Da Bepi</i>	Food plants, fibres, water

Table 1: Summary of key resources within Yak Maninh and Yak Diminh environments associated with the Blacktip proposal

*The cultural significance of these environments is not limited to the resources listed.

Category	Attribute and uses
Food	Fruit flesh Pith / shoots Fruit seeds Tuber Nectar and sap Water source
Plant and animal associations	Edible animals associated with specific plants Food for animals Calendar plants (indicating seasonality or species availability)
Implements	Clap-sticks Didgeridoos Digging sticks Fighting sticks Fire carriers Fire sticks Spears Throwing sticks Tools Water craft (dugout and bark canoes) Woomeras
Material culture	Carrying baskets Water carriers Caulking compounds (for repairing leaks) Dyes Fibres Fish poisons Glues Harmful / poisonous Insect repellent Ornament / decoration Sandpaper Shelter / bedding Smoking pipes Tobacco Toys Drinking cups Straws Stone axe handles
Medicines	Respiratory ailments Skin ailments Headaches Others
Other uses	Firesticks Firewood and kindling Wrapping food for cooking Ceremonies Shade

Table 2: Some attributes and uses of Aboriginal knowledge of plants

Based on information from Nambatu et al (2004) and consultations with Yak Maninh and Yak Dimininh Traditional Owners.

Category	Attribute / Uses
Food	Flesh of mammals, birds. Fish, reptiles, amphibians Eggs or birds and reptiles Marine and terrestrial invertebrates Bait
Spiritual	Many species are totems for particular people and groups Dreaming sites associated with particular species Particular species of spiritual importance to men Particular species of spiritual importance to women Particular species feature in creation stories
Clothing and decoration	Feathers Shells
Medicine	Some species have medicinal properties
Calendar species	Some species indicate seasonal changes and availability of particular plant foods
Other uses	Water carriers Smoking pipes Lead people to water Look after country

Table 3: Some attributes and uses of Aboriginal knowledge of animals

Based on information from Nambatu (2004) and consultations with Yak Maninh and Yak Dimininh Traditional Owners.

3.1.1 Summary of Indigenous environmental cultural values:

The plant and animal species in the vicinity of the proposed Blacktip gas plant, pipeline, shore crossing and access road form part of Yak Maninh and Yak Dimininh cultural landscapes. A large number of species have specific utilitarian and other cultural values, and collectively they are an integral part of country for which traditional owners have an inherited responsibility. All country has inherent value to traditional owners, over and above the value or usefulness of particular animal and plant species within it.

The gas plant site and access road corridor are located in open woodland environments that are well represented elsewhere in Yak Maninh and Yak Dininh clan estates. While this does not diminish the cultural value of environments at the gas plant site and along the road corridor, traditional owners reported that culturally significant resources available at these locations are also available elsewhere within their clan estates.

Marine and terrestrial environments adjacent to the shore crossing (mangrove, rocky platform, intertidal zone, beach, vine thicket etc.) are rich in culturally significant resources and comprise only a small portion of traditional owners' clan estates.

3.2 Impact of Blacktip proposal on environmental cultural values

There are two potential types of impact on environmental cultural values from the Blacktip proposal:

1. Temporary or permanent damage to environments and biological communities including species of cultural significance; and
2. Change in status of cultural knowledge and practices associated with species and environments, as a result of economic and social change over time.

3.2.1 Disturbance to environments and species of cultural significance

The construction of the pipeline, gas plant and access road will cause temporary or permanent disturbance to some environments and biological communities including species of cultural significance to Traditional Owners. In particular, plant and animal communities living at the gas plant site and on the access road corridor will be totally removed.

The gas plant site is part of an extensive open woodland area periodically used for hunting, gathering and collection of other cultural material, particularly by traditional owners residing at a nearby outstation. Clearing of the site and construction of the gas plant will therefore to some extent reduce the area available for traditional owners to carry out these activities. The extent to which clearing of the gas plant site will impact on Aboriginal resource use will be determined not only by the size of the clearing, but its ecological impact in the surrounding area, as well as the ecological impact of the construction and operation of the gas plant. Factors impacting on Aboriginal use of animal and plant resources in the vicinity of the gas plant will therefore include:

- Loss of animals and plants within the area of clearing;
- Changes in ecology of surrounding area caused by clearing;
- Ecological impacts of construction and nearby road use;
- Ecological impacts of operation of the gas plant (e.g. caused light, noise, vehicle use etc.).

Plant and animal communities along the pipeline corridor, shore crossing and on the sea bed will be disturbed during the construction phase. The extent to which this disturbance will impact on long term Aboriginal resource use will depend on the care taken during construction, success of rehabilitation after construction and control of weeds.

Traditional owners made the following observations concerning the potential impact of the Blacktip proposal on their country and resources:

- Habitats and species to be permanently removed along the access road corridor and at the gas plant site are well represented elsewhere within Yak Maninh and Yak Diminh clan estates.
- Although some loss of resources will occur as a result of road and gas plant construction, the scale of the impact is not expected to significantly

reduce access to plant and animal resources that are available elsewhere in their clan estates.

- Country damaged during the laying of the undersea pipeline, shore crossing and pipeline corridor to the gas plant should recover in a relatively short period, with no long term loss of resources expected in these areas.
- Construction of the undersea pipeline, shore crossing and pipeline corridor to the gas plant must avoid mangroves and jungle patches, which are culturally very significant and which make up only a small proportion of clan estates.
- Every effort must be made to avoid disturbing nesting turtles during the construction of the undersea pipeline and shore crossing.
- All country has value to traditional owners, over and above the value of particular species or environments on country.

3.2.2 Status of cultural knowledge and practices

Traditional Owners stressed the importance of maintaining environmental cultural values within their clan groups and within the broader Wadeye society. Knowledge of plant and animal language names, uses and other cultural attributes are currently widely held by people in Wadeye community, and this information is passed on to younger generations through family outings, time spent on outstations, hunting, gathering and fishing trips etc, as well as through formal programs at the local school.

Nevertheless, Traditional Owners are aware that social changes in the Wadeye region over the last couple of generations, and particularly more recently, are impacting on the extent to which cultural knowledge and practices are passed on and will continue into the future. These social changes include:

- Trends to more sedentary lifestyles;
- Increasing formal education opportunities;
- Access to TV and internet;
- Availability of processed foods;
- Access to manufactured medicines;
- The transition of their local economy from a total reliance on local resources to a mixed subsistence/welfare/employment economy.

Some of these social changes are also contributing positively to the maintenance of cultural values, for example through cultural lessons at school, the use of computers and other technology to record and access cultural information, and access to transport and other resources to establish outstations on country.

The Blacktip proposal is part of this pattern of social change and therefore has the potential to impact both negatively and positively on environmental and other cultural values in the region. Education, training and employment

associated with the construction and operation of the gas plant and pipeline, while bringing economic benefits to individuals and the community, may further contribute to weakening the traditional link between Traditional Owners and the environmental resources of their clan estates. Conversely, initiatives associated with the Blacktip proposal that support the relationship between Traditional Owners and their country have the potential to contribute to the maintenance of environmental cultural values held by Aboriginal people of the Wadeye region.

3.3 Current initiatives to support environmental cultural values

In addition to the cultural education provided within family and clan groups, there are two significant initiatives underway at Wadeye to support the management of country and the maintenance of environmental cultural values. These are the Thamarrurr Rangers and the Wadeye Aboriginal Languages Centre.

3.3.1 Thamarrurr Rangers

The broad objectives of the Thamarrurr Rangers, as outlined in McIntyre (2003) are:

- 1. Drawing together people from different land owning groups to work together to look after Country;*
- 2. Facilitating the traditional passing down of knowledge and stories from elders to the young; and*
- 3. By making sure the country is in good condition, providing land management conservation and development opportunities for future generations*

Current and planned activities of the Thamarrurr Rangers, outlined in their *Land and Sea Management Plan* (Thamarrurr Rangers 2003), include:

- Weed control
- Feral animal control
- Exotic disease monitoring
- Revegetation and erosion control
- Waste recycling
- Monitoring turtle nesting
- Fire management
- Family-based planning for managing country;
- Enterprise development based on natural resources (e.g. aquaculture)
- Development of a system for managing land access
- Cooperation with the Wadeye Aboriginal Language Centre in collecting and documenting traditional knowledge of country.

Thamarrurr Rangers have received some funds from the NT Government to supplement Thamarrurr Regional Council and Commonwealth Community

Development Employment Project funding, but they are currently severely under-funded to carry out their existing and proposed environmental and associated cultural activities. They are actively seeking project based funding as well as more strategic recurrent funding to enable the Ranger program to further develop their capacity to meet the needs of Traditional Owners to look after country and culture.

3.3.2 Wadeye Aboriginal Languages Centre

The Wadeye Aboriginal Languages Centre (WALC) is co-located with the Kanamkek Yile-Ngala Museum in a building constructed by local Aboriginal people in the 1960s and formerly used as the community hospital. WALC aims to preserve local Aboriginal languages and document information relating to:

- Traditional knowledge of Country, including stories;
- Mapping of Country and place names;
- Bush foods, medicines and other uses of plants and animals;
- Educational materials for use in the local school;
- Oral histories.

Since October 2002 WALC has been collecting Aboriginal knowledge of plants and animals from the Wadeye region, as part of a collaborative project with the Merrepen Art Centre at Nauiyu, the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education and the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Environment, with initial funding from the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies. To date the project has accumulated a large amount of data and produced a draft document "*Marri Ngarr and Magati Ke Plants and Animals*". Subject to availability of further funding, WALC aims to publish a book and interactive computer data base containing comprehensive information about the ethnobiology of the Wadeye region, including names of plants and animals in all local languages, including Murrinh Patha (the language spoken by the Yak Maninh and Yak Dimininh clans), with colour photographs of each species.

The WALC coordinator expressed the view (Crocombe pers com, September 2004) that there is an urgent need to document detailed linguistic and associated cultural knowledge of older Aboriginal people in the region, so that this information will be available for future generations. WALC is seeking funding partners to enable it to complete the collection, processing of environmental cultural data and production of the ethnobiology publication and computer program. WALC is also in need of strategic funding to cover long term professional and administrative costs.

4 CONCLUSIONS

A summary of the key potential impacts and management measures for species with Indigenous conservation values are presented below.

- Species, habitats and biological communities with Indigenous conservation values exist in all environments potentially impacted by the Blacktip proposal.
- All country impacted by the Blacktip proposal has value to traditional owners over and above the value of particular species living within that country.
- Clearing of the gas plant site and road corridor will to some extent reduce the area available for hunting, gathering and other cultural resource use by traditional owners. The extent of this reduction will depend on several factors, including the size of the cleared area and the ecological impact in the surrounding area of the construction and operation of the plant and access road.
- Traditional owners reported that culturally significant resources at the gas plant site and along the road access corridor are also available in similar open woodland environments elsewhere in the clan estates.
- The areas of diverse habitat adjacent to the proposed shore crossing are particularly culturally significant, because of the diversity of resources they contain, and because these environments comprise a relatively small proportion of country within clan estates.
- Traditional knowledge, practices and other environmental cultural values are widely held by Yak Maninh and Yak Dimininh and other Aboriginal people in the Wadeye region.
- Ongoing social and economic changes in the Wadeye region, including the Blacktip proposal, have the potential to impact both negatively and positively on the status of environmental cultural values held by Aboriginal people.
- There are opportunities for Blacktip to contribute positively to the maintenance of environmental cultural values by supporting community initiatives already underway, including projects being undertaken by the Thamarrurr Rangers and the Wadeye Aboriginal Languages Centre.

These issues can be addressed by Woodside, in collaboration with traditional owners and appropriate organisations, through the development of strategies and actions to minimise and monitor the impact of the Blacktip proposal on species and environments of cultural significance, and to support Indigenous environmental values where possible. These strategies and actions could form part of the proposed Cultural Heritage Management Plan. Key strategies and actions could include:

- Collecting baseline data on Aboriginal resource use and other cultural values relating to environments potentially impacted by the Blacktip proposal;

- Devising methods to minimise the impacts on culturally significant species and environments during the construction and operational phases of the project;
- Monitoring the impact of construction and operation of Blacktip infrastructure on environments and species of cultural significance, including the impact on hunting resources in the surrounding region;
- Developing and/or supporting projects to strengthen environmental cultural values, knowledge and practices in collaboration with traditional owners, the Thamarrurr Rangers and the Wadeye Aboriginal Languages Centre.

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