



## **PART A – Introduction and Description**

### **GUIDELINES FOR PREPARATION OF A DRAFT**

### **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

### **ON THE PROPOSED SUNRISE AQUACULTURE ESTATE AT**

### **POINT CEYLON (BYNOE HARBOUR) IN THE NORTHERN**

### **TERRITORY**

### **SUNTAY AQUACULTURE P/L**

#### **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>PROJECT DESCRIPTION .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>PURPOSE OF THE EIS .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>EIS PROCESS .....</b>	<b>5</b>

# 1 INTRODUCTION

These Guidelines have been developed to assist Suntay Aquaculture Pty Ltd in preparing a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for an aquaculture estate at Point Ceylon, Northern Territory, in accordance with Clause 8 of the Administrative Procedures of the *Environmental Assessment Act* 1982 of the Northern Territory. These (final) Guidelines consist of two sections:

- Part A (this section) is the introduction and description of the project and the EIS process; and
- Part B (attached) details the type and extent of information to be included in the Draft EIS. The list includes issues and concerns that were identified before the public and Government review period (for the Draft Guidelines) in addition to further information requirements identified in nineteen submissions that the Office of Environment and Heritage received on the Draft Guidelines.

# 2 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Notice of Intent submitted by Suntay P/L outlines a two-phase plan to develop a “closed system prawn farm with minimal to zero-discharge.” Phase 1 of the project will involve the development of approximately 15 hectares (including 5-10 hectares of production ponds). Phase 2 will require the further development of approximately 65 hectares (including 50 – 55 hectares of production ponds). The total development area will be approximately 100 hectares including 60 hectares of ponds with 30 hectares allocated for open space, farm infrastructure and staff accommodation. This includes approximately 5 hectares at the northern tip of the property for a hatchery and maturation facility.

The proposed infrastructure includes the following:

- Processing shed;
- Storage warehouse;
- Staff accommodation;
- Hatchery and maturation facility;
- Freshwater dam;
- Sedimentation/recycling basin; and
- Weir.

Initially, the development will produce prawns; however, future aquaculture might include fin-fish.

Suntay Aquaculture Pty Ltd aim to conform with the latest Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) code of responsible aquaculture, and apply recently developed principles to achieve the following outcomes:

- a “closed” system with minimal to zero-discharge;
- low saltwater and freshwater consumption;

- no soil leaching;
- no salinisation of groundwater;
- no impact on mangroves; and
- low phosphorous and nitrogen in waste water.

**Important note:** These Guidelines have been developed for a two-staged proposal, involving

- a total development area of 100 hectares (with 60 hectares of ponds);
- a closed-system prawn farm with discharges to the environment occurring only as transient contingent events (eg. unusually high rainfall or cyclones); and
- production ponds, sedimentation/recycling basin, a small hatchery and associated infrastructure.

If at some future stage the proponent desires to significantly expand its operations or operate

- in a non-closed manner;
- with fin-fish, crabs or other substantially different aquaculture species (ie. non-prawn); and/or
- using a substantially altered design (for infrastructure and process);

then the proponent will have to submit a new Notice of Intent to the Office of Environment and Heritage to determine if formal assessment (at the PER or EIS level) will be required.

The alterations identified above have an increased potential to significantly impact the environment (especially the nearshore waters off the lease area), and environmental assessment would likely require the proponent to do more extensive baseline surveys and on-going monitoring of the marine environment than those identified in these Guidelines.

In addition, the Executive Director of Fisheries can apply complementary conditions to the aquaculture licence to ensure that substantial deviations from the proposed design, processes, etc., as outlined in the Draft EIS, will be subject to further assessment.

### **3 PURPOSE OF THE EIS**

The draft EIS aims to provide:

- a source of information from which individuals and groups may gain an understanding of the proposal, the need for the proposal, the economic and other benefits that might arise from the project, the alternatives, the environment that it would affect, the impacts that may occur and the measures taken to minimise those impacts;

- a basis for public consultation and informed comment on the proposal; and
- a framework against which decision-makers can consider the environmental aspects of the proposal, set conditions for approval to ensure environmentally sound development and recommend an environmental management and monitoring program.

The object of these Guidelines is to identify those matters that should be addressed in the draft EIS. The Guidelines are based on the initial outline of the proposal in the Notice of Intent. Not all matters indicated in the Guidelines may be relevant to all aspects of the proposal. Only those matters that are relevant to the proposal should be addressed. The Guidelines however are not necessarily exhaustive and should not be interpreted as excluding from consideration any matters which are currently unforeseen that emerge as important or significant from scientific studies or otherwise during the preparation of the draft EIS, the public consultation process and the preparation of the Supplement to the draft EIS (response to submissions).

The draft EIS should be a self-contained and comprehensive document written in a clear, concise style that is easily understood by the general reader. Cross-referencing should be used to avoid unnecessary duplication of text. Text should be supported where appropriate by maps, plans, diagrams or other descriptive material. Detailed technical information and baseline surveys should be included as appendices.

Content in the draft EIS should include both quantitative and qualitative analysis as appropriate. Impacts should not just be treated as adverse: beneficial effects should also be identified.

The justification of the project in the manner proposed should be consistent with the principles of ecologically sustainable development. Assessment of the environmental impacts of the proposal and alternatives should be comprehensive. For the purpose of these Guidelines, the “principles of ecologically sustainable development” are as follows:

- the precautionary principle - namely, that if there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to prevent environmental degradation;
- inter- and intra-generational equity - namely, that the present generation should ensure that the health, diversity and productivity of the environment are maintained or enhanced for the benefit of future generations;
- conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity; and
- improved valuation and pricing of environmental resources.

## 4 EIS PROCESS

The Northern Territory Minister for the Environment determined (on 13 September 2002) that the proposal (as described in the Notice of Intent submitted by Suntay Aquaculture Pty. Ltd) requires assessment under the *Environmental Assessment Act* at the level of Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The current proposal was referred to the Commonwealth Government under the provisions of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act*. On the 22 August 2002 it was confirmed that the proposal is not a controlled action under the *EPBC Act*; therefore, the environmental assessment process will be facilitated wholly under NT legislation.

The EIS process, as described by the Administrative Procedures of the *Environmental Assessment Act 1981* of the Northern Territory, is displayed in Figure 1. (Note that with recent restructuring, the term “Office of Environment and Heritage” should be substituted for “Department of Lands, Planning and Environment” and the correct name for the Minister responsible for the environmental assessment process in the NT is the “Minister for the Environment and Heritage.”

### Overview of the Process

Once the Minister has determined that an EIS is required, the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) prepares Draft Guidelines for Preparation of an EIS, after consulting with relevant advisory bodies.

These Draft Guidelines are then subject to public review for a 14-day period. At the end of this period, OEH has 14 days to finalise the Draft Guidelines for Ministerial approval. If approved, final Guidelines are forwarded to the proponent.

When the proponent has prepared a Draft EIS, this document is exhibited for public review and comment for a minimum of 28 days, during which time advisory bodies also comment on the document.

Comments are forwarded to the proponent, who addresses issues in a Supplement to the Draft EIS. The Supplement is reviewed by advisory bodies.

OEH then has 35 days to prepare an Environmental Assessment Report and Recommendations based on the Draft EIS and Supplement. If the Minister approves the Report and Recommendations, these are forwarded to the responsible (consent) Minister(s) for inclusion in permit, lease or license conditions and in relevant management procedures (e.g. Environmental Management Plans).

The Assessment Report and Recommendations are included on the OEH website and hard copies are provided to respondents and selected public libraries and viewing sites.

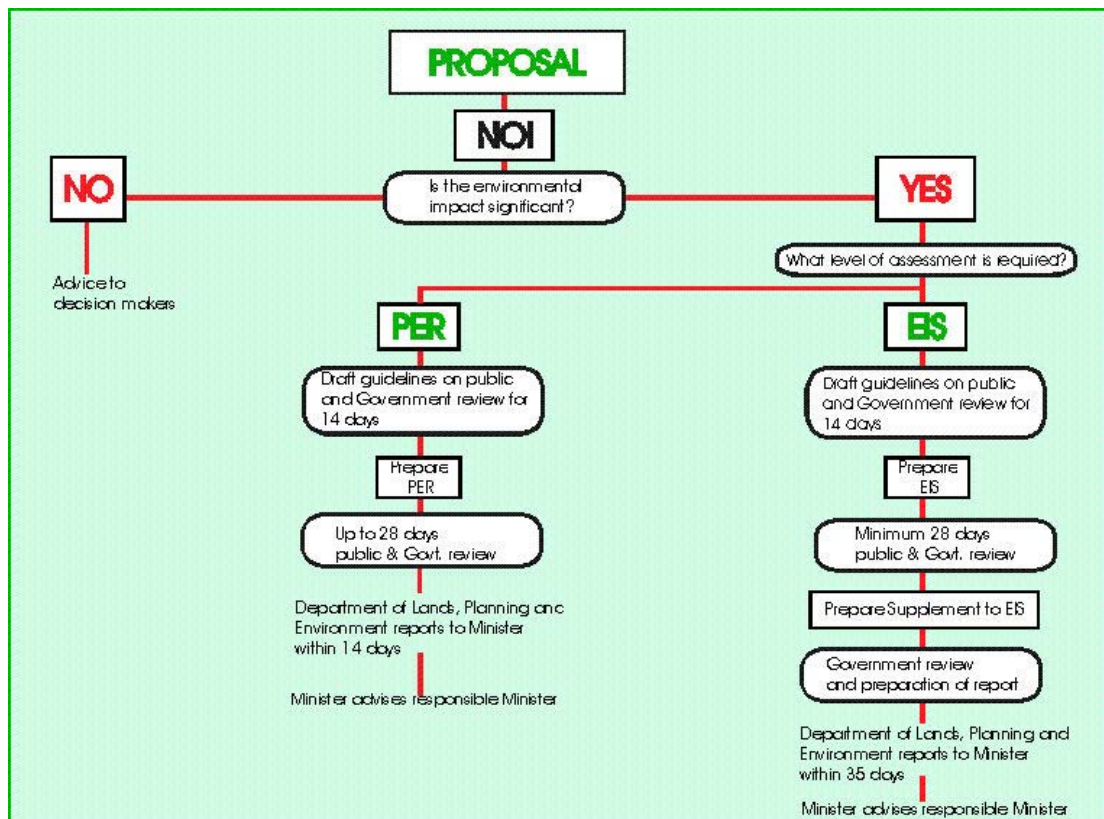


Figure 1 – The Northern Territory Environmental Assessment Process.

*(Note: subsequent to preparation of the above figure, the Department of Lands, Planning and Environment has been restructured and renamed the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Environment.)*