

## Statement of Reasons

### OSTOJIC GROUP PTY LTD – SUNDAY CREEK EAST PROJECT 2016

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#### PROJECT

The Mining Management Plan (MMP) for the Sunday Creek East Project (the Project) was referred from the then Department of Mines and Energy to the Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority (NT EPA) on 18 May 2016 for consideration under the *Environmental Assessment Act* (EA Act). Further information was requested on 3 August 2016 to inform the NT EPA's decision. The Proponent, Ostojic Group Pty Ltd, responded to the further information request on 9 and 14 November 2016 and 24 January 2017.

The Project tenements (EMP25404, EMP27935, EMP27935, EMP30684 and EMP30685) are located within Koolpinyah Station, approximately 15 km east of Humpty Doo. The MMP outlines the proposed land clearing (6 ha) and sand extraction (up to 100 000 t) operations by the Proponent for the 2016-17 period. Operations would specifically target sand extraction from EMP25404.

#### CONSULTATION

The MMP and further information have been reviewed as a notification under the EA Act in consultation with Northern Territory Government (NTG) advisory bodies and the responsible Minister, in accordance with clause 8(1) of the Environmental Assessment Administrative Procedures (EAAP).

#### JUSTIFICATION

Review of the MMP and further information identified the following potential environmental impacts and risks associated with the Project:

- potential impacts to the values of the Adelaide River Coastal Floodplain Site of Conservation Significance (SOCS)
- potential to introduce and/or spread weeds.

#### Potential impacts to the values of the Adelaide River Coastal Floodplain SOCS

The MMP was referred to the NT EPA because the Project tenements (EMP25404, EMP27935, EMP27935, EMP30684 and EMP30685) are located within the western section of the Adelaide River Coastal Floodplain SOCS. The ecological values of the SOCS include significant flora species and habitat for threatened species listed under the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act* (TPWC Act).<sup>1</sup> The western section of the SOCS is recognised as important because seven of the eight identified Northern Territory populations of the endangered Darwin Palm *Ptychosperma macarthurii* occur in rainforest patches in this area.<sup>1,2</sup>

There is a small patch of monsoon rainforest along the southern boundary of EMP25404. Further information provided by the Proponent confirmed that sensitive vegetation types, including the area

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Natural Resources, Environment, The Arts and Sport (NRETAS), 2010. *Sites of conservation significance – Adelaide River Coastal Floodplain*. NRETAS, Darwin, Northern Territory. Available at: [http://www.territorystories.nt.gov.au/bitstream/handle/10070/254075/12\\_adelaide.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](http://www.territorystories.nt.gov.au/bitstream/handle/10070/254075/12_adelaide.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)

<sup>2</sup> Liddle, D.T., Brook, B., Matthews, J., Taylor, S.M., and Caley, P., 2006. Threat and response: A decade of decline in a regionally endangered rainforest palm affected by fire and introduced animals. *Biological Conservation* 132, 362-375.

of rainforest along the southern boundary of EMP25404, would not be disturbed by the Project and a buffer of native vegetation of at least 25 m would be maintained. Advice from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources indicated that while the Darwin Palm may occur in the identified patch, it is unlikely to be part of a significant population and the risk to the species from the Project is considered to be low.

The NT EPA considers that avoiding sensitive vegetation and maintaining a buffer of native vegetation will assist the Proponent in reducing the potential impacts to the values of the Adelaide River Coastal Floodplain SOCS.

#### Potential to introduce and/or spread weeds

Clearing and extraction activities have the potential to introduce and/or spread existing incursions of weeds. Weed management protocols outlining weed hygiene, control and management information were included in the MMP. The weed management protocols could be strengthened by including targeted measures for the control and management of the invasive species Humidicola (*Urochloa humidicola*) within environmental management sections of the MMP. Provided this recommendation is adopted, the NT EPA considers impacts are unlikely to be significant and can be managed through the implementation of proposed weed management measures.

#### **DECISION**

The proposed action, which was referred to the NT EPA by the then Department of Mines and Energy, has been examined by the NT EPA and preliminary investigations and inquiries conducted. The NT EPA has decided that the potential environmental impacts and risks of the proposed action are not so significant as to warrant environmental impact assessment by the NT EPA under provisions of the EA Act. The proposed action will require assessment and authorisation under the *Mining Management Act* to ensure the environmental issues associated with the proposed action are effectively managed.

This decision is made in accordance with clause 8(2) of EAAP, and subject to clause 14A, the administrative procedures are at an end with respect to the proposed action.



DR PAUL VOGEL

CHAIRMAN

NORTHERN TERRITORY ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AUTHORITY

10 MARCH 2017