

Central Australian Bushwalkers Association Inc.

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Submission on Singleton Horticultural Project

Background

The Central Australian Bushwalkers Association Inc. began in 1985 as a group of bushwalkers exploring and enjoying the ranges around Alice Springs. We are now an incorporated association and a member of Walking Federation of SA (Walking SA). We have about 30 members and organise about 40 walks per year, including single and several day walks in the parks and reserves of central Australia. Members and non-members can join our walks.

As a group of outdoor enthusiasts in Central Australia the Central Australian Bushwalkers Association has concerns about the proposed Singleton Horticulture project that will clear 4000Ha of land, accommodate 1350 people and drain 1 trillion litres of water.

Iytwelepenty / Davenport Ranges National Park

This Park adjoins Singleton Station along half the Park's western boundary, and is only 65km from the proposed horticultural project site. The park is under joint management with the Traditional Owners and NT Parks and Wildlife Commission. Remoteness, isolation and difficulty in access are the park's key attractions. These would be completely undermined by the presence of 1350 employees at the project, many of whom would be off work at any point in time. The park is one of few opportunities for economic development for local Aboriginal people and the proposal has made no account for loss of amenity of this park. The proposal needs to address potential impacts on the Park, its economy, and the Traditional Owners.

Land clearing

Land-clearing is Australia's main source of biodiversity loss, and Australia is the only developed country that continues large scale land-clearing. While clearing for the project would not in itself affect bushwalking opportunities, we are concerned at on-going loss of species in Australia through destruction of vegetation, fragmentation of remaining habitats and degradation of water sources through land clearing. This project would clear 4000Ha of the most well-watered area in Singleton Station, which will contribute to ecosystem stress and species loss over a much wider region. The proposal must address how it will mitigate the impacts of land clearing on ecosystems or species.

Water extraction

The extraordinary proposal to extract up to 40 gigalitres of water each year, locked in for 30 years and totalling 1 trillion litres, with no payment to the NT government demands public scrutiny. Our precious water will be sold interstate and overseas in produce from this project. Drawing down the water table over 40km² area, up to 50m depth will impact on all ground water dependent species and ecosystems. While the Central Australian Bushwalkers Association does not walk on Singleton Station we believe that such a destructive proposal in a region where so little is known about groundwater ecosystems is unacceptable.

As a community organisation we believe that this proposal requires full environmental assessment by EPA.

Nick Tyllis
Secretary