

Northern Territory
Environment Protection
Authority
GPO Box 3675
Darwin NT 0801

Scarlett Cheesman & Sam Moore

xxx
xxx 0870, xx

13 February 2022

To whom it may concern,

We are residents of Mparntwe (Alice Springs) and are deeply concerned by the proposed Singleton horticulture project and its impacts on both Traditional Owners and the environment. The proposal carries significant risks of irreversible damage to the environment, sacred sites and to groundwater dependent ecosystems, all for incentives that do not benefit the local community or economy in a justifiable way. Many of us in the community are upset and at a loss as to how this project can ethically, morally and legally be permitted without appropriate environmental assessments.

The public was not adequately consulted about the impacts on groundwater dependent ecosystems as not enough information was provided publically to allow for any form of informed consent. Further, since the NT water act requires very minimal public involvement, the views of the 23,355 people who petitioned the Controller to refuse the licence were not acknowledged in the Controller's Notice of Decision. We imagine that far more people would have signed this petition had there been more transparency about the risks to groundwater dependant ecosystems.

The Mparntwe community is well aware that arid and semi-arid environments in Australia are already undergoing catastrophic ecosystem collapses due to climate change, agriculture and industry. The extraction of 40,000 mega litres of groundwater and the land clearing required for the project will exacerbate the risks faced by vulnerable species such as the bilby and grey falcon. No meaningful fieldwork at the ground level has been conducted to properly understand and assess the risks that the project will have on groundwater dependent ecosystems, nor do we fully understand the potential impacts of the salinization of groundwater and nor has there been studies undertaken to determine the presence of stygofauna in the impacted aquifers. Increased research and the environmental impact assessment (Tier 3) must be implemented to ensure that adequate environmental safeguards are maintained.

The Singleton proposal will cause immense cultural damage and threatens 40 sacred sites that are within the drawdown area. The extraction of groundwater will massively impact cultural values as many culturally relevant species, sacred sites, and cultural practices rely on groundwater. All of this damage and destruction is being posed for little to no benefit to the surrounding community. The report estimates that there will only be 26-36 full-time equivalent jobs for NT residents, of which only 5-8 are expected to be from Aboriginal communities in the Barkly region.

Assessments of the highest order are required for projects with potentially devastating environmental, social and cultural impacts undermined by unsustainable business practices that contribute little to our local economy in Central Australia.

Again, to conclude, we ask that you please ensure that the most rigorous level of environmental impact assessment (Tier 3) is applied.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this letter. We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Scarlett Cheesman & Sam Moore