

Part A -

Information for the Public

**Guidelines for Preparation of a
Draft
Environmental Impact Statement**

**PASTORAL LAND CLEARING
GORRIE STATION
(NT Portion 4965, PL1173)**

Harding Pastoral Company

April 2009

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1. INTRODUCTION

Harding Pastoral Company is proposing to clear approximately 1800 Ha of native vegetation on NT Portion 4965, PL 1173 Gorrie Station.

The proposal was referred to the NT Minister for Natural Resources, Environment and Heritage (the NT Minister) by the Pastoral Land Board under the *Pastoral Land Act* as a requirement to take into account environmental matters when deciding to approve a land clearing application.

The Minister has determined that this proposal warrants formal assessment under the *Environmental Assessment Act* at the level of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).

Issues of concern contributing to this decision include:

- The greenhouse gas emissions of the clearing proposal;
- The lack of information on flora and fauna and sites of conservation significance;
- The potential for down-gradient impacts of clearing on known potential habitat for species listed under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act*, and wetlands described as having regional significance;
- The need to evaluate at a local scale the potential for hydrological changes to increase the risk of dryland salinity on the property; and
- The realistic net financial benefits of the proposal.

2. PURPOSE

These Guidelines have been developed to assist the proponent in considering the key issues associated with the proposal in preparing their EIS, in accordance with Clause 8 of the NT *Environmental Assessment Administrative Procedures*. The Guidelines have been prepared by the Environment, Heritage and Arts (EHA) Division of the Department of Natural Resources, Environment, the Arts and Sport (NRETAS).

The Guidelines consist of two sections:

- Part A – *Information for the Public*; (this section) is the introduction and brief description of the project and the EIS process; and
- Part B – *Guidelines for Preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement*.

This section (Part A) of the guidelines has been developed to assist members of the public and other interested parties in preparing comments on the draft guidelines for the preparation of an EIS for the proposal. It aims to:

- Communicate the draft guidelines for the preparation of an EIS to relevant stakeholders;
- Seek input on issues relating to the proposal; and

- Enable NRETAS to consider stakeholder input when developing the final EIS guidelines.

The Guidelines are based on the initial outline of the proposal in the proponent's pastoral land clearing application. They 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.

3. EXHIBITION TIME

The draft guidelines will be on exhibition until 5 May 2009, which is 14 days from the date advertised, in accordance with Section 8 (4)(c)(i) of the *Environmental Assessment Administrative Procedures*.

The public will be invited to comment on the draft EIS when it has been submitted (based on the final guidelines) to NRETAS. This public comment period will be open for a minimum period of 28 days.

4. THE PROPONENT

The proponent is Harding Pastoral Company.

5. DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL

The proponent submitted an application to the Pastoral Land Board to seek approval to clear native vegetation totalling 1800 hectares on Gorrie Station.

Gorrie Station is located on the Sturt Plateau approximately 45km south of Mataranka, in the Northern Territory.

The clearing is proposed for pasture improvement and some hay production to help maintain growth rates of weaners and to ready animals for live export. Increased livestock numbers is not proposed. Clearing would be undertaken by chaining using dozers or wheel loaders in summer, and the mulched material then burnt and/or pin wheeled as necessary.

Sowing would be conducted by air or planting equipment. Pasture species to be planted include Secca, Verano, Sabi, Jarrah, Rhodes and Siran Mega. Standard pasture fertilizer would be used.

Woody regrowth would be chained when needed. Weeds are proposed to be chemically sprayed and controlled by pasture and stock management.

6. EIS PROCESS

The draft guidelines are subject to public review for a 14-day period. At the end of this period, NRETAS will finalise the draft Guidelines for approval by the NT Minister. Under the *Environmental Assessment Act* the guidelines are required to be finalised and issued within 14 days. The approved final guidelines will be forwarded by the NT Minister to the proponent to facilitate preparation of the draft EIS.

Once the draft EIS has been prepared, it will be exhibited for public review and comment for a minimum period of 28 days, during which time advisory bodies will also comment on the document. After taking into consideration the comments received during the public review period, the proponent will be directed to prepare a Supplement to the EIS addressing issues raised.

The EHA Division will prepare an Environmental Assessment Report and Recommendations based on the EIS, Supplement to the EIS, any further information submissions and any comments received. If the Minister endorses the Report and Recommendations, these are forwarded to the Minister(s) responsible for consent or the relevant consent authority, for inclusion in permit, lease or license conditions and in relevant management procedures (e.g. Environmental Management Plans).

The Assessment Report and Recommendations will become available on the NRETAS website and hard copies will be provided to respondents to the EIS if requested.

The website is at:

<http://www.nt.gov.au/nreta/environment/assessment/register>.

7. ADMINISTRATION DETAILS

The Project Officer is Sally-anne Strohmayr from the Environment, Heritage and Arts Division of NRETAS. The contact number is (08) 8924 4002 and facsimile (08) 088924 4053, email: sally.strohmayr@nt.gov.au. Comments can also be posted to the contact officer at EHA Division, NRETAS, PO Box 496, Palmerston, NT 0831.

Comments on the EIS Guidelines should be forwarded to the NRETAS Project Officer

Copies of the final guidelines, and the draft EIS once submitted will be posted on the NRETAS website at:

<http://www.nt.gov.au/nreta/environment/assessment/register/index.html>