

Statement of Reasons

DEFENCE HOUSING AUSTRALIA - LEE POINT MASTER-PLANNED URBAN DEVELOPMENT

PROJECT

The Proponent, Defence Housing Australia, is proposing the Lee Point Master-Planned Urban Development (the Project), approximately 14 km north-north-east of the Darwin on the northern edge of the residential suburbs Muirhead and Lyons. The 132.5 ha development of Lots 4873 and 9370, Town of Nightcliff, lies on the eastern and western sides of Lee Point Road, and abuts Casuarina Coastal Reserve.

The Project would involve land clearing, earthworks and excavation for the purpose of creating land suitable for residential housing, tourism / commercial infrastructure and community facilities; and the provision of transport / road infrastructure and connection to utilities services. The Project is expected to be staged over a four year period with the completion of the final stage in 2020.

The Proponent submitted a Notice of Intent (NOI) for the Project to the Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority (NT EPA) on 24 August 2015, followed by a revision of the NOI on 8 September 2015, for consideration under the *Environmental Assessment Act* (EA Act).

CONSULTATION

NT EPA staff have reviewed the NOI in consultation with Northern Territory Government (NTG) advisory bodies, as required by clause 8(1) of the Environmental Assessment Administrative Procedures.

JUSTIFICATION

Consultation with NTG advisory bodies identified that there is a risk of significant impact to the environment from the Project. In particular:

- The site provides habitat for and was previously occupied by a population of black-footed tree-rat (*Mesembriomys gouldii*).¹ *Mesembriomys gouldii* is listed as endangered under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) and vulnerable under the *Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act* (TPWC Act).
- The Project is likely to increase the frequency of visitors and domestic animals to Lee Point and Sandy Creek. Increased frequency to these areas could result in the

¹Griffiths, A.D., Koenig, J., Carrol, F., and Price, O., 2001. Activity area and day-time tree use of the black-footed tree-rat *Mesembriomys gouldii*, *Australian Mammalogy*, 23(2) 181-183.

disturbance of threatened and migratory species listed under the EPBC Act and the TPWC Act. In particular, the area between Tree Point and Lee Point is identified as an internationally important habitat for migratory birds² and Sandy Creek meets the requirements for listing as important migratory bird habitat.³ Recent bird counts at Sandy Creek have identified the eastern curlew (*Numenius madagascariensis*) and curlew sandpiper (*Calidris ferruginea*), which are listed as critically endangered migratory shorebirds under the EPBC Act. These species are easily disturbed by people and dogs and such disturbances can prevent shorebirds from using all or part of the habitat. The high energy demands of their migratory lifestyle means that disturbance that either reduces their feeding rate or does not allow the birds to rest properly can have a considerable impact on behaviour and energetic fitness, and therefore have a significant impact on migratory shorebirds.³

- The proximity of Project to the Casuarina Coastal Reserve has the potential to further spread existing weeds or introduce new weeds to the site. Occupation of the site by residents will present an ongoing weed risk to the Casuarina Coastal Reserve and other areas of adjacent vegetation in the absence of a detailed Weed Management Plan. Additional linked risks relating to increased fire risk and pest species need to be addressed.
- Important significant remnant populations of the floodplain monitor (*Varanus panoptes*) have been identified within the Casuarina Coastal Reserve. The addition of stormwater drainage and detention basins will create additional breeding habitat for cane toads, which are a threat to these species.
- Several items and places that have historic and cultural heritage significance have been identified within the footprint of the Project. The NOI has identified a number of these sites for removal and several that will be retained as part of the Project. The heritage values of these places could be degraded or lost in the absence of a detailed archival recording and heritage assessment.
- Extensive erosion is occurring in a number of active gullies to the south western corner of the Project area and much of the site has been identified as being at medium risk of erosion. There is potential to create new or exacerbate existing erosion and sedimentation problems in the absence of adequate and targeted stormwater and erosion and sediment control planning.
- Casuarina Coastal Reserve and Buffalo Creek provide suitable breeding habitat for biting insects. Biting insects are likely to significantly impact the amenity of residents and pose a risk to human health. Significant risks to socio-economic values from biting insects exist in the absence of suitable measures to rectify the breeding sites and/or impose adequate buffers.

DECISION

²Bamford M, Watkins D, Bancroft W, Tischler G and J Wahl. 2008. *Migratory Shorebirds of the East Asian - Australasian Flyway; Population Estimates and Internationally Important Sites*. Wetlands International - Oceania. Canberra, Australia

³Commonwealth of Australia, 2009. Draft Background Paper to EPBC Act Policy Statement 3.21 – Significant Impact Guidelines for 36 Migratory Shorebird Species, online at: <https://www.environment.gov.au/system/files/resources/b2ce75cf-1f30-4cb6-9730-fb03ef63cbe5/files/migratory-shorebirds-background.pdf>

The NT EPA considers that there is a risk of significant impact to the environment from the Project and a number of risks cannot be adequately characterised without a more comprehensive assessment. The NT EPA has decided that an environmental impact statement is necessary in respect of the proposed action.



DR BILL FREELAND

CHAIR

NORTHERN TERRITORY ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AUTHORITY

19 JANUARY 2016

