
From: Jo Tibbitts
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To: eia consult
Subject: stop big companies destroying our country and the planet

Categories:

Fortune Agribusiness Funds Management Pty Ltd plans to develop approximately 3,300 ha of intensive irrigated agriculture at Singleton Station, a cattle station located 35km south-east of Ali Curung and 390km north of Alice Springs. They plan to grow perennial crops such as mandarins, grapes, avocados, and jujubes as well as annual crops such as onions and rock melons. They have been granted a 30 year, staged, Groundwater Licence from the Northern Territory Government for this project. By year 8, the licence allows for 40,000 ML a year (40GL/year) of groundwater to be extracted for the Project.

This is an unsustainable project, which will have substantial, irreversible environmental impacts if it is allowed to proceed in its current form. Extraction of this amount of water is unparalleled and unsustainable:

- The Singleton Station groundwater licence presently authorises the extraction of 40,000 ML/year, or 40GL/year, from 144 bores. It is the largest groundwater licence granted in the Northern Territory by a margin of some 24.6 GL. By way of further comparison, the 10 largest groundwater licences in NSW range from approximately 7GL to 15GL, involving 3-11 bores per licence.
- As explained further below, Fortune's modelling indicates that the water table would be lowered by up to 50 metres in parts of the aquifer, threatening Groundwater Dependent Ecosystems (GDEs) and numerous groundwater dependent sacred sites in and around the drawdown area. These impacts are extremely significant, and in our view, unacceptable.
- The Project is located in the Arid Zone of the NT, and specifically within the Western Davenport Water Control District. Groundwater recharge in the Western Davenport region is "highly episodic" and "rare, peak rainfall years contribute disproportionately to groundwater recharge while in an annual year, minimal, if any, groundwater recharge occurs". There have only been three significant recharge events in the last 100 years.⁴ We are concerned about the volume of water extraction that has been proposed in these circumstances, and especially where substantial uncertainties remain about the nature of the water resource.
- In addition, it is well understood that arid and semi-arid environments in Australia are already undergoing ecosystem collapse, including due to the impacts of climate change, such as changes to temperature and precipitation, and regional factors such as land clearing and habitat loss, invasive species, and impacts from agriculture and industry, including water extraction.⁵ The substantial groundwater extraction associated with this Project, as well as the land clearing it requires, will further threaten these at-risk ecosystems.

Instead of allowing large corporations to do monocropping that destroys the land; the government needs to set up small local permaculture farms all over the country that supplies the local/regional communities and coexists with the native flora and fauna especially kangaroos who are essential to the regeneration of native bush and hence combat the climate crisis we introduced humans have caused.

Dr Jo Tibbitts

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