

Submission on draft terms of reference

Fortune Agribusiness Funds Management Pty Ltd- Singleton Horticulture Project

This submission is made under regulation 103 of the Environment Protection Regulations 2020

NT EPA reference number: EP 2022/019

Government authority: Aboriginal Areas Protection Authority

Section of terms of reference	Theme / issue	Comment
1.2 Pg 5	Authority Certificate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The draft TOR states that the proponent holds Authority Certificate C2019/083 and that it does not cover areas and sacred sites outside of Singleton Station. The proponent has previously stated that they will apply for an Authority Certificate for the areas of impact not covered by Authority Certificate C2019/083. However, the proponent has not made this application. The further application for an Authority Certificate is necessary to ensure that Aboriginal sacred sites in areas that will be impacted by the project can be properly identified and measures taken to avoid impacts to them. It would benefit the EIS information requirements in Section 2.5 if the proponent applied for an Authority Certificate for the broader impact area prior to the commencement of this study. Alternative bore field scenarios and salinity modelling should be based around avoiding impacts to Aboriginal sacred sites..
Table 3, Pg 13 Table 4, Pg 15 Table 5, Pg 17	Field investigations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The information on aquifer connectivity required by the hydrological processes factor, and the determination of the source of water sustaining the GDEs required by the terrestrial ecosystems factor, will require monitoring bore installation. The requirement to update the groundwater model taking into account results of field investigations will also require new monitoring bores and aquifer testing. Updates to the salinity assessment require the incorporation of field observations. These could involve soil and water sampling at shallow depths. We recommend that the proponent apply for an Authority Certificate for any works in areas not covered by the existing Authority certificate.
Table 3 Pg 14	Monitoring and reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The proponent is required to demonstrate that monitoring and reporting activities align with best practice. However, the TOR does not specify the

		<p>monitoring frequency and duration. The proponent is required to state these parameters, but it is not clear whether they require EPA approval.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The requirements of the TOR are shown to align with the water extraction licence requirements (CP8 pg 30). However, it is not clear whether the Controller's approval of the monitoring plan under the water extraction licence will also meet the requirements of the environmental impact assessment in the EIS.• It is also noted that the water extraction licence approval requires monitoring to be implemented during the first stage of the licence, which means that a baseline of pre-extraction natural conditions may not be established in the areas identified in the referral report as being potentially impacted.• To ensure the EIS is adequate, it is recommended that an explicit guide to groundwater monitoring is included. For example, monthly monitoring for a minimum of 1 year prior to the commencement of agricultural development and groundwater extraction, to understand natural seasonality in each aquifer and potential aquifer interactions. If the year is not representative (eg, if it is unusually wet or dry) then monitoring should be ongoing to collect a representative baseline prior to commencement of stage 1 of the water extraction licence.
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