

STATEMENT OF REASONS

Section 69(1)(a) of the *Environment Protection Act 2019* (EP Act)

Environmental approval holder	NTR AG PTY LTD & THE TRUSTEE FOR MOHR-BELL FAMILY TRUST & THE TRUSTEE FOR PANCHO TRUST (trading as Pancho Beef) ABN 81 243 084 385
Environmental approval number	EP2023/026 - 001
Action	Mathison Land Clearing Proposal Clearing of 4,060.03 hectares (ha) of native vegetation on Mathison Station (NT Portion 7061, Perpetual Pastoral Lease 1224), at a rate of ~450 ha/year for the purposes of growing hay and fodder crops.
Material considered	Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority (NT EPA) advice received on 16 November 2023: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assessment Report 105• A draft environmental approval setting out recommended conditions. Fit and proper person advice – signed declaration.
Decision	In accordance with sections 69(1)(a) and 82(4)(a) of the EP Act, I accept the draft environmental approval, adopt the proposed conditions of the NT EPA and grant the approval.

REASONS

This statement of reasons has been prepared in accordance with sections 82(3) and 82(4) of the EP Act.

Overview of Action

Pancho Beef submitted a referral for the Mathison Land Clearing Proposal (action) to the NT EPA that was accepted on 23 June 2023 for consideration under the *Environment Protection Act 2019* (EP Act).

The action is to clear 4,060.03 ha of land on Mathison Station (NT Portion 7061, Perpetual Pastoral Lease 1224) for the purpose of growing hay and fodder crops including cavalcade, jarrah, forage sorghum and Rhodes grass. No irrigation is planned for this action.

Environmental context

The action is located 100 km south west of Katherine on NT Portion 7061 (Perpetual Pastoral Lease 1224) in the Victoria Daly Shire local government area. The action is bordered by 'Aldersyde' creek in the south, Duckhole swamp in the north, and a drainage channel between clearing polygons B, C and D. The action is within the Birdum subregion of the Sturt Plateau Bioregion. The Sturt Plateau bioregion mostly comprises a gently undulating plain on lateritised Cretaceous

sandstones. Soils are predominantly neutral sandy red and yellow earths. Small wetlands associated with the intermittent drainage systems occur throughout the bioregion

Environmental values which require protection from the action include small wetlands associated with the intermittent drainage systems throughout the bioregion, biodiversity, atmospheric processes supported by the terrestrial carbon cycle in tropical savannahs, and Aboriginal culture and heritage.

Matters considered under section 73 of EP Act

Section 73(1) Principles of environment protection and management

In considering Part 2 (Principles of environment protection and management) of the EP Act, I have considered the meaning of ecologically sustainable development (ESD) and applied each of the principles of ESD. I have reviewed the NT EPA's consideration of the principles of ESD as summarised in Assessment Report 105. I have considered and weighed all the principles of ESD in making my decision.

The NT EPA's assessment process has considered, and I have applied approval conditions, to mitigate environmental impacts associated with land clearing. The assessment of the proposal, the NT EPA's advice to me and consequently my decision, has been informed by public and government authority consultation processes.

I have considered and applied the hierarchies for environmental decision-making and waste management. I have given particular consideration to the application of the environmental decision-making hierarchy, and proposed measures to avoid, and then mitigate and manage potential adverse impacts on the environment.

I am satisfied that through compliance with the environmental approval, the action is consistent with the ESD principles and the management hierarchies.

Section 73(1)(a) Objects of the EP Act

I have had regard to the objects of the EP Act. I note in particular that through the environmental impact assessment of the action and the granting of the environmental approval, significant adverse impacts on the Territory environment are likely to be minimised to the extent reasonably practicable and the protection and management of the Territory environment have been promoted.

The approval of the action will allow for agricultural development of land while maintaining protection of the environment of the Territory. The wellbeing of the people of the Territory is likely to be improved by the action through the generation of benefits for local and regional communities and businesses. I also note the opportunity provided to the community for involvement in the environmental impact assessment of the action.

Section 73(1)(b) Assessment report on the action

I have considered the advice of the NT EPA in its assessment report on the action (Assessment Report 105) which provides the NT EPA's assessment of the potential significant impacts of the action and recommendations for avoiding, mitigating and managing those impacts. The NT EPA identified that the action has the potential to have a significant impact on environmental values associated with three environmental factors, including terrestrial ecosystems, atmospheric processes, and culture and heritage. Assessment Report 105 states that the action is likely to meet the NT EPA's environmental objectives and can be implemented and managed in a manner that is environmentally acceptable. The NT EPA recommended an environmental approval be granted subject to implementation of the approval holder's commitments in the referral information and

the recommended conditions in the draft environmental approval. The proposed conditions of the NT EPA have been adopted in the environmental approval.

Section 73(1)(c) Fit and proper person to hold environmental approval

I have had regard to whether the approval holder is a fit and proper person to hold an environmental approval. I consider the approval holder to be a fit and proper person to hold an environmental approval.

Section 73(1)(d) Any other matters the Minister considers relevant

I have not identified any other matters that are relevant to, or require my consideration, in deciding to grant environmental approval for the action.

Section 73(2) of the EP Act

Overall, having regard to the above and the materials I considered, I am satisfied that:

- the community has been consulted on the potential environmental impacts and environmental benefits of the proposed action through public consultation on the referral information; and
- the significant impacts of the action have been appropriately avoided or mitigated or can be appropriately managed to acceptable levels through compliance with the environmental approval. The NT EPA's Assessment Report 105 supports this view.

No significant residual adverse impacts on the environment were identified that would require an environmental offset.



Signature

Hon Kate Worden MLA

Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Water Security

DATE 02/01/24
