

Shamrock Station Irrigation Project

Further explanation of decision on referral

Argyle Cattle Company Pty Ltd (ACC) has referred the Shamrock Station irrigated agriculture proposal to the Environmental Protection Authority under s38(1) of Part IV of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986* (EP Act). The proposal is located 64 km south of Broome (Figures 1 and 2) and is the first stage of irrigated agricultural development on Shamrock Station, to produce fodder crops

The EPA Chairman notes that the proposal includes clearing of up to 650 ha for irrigation pivots and supporting infrastructure, disturbance of up to an additional 550 ha in buffers surrounding the pivots, and up to 9.5 GL/annum of groundwater abstraction. The EPA Chairman also notes that the proponent, ACC, has undertaken appropriate flora and vegetation and terrestrial fauna (including bilby) surveys.

The EPA Chairman understands from the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation that the proponent has undertaken an appropriate hydrological assessment for the proposed 9.5 GL/annum abstraction and that if allocated, this application is within the allocation limit for the La Grange North subarea set out in the *La Grange groundwater allocation plan* (Department of Water, 2010). As part of the licence application the proponent has prepared a draft operating strategy which contains comprehensive monitoring and a management framework for the water resource (including the salt water interface) and groundwater-dependent ecosystems.

In making the decision to assess the proposal on Referral Information, the EPA Chairman considered the following:

- Comprehensive referral documentation submitted by the proponent including:
 - supplementary report consistent with the EPA's instructions for preparing an Environmental Review document
 - hydrogeological assessment
 - flora and fauna assessment
 - draft Environmental Management Plan provisions
 - draft operating strategy for the water licence application
- Information provided with the submissions from the public on the level of assessment.

Having regard to the significance considerations in the EPA's *Statement of Environmental Principles, Factors and Objectives*, the EPA Chairman notes:

- The proposal has a disturbance footprint of up to 1,200 ha (comprising 650 ha of clearing and 550 ha of vegetation buffer).
- No threatened flora were recorded in the study area during the survey. Threatened fauna (including bilby) were recorded in the study area.

- The proposed groundwater abstraction is within the allocation limit set out in the *La Grange groundwater allocation plan*.
- There are no groundwater-dependent ecosystems within the development envelope. The closest wetland is Injudinah Swamp and associated wetlands, 10 km south-west of the development envelope.
- The proposal is for the first stage of development of irrigated agriculture on Shamrock Station.
- There is a high level of confidence in the prediction of impacts and understanding of appropriate management measures in relation to irrigated agriculture.
- There is public interest about the environmental effects of the proposal; matters raised include those relating to threatened flora, threatened fauna (including bilby), groundwater-dependent ecosystems (including culturally significant ones) and other water users.

The EPA Chairman also notes that the proponent has submitted a groundwater licence application for abstraction of 22 GL/annum of groundwater, which would support a further stage of development. The proponent understands that planning for future development would be subject to further feasibility studies and water and environmental investigations. The EPA's decision to assess the current proposal on referral information does not have any bearing on future proposals.

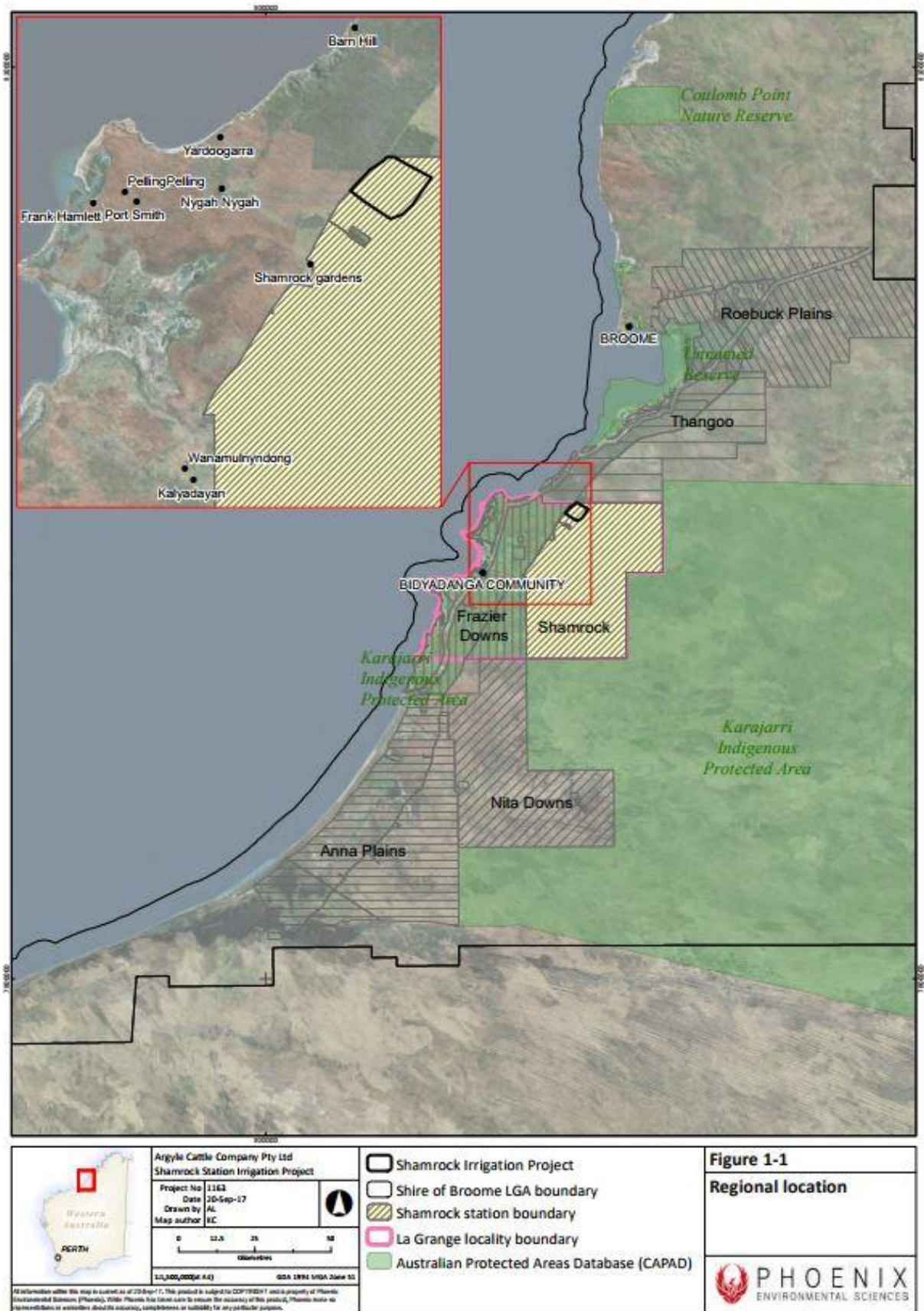


Figure 1: Regional location

(Source: Shamrock Station Irrigation Project: Section 38 referral supplementary report, September 2017)

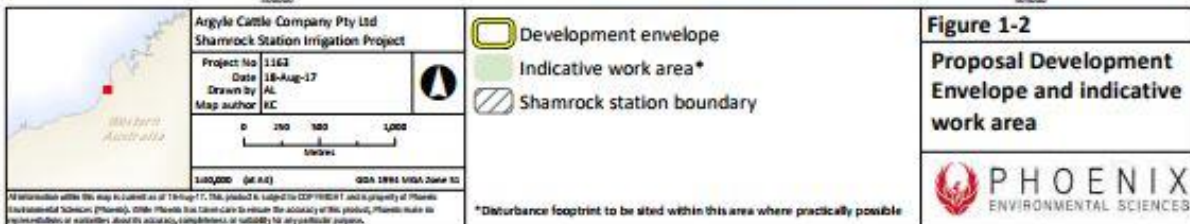


Figure 2: Proposal area (development envelope)

(Source: Shamrock Station Irrigation Project: Section 38 referral supplementary report, September 2017)