

Environmental Protection Act 1986

Section 39A(7)

PUBLIC ADVICE

Proposal: Camping on Lot 62 and Lot 303 Dirk Hartog Island

Proponent: Hypermarket Pty Ltd

Decision:

The EPA considers that the proposal is unlikely to have a significant impact on the environment and does not warrant formal assessment.

Background:

On the 20 September 2019, the Shire of Shark Bay referred a development application for the camping on Lot 62 and Lot 303 Dirk Hartog Island (the proposal) to the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) as a decision making authority under section 38 of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986* (EP Act).

The EPA wrote to Hypermarket Pty Ltd (the proponent) for further information regarding the proposal, which was received on 29 November 2019. The proposal includes an expansion to the existing nature-based campground on Lot 62 and Lot 303 for 23 bare earth campsites, three camp-kitchen/ablution blocks to facilitate up to 80 people in camping accommodation, and the construction of vehicle access roads and firebreaks.

The proposal was advertised for public comment and the EPA received six public comments, including a submission from the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation, and Attractions (DBCA) Midwest Region. The majority of public comments requested the proposal be formally assessed due to potential impacts to the values of the Shark Bay World Heritage Area, and the Dirk Hartog Island National Park, including impacts to biosecurity of DBCA's *Return to 1616* ecological restoration project.

Relevant Statutory and Administrative Provisions

The EPA has considered the proposal in accordance with the requirements of the EP Act and the *Environmental Impact Assessment (Part IV Divisions 1 and 2) Administrative Procedures 2016* and *Environmental Impact Assessment (Part IV Divisions 1 and 2) Procedures Manual*.

Materials considered in making this decision

The EPA has considered and had regard to the referral information, which is available on the EPA's consultation hub, the comments received during the 7-day comment period, information conducted through its own inquiries and further information requested from the proponent.

Consideration

In making its decision on whether to assess the proposal, the EPA had regard to various matters, including the following (as outlined in the EPA's *Statement of Environmental Principles, Factors and Objectives*):

- a) values, sensitivity and quality of the environment which is likely to be impacted
- b) extent (intensity, duration, magnitude and geographic footprint) of the likely impacts
- c) consequence of the likely impacts (or change)
- d) resilience of the environment to cope with the impacts or change
- e) cumulative impact with other existing or reasonably foreseeable activities, developments and land uses connections and interactions between parts of the environment to inform a holistic view of impacts to the whole environment
- f) level of confidence in the prediction of impacts and the success of proposed mitigation
- g) public interest about the likely effect of the proposal or scheme, if implemented, on the environment and public information that informs the EPA's assessment.

In considering the potential direct and indirect impacts of the proposal on Flora and Vegetation, Terrestrial Fauna, and Social Surroundings, the EPA has had particular regard to:

- the high environmental values of Dirk Hartog Island National Park and the small scale and extent of the proposal;
- the mitigation strategies proposed by the proponent to avoid and minimise impacts, for example
 - quarantine measures would continue to be undertaken in accordance with the *Dirk Hartog Island Biosecurity Plan* (DPAW 2014);
 - the provision of a draft Foreshore Management Plan with proposed management actions for pedestrian beach access between the campground and adjacent foreshore areas;
 - structures and campgrounds are proposed in previously cleared areas, and would be semi-permanent with a height no greater than three metres, in accordance with the formal World Heritage colour palette; and
- the presence of other statutory processes, including conditioning of the development application through the *Planning and Development Act 2005*.

In summary, although the proposal raises a number of environmental issues, the EPA considers that its objectives for Flora and Vegetation, Terrestrial Fauna and Social Surroundings can be met.

As a result, the EPA considers that the likely effects of the proposal are not so significant as to warrant formal assessment. The EPA is of the view that the potential impacts from the proposal can be adequately managed through the implementation of the proposal in accordance with the referral documentation and the proponent's management and mitigation measures.

1. Advice and Recommendations regarding Environmental Issues

In determining whether the proposal is likely to have a significant effect on the environment the EPA used its professional judgement and had regard for the points in clause 7 of the Environmental Impact Assessment (Part IV Divisions 1 and 2) Administrative Procedures. The EPA has considered the high values and sensitivity of Dirk Hartog Island National Park and the extent of the potential impacts from the proposal.

a) Flora and Vegetation, and Terrestrial Fauna

The proposal involves the clearing of 0.21 hectares (ha) of native vegetation and potential fauna habitat for the purpose of vehicle access and firebreaks. No clearing is required to facilitate the proposed campgrounds or camp-kitchen/ablution structures, as these elements would be developed on 0.07 ha of previously cleared land.

Vegetation within Lot 62 and Lot 303 is slowly revegetating following the previous 150 years of livestock grazing. The vegetation is classified as part of the Edel system, which covers approximately 20,000 ha of Dirk Hartog Island. The EPA considers clearing 0.21 ha of the vegetation for the purpose of vehicle access and firebreaks is unlikely to have a significant impact on the Edel system or fauna habitat on Dirk Hartog Island.

The proponent has included details of its ongoing biosecurity measures, conducted in accordance with the *Dirk Hartog Island Biosecurity Plan* (DPAW 2014). The EPA considers ongoing implementation of biosecurity measures are critical in ensuring that the integrity of the DBCA's *Return to 1616* project is not compromised through the introduction of weeds, or feral and domesticated animals. The proponent operates the only public access barge operation to the island and is licensed to do so by DBCA. The EPA notes that visitors to the island would also be required to abide by quarantine measures, including cleaning four-wheel drives and equipment prior to transportation.

Pedestrian access from the campgrounds to the adjacent beach would require passage through the Dirk Hartog Island National Park, which is managed by DBCA. The proponent has drafted a Foreshore Management Plan with actions to reduce potential impacts to the beach from continued pedestrian access. The EPA recommends the proponent formally consults with DBCA prior to formalisation of the Foreshore Management Plan, particularly in defining the location of access pathways,

pathway specifications and other details to mitigate potential impacts to foreshore areas.

Given the above information, the EPA considers that the proposal, as consistent with the referral information, can meet the EPA's objectives for Flora and Vegetation and Terrestrial Fauna.

b) Social Surroundings

The EPA notes that the proposal is located within the Shark Bay World Heritage Area (World Heritage Area) and is adjacent to the Dirk Hartog Island National Park and the Shark Bay Marine Park. The proposal is located on the South-East Coast of Dirk Hartog Island and has the potential to impact visual amenity of the World Heritage Area, particularly "the superlative natural phenomena, formation or features" value which includes the coastal scenery of Dirk Hartog Island.

The proposal includes an expansion of the existing campground in previously cleared areas and development of three camp-kitchen/ablution structures with a height no greater than three metres. The proponent advises that the development would not include any permanent buildings, rather it would comprise a number of small structures with timber decking, limestone blocks and tents. The lifespan of the structures would be approximately 20 years, with the ability to be relocated or removed easily. The EPA notes the proponent's commitment to using the formal World Heritage colour palette and designing the structures to blend into the landscape.

The EPA considers that the proposal is small in scale and extent. The three proposed camp-kitchen/ablution structures would have a low profile and are unlikely to significantly impact the natural landscape, features or scenic quality of Dirk Hartog Island or the visual amenity aspects of the World Heritage Area.

The EPA recommends the Shire of Shark Bay place a condition on the development application requiring the proponent to use the appropriate colour palette for the World Heritage Area.

Given the above information, the EPA considers that the proposal, as implemented consistent with the referral information, can meet the EPA's objectives for Social Surroundings.