

Environmental Protection Act 1986

Section 39A(7)

PUBLIC ADVICE

Proposal: Rottnest Lodge Development

Proponent: Rottnest Island Authority

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 29 August 2019, Rottnest Island Authority (RIA) referred the Rottnest Lodge Development proposal to the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) under section 38 of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986* (EP Act). The proposal includes RIA redeveloping the south west section of the Lodge accommodation and will involve the demolition and/or refurbishment of existing accommodation, the construction of new accommodation and associated infrastructure.

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 *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, any comments received during the 7 day comment period, information conducted through its own inquiries and any further information requested from the proponent and government agencies.

The proposal was advertised for public comment and the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) notes that one (1) public comment was received.

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 projects
- f) connections and interactions between parts of the environment to inform a holistic view of impacts to the whole environment
- g) level of confidence in the prediction of impacts and the success of proposed mitigation
- h) public information that informs the EPA's consideration of the likely effect of the proposal, if implemented, on the environment

In considering the potential direct and indirect impacts of the proposal on the environment, the EPA has had particular regard to:

- the existing highly modified environment of the proposed site, majority being located in completely degraded vegetation, on previously cleared land and/or currently used for existing accommodation dwellings and infrastructure;
- the environmental values surrounding the proposal area, particularly the adjacent Garden Lake, listed in the Directory of Important Wetlands of Australia and an Environmentally Sensitive Area. Garden Lake provides habitat for migratory birds, other conservation significant terrestrial fauna and the occurrence of Threatened Ecological Communities (TECs) and Priority Ecological Communities (PECs);
- Garden Lake is habitat for the Priority 1 PEC 'Microbialites and microbial mats of coastal hypersaline lakes (Rottnest Island) – Community 5 – Garden Lake', a hydrologically sensitive dominant primary producer of the hypersaline environment that regulate water quality, nutrient status and the interactions between biota and the physicochemical environment;
- While there is no dewatering required for excavation or other construction activities, there may still be potential indirect impacts to Garden Lake (and the P1 PEC) from ongoing operations that will require ongoing management. The proponent recognises this and has identified the types of indirect impacts and the relevant and appropriate management measures to minimise impacts;
- For example, a stormwater overflow pipe that infrequently flows into Garden Lake will be decommissioned as a part of the proposal, resulting in improved lake water quality. Furthermore, the proponent will be relocating a portion of an existing public pathway on the eastern shoreline and to expand revegetation of the degraded eastern shoreline embankment to improve bank stabilisation and improve surface water run-off from the development;

- the small scale clearing (0.5 hectares (ha)) within a small DE of 1.8 ha, of which 72 % of the vegetation is mapped as ‘Completely Degraded’, and 1 % in ‘Degraded to Good’ condition, of remnant native vegetation. In addition, the proponent has delineated an area for vegetation retention within the DE; and
- the proposed DE avoids known Aboriginal and European heritage sites, avoiding the ‘Rottnest Lodge/Quod’ Registered Aboriginal Site 3540.

In summary, although the proposal raises a number of environmental issues, the EPA considers that the potential impacts can be adequately managed through the implementation of the proposal in accordance with the referral documentation, which includes the proponent's management and mitigation measures, and implementation of the EPA's advice.

1. Advice and Recommendations regarding Environmental Issues

Environmental Management Plans

While the potential impacts from this proposal are not significant enough to warrant assessment by the EPA, it is expected that the proponent will manage any impacts from construction and operations by way of Environmental Management Plans for construction activities, wetland management and a microbial monitoring program for Garden Lake. It is important that any plans consider and cover the potential cumulative impacts from existing surrounding land uses on the lake.

The EPA recommends that the RIA prepare (or expand the current) Environmental Management Plans for wetland management and microbial monitoring in consultation with the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attraction (DBCA), noting their technical expertise in flora & vegetation identification and management, fauna management and their previous research and mapping undertaken of the Rottnest Island hypersaline microbial communities.

This EPA decision and public advice that this proposal does not warrant formal assessment by the EPA under Part IV of the EP Act, it does not replace any responsibilities the proponent may have for seeking approvals from other government agencies to implement the proposal.