



Coordinator-General's report summary Hummock Hill Island Development project

February 2011

REPORT
SUMMARY

The Coordinator-General has recommended that the Hummock Hill Island Development project proceed, subject to the conditions and recommendations proposed in his report.

This document summarises the report and includes background information, assessment and conclusions about the environmental effects of the project, associated mitigation measures and recommendations.

What happens now?

The report will be provided to the Australian Government for a decision on the controlled actions for the project under its jurisdiction. It will also be forwarded to state agencies and local authorities for their consideration in issuing development approvals.

Background

Eaton Place Pty Ltd (the proponent) proposes to construct a \$950 million integrated tourism and residential community within special lease 19/52155 on Hummock Hill Island, 30 kilometres south-east of Gladstone. The site is located about 100 metres off the mainland within Rodds Bay in the south-east coastal area of the Gladstone Regional Council. Of the 1163-hectare special lease area, the proponent proposes a development area of 518 hectares consisting of 341 hectares for the development footprint and 177 hectares for open space, a golf course and parkland. Development of the lease area into a master planned tourism/residential community will occur over a 15- to 20-year period, along with construction of a bridge between the island and the mainland near Turkey Beach, Queensland.

The development will incorporate a range of short-term tourist accommodation such as resort hotels, holiday units and camping grounds for approximately 2800 tourists. There are also plans to have 700 permanent residences housing approximately 1200 people. The township design also promotes educational and village precincts, boat ramps and beach access, an 18-hole golf course, retail outlets, relevant public infrastructure and leisure facilities for local communities.



Coordinator-General's conclusions

The report contains conclusions and conditions on the following topics.

Social and economic impacts

The Hummock Hill Island Development is expected to inject \$65 million per annum in tourism expenditure by 2016 and over \$85 million by 2024. The development is also expected to generate an average of 190 jobs per annum during the 17-year construction period, with peak employment of 350 people. The number of operational jobs created by the project is expected to peak at around 700 people in 2024. Total benefits are expected to be \$1.02 billion with a net benefit being around \$360 million (2007/2008 dollars over 30 years). The project may also benefit the local community, given its close proximity to Gladstone and the inclusion of public facilities such as beachfront parks and other passive recreation opportunities.

The environmental impact statement (EIS) found that the residential component is critical to the financial viability of the overall development. The permanent residents on the island would contribute to the funding of recreation and community facilities and the open space areas through rate levies to be imposed by Gladstone Regional Council. Sales of residential land would underpin the project's ability to provide infrastructure and services. The proposed level of permanent residential dwellings within the development footprint (i.e. 30 per cent of dwellings) is considered to be suitable for an integrated tourism/residential development of this size and location.

Infrastructure impacts

The Hummock Hill Island Development requires major infrastructure to be developed, including roads, access bridge, boat ramps, water supply, wastewater, gas, electricity, power and an airfield. The proponent has committed to provide and fund

all necessary infrastructure for the development so that local and state infrastructure providers are not affected. The Coordinator-General has stated a condition for the proponent to enter into an operation and maintenance agreement with the Gladstone Regional Council to maintain and operate the service infrastructure. Conditions have also been stated on the design and construction of the proposed bridge and boat ramps.

Road studies undertaken for the EIS indicated that two roads and several intersections on the mainland would require upgrading if the Hummock Hill Island Development was to proceed. Upgrades would be required for state- and council-controlled roads. The proponent is required to enter into infrastructure agreements (or a similar instrument) with the Department of Transport and Main Roads and Gladstone Regional Council for works on the respective roads/intersections as indicated in the EIS and supplementary EIS (SEIS), and to fully fund and construct appropriate roads and relevant infrastructure for the development on Hummock Hill Island.

The proponent's desire to use desalination as its major source of potable water for the Hummock Hill Island Development is noted. However, Gladstone Regional Council requires that the development connect to mains water supply (in the long-term) as part of its initiative in providing services to southern areas of the region. Until Gladstone Regional Council can provide mains water supply to the area, the project will require water supply from a temporary desalination plant, to be constructed within the development footprint.

The EIS and subsequent documents provide mitigation measures and commitments proposed by the proponent for water quality management. Measures include implementing erosion and sediment controls and water sensitive urban design practices, the proponent's commitments and the construction and operational environmental management plans (EMPs). It is considered that the potential for the Hummock Hill Island Development to impact on water quality in Colosseum Inlet, Boyne Creek, Rodds Bay (adjacent to the island),



and around the island in general, can be adequately minimised through these measures. Conditions have also been set in the report to ensure marine water quality is appropriately managed.

The project proposal includes hard infrastructure such as roads, water and sewerage at no cost to local or state government. Infrastructure for social services such as police, ambulance and fire brigade facilities will be funded by the proponent through infrastructure agreements between the proponent and the state government. Surrounding communities, such as Turkey Beach, are also expected to benefit from these services.

Environmental management of the site (plant and animal)

The EIS reported that targeted surveys on Hummock Hill Island during 1993 and 2007 located 5 amphibians, 14 terrestrial reptiles, 125 birds, 33 mammals and 4 aquatic species. Of these, four species of birds, one mammal species and all four aquatic species are considered to be rare or threatened in Queensland or at a national level.

These surveys did not locate any listed threatened plant species. Therefore, no significant impact is expected on listed plants. However, conditions stated in the report require vegetation mitigation strategies to protect listed species, if located during clearing works.

The SEIS indicated that approximately 518 hectares of vegetation needs to be disturbed for the development (including all infrastructure). The regional ecosystems that are listed as endangered, of concern or least concern total approximately 300 hectares.

A recommendation to ensure the rehabilitation, ongoing management and conservation of all parts of Hummock Hill Island not allocated for urban purposes is stated in the report. The proponent has submitted an offsets proposal to the state government and the Coordinator-General considers that it will meet the state's offsets requirements.

The EIS recommended specific management of those parts of the island that will not be developed as part of the Hummock Hill Island Development, to protect these areas. In the long-term, it is preferred that a conservation park be declared under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* (Qld) over all the undeveloped parts of Hummock Hill Island (approximately 1700 hectares) and for Gladstone Regional Council to assume the role of trustee. Currently, this is not feasible given the presence of an exploration permit (for mineral sands) over 2041 hectares of the island. Therefore, the Coordinator-General recommends interim arrangements.

The proponent has committed to fund and manage the undeveloped parts of the island for 17 years or as otherwise agreed with Gladstone Regional Council through an infrastructure agreement. Gladstone Regional Council will be responsible for managing this area at the conclusion of the infrastructure agreement. A condition has been stated in this report to ensure the proponent's commitment and the appropriate management of the undeveloped parts of Hummock Hill Island. Beneficial aspects of this would include control of public access to sensitive areas, greater public awareness and a reduction in the incidence of feral animals on the island.

The EIS indicated that the closest seagrass areas to the proposed bridge and boat ramp at Boyne Creek occur approximately 200 metres east of the existing causeway. Accordingly, construction of the bridge is unlikely to impact on local seagrass. Approximately 0.38 hectares of mangroves and 0.38 hectares of saltpan are expected to be impacted by the bridge construction.

The EIS stated that the changes to Boyne Creek tidal flows are anticipated to be minimal due to installation of bridge supports. An overall positive impact is expected following the removal of the current artificial rocky causeway with restoration of the natural flow regime and greater access for marine animals.



Constructing the bridge and removing the current causeway would improve navigation for boat users and potentially benefit fish and other marine animals. These benefits would outweigh the minor impacts on the marine fish habitat associated with the disturbance of small areas of mangrove and salt flat communities.

The Boyne Creek boat ramp and associated facilities will require removing approximately 0.07 hectares of mangroves. The Colosseum Inlet boat ramp and associated facilities will require 0.6 hectares of 'least concern' eucalypts. The road to the Colosseum Inlet boat ramp will require approximately 0.4 hectares of native vegetation to be cleared.

The EIS also stated that increased boat traffic in Boyne Creek and Colosseum Inlet will occur as a result of increased accessibility resulting from the Hummock Hill Island Development, construction of boat ramps and natural population growth in the region.

The EIS indicated that impacts on habitat for dugongs, turtles and other key marine species around Hummock Hill Island are expected to be small given the minor impacts associated with the bridge and boat ramps and the commitment to a high standard of management of water quality from the development.

Increased human activity on Hummock Hill Island could impact on the small number of turtles that may nest on the island. The northern beaches of the island appear suitable for turtle breeding and egg laying; however, the EIS indicated that there is evidence that turtles use these beaches infrequently and at low densities.

Beaches on the island will not be directly impacted by the development and the proponent has committed to employ techniques that have been successfully used elsewhere, to ensure that public access to turtle breeding beaches does not affect turtle breeding, egg laying and egg hatching.

The proponent has proposed a suite of management strategies to mitigate potential construction and operational impacts on the environment, animals, plants and communities including an offsets strategy, EMPs, protected areas management and a wildlife management plan.

In constructing and operating the project, the proponent has committed to mitigation measures to negate or minimise potential impacts on marine plants and animals including; minimising clearing of key habitats, implementing erosion and sediment controls, water sensitive urban design, water quality monitoring, marine ecological monitoring, integrated turf and pest management, commitment to the *Reef Water Quality Protection Plan 2009*, nesting turtle strategies, artificial lighting strategies and public awareness and education programs. Conditions have been stated in this report requiring the proponent to implement these measures.

Implementing the required mitigation and conservation measures should avoid and minimise any potential impacts of the Hummock Hill Island Development project on key animal species. As a result, it is expected that there may be minimal short-term disturbance to, and no significant long-term impact on, listed threatened species and communities on and surrounding Hummock Hill Island.

Matters of national environmental significance

World Heritage values

The report reviewed the extent to which the EIS process addresses the actual or likely impacts of the project on each of the matters protected by the controlling provisions under the Commonwealth *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act).



An assessment of the impacts on the World Heritage values of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area present or likely to be present within and around Hummock Hill Island was undertaken during the EIS process. The following potential impacts are concluded:

- visual disturbance of a relatively undeveloped island within the World Heritage Area
- a reduction in the representation of vegetation types within the World Heritage Area of up to six per cent although no loss of EPBC-listed plant species or threatened communities would occur
- permanent development on 151 hectares of a relict coastal dune system corresponding to 12 per cent of the total area of dunes on Hummock Hill Island
- potential loss of habitat for terrestrial animals, including foraging areas of the grey-headed flying fox—listed as vulnerable under the EPBC Act
- an increase in the number of small boats in the Rodds Bay/Colosseum Inlet area leading to an increased risk of boat strike injuries of vulnerable marine animals.

Beneficial and mitigating actions of the proposal include:

- new opportunities for visitors to appreciate the World Heritage Area in an appropriately managed manner
- strict controls over the built form on the island would be implemented to minimise visual intrusion
- active management and protection of the undeveloped part of the island
- removal of the Boyne Creek causeway
- implementation of a marine ecological monitoring program to map and monitor key marine communities in the close proximity to Hummock Hill Island
- implementation of a wildlife protection plan
- development and implementation of public awareness and education programs to inform visitors and residents and address environmental issues.

Threatened species and communities

The following key potential impacts were concluded:

- potential loss of foraging habitat for the grey-headed flying fox caused by the clearing of around 300 hectares of remnant vegetation—listed as vulnerable under the EPBC Act
- an increase in the number of boat trailers in the Rodds Bay/Colosseum Inlet area leading to an increased risk of boat strike injuries of listed marine animals.

Overall, the proposed Hummock Hill Island Development would have minimal disturbance in the short-term and no significant long-term impact on listed threatened species and communities and any impact could be offset by measures proposed by the proponent and conditions stated in this report.

Beneficial and mitigating actions of the proposal are noted above.

Migratory species

Impacts on migratory species are expected to be minimal. Implementing mitigation and conservation measures, as described in the EIS, SEIS, EMPs and the proponent list of commitments, is expected to mitigate the impacts of the Hummock Hill Island Development project on species that were identified during the field surveys. As a result, it is expected that there will be no significant long-term impact on the listed migratory species component of the controlling provisions of the project under the EPBC Act.

More information

For a full copy of the Coordinator-General's report, visit www.dip.qld.gov.au/projects



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