



# LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

No. 57

## WRITTEN QUESTION

K McNamara to the Minister for Lands, Planning and Environment, Hon Joshua Burgoyne MLA:

### **Black-footed Tree Rat Offset Relating to Lee Point DHA Development**

- 1. Please provide correspondence between Defence Housing Australia (DHA) and the Department in relation to the offset management plan as per recommendation 14?**

Environmental impacts of the Defence Housing Australia (DHA) Lee Point housing development were assessed in 2015 under the former Northern Territory (NT) Environmental Assessment Act 1982; however, this Act did not have provisions for environmental offsets. Offset requirements for the DHA housing development are conditions of an environmental approval granted under the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act).

Recommendation 14 of the Northern Territory Environment Protection Authority assessment of the Lee Point DHA housing development included a requirement for the proponent to demonstrate consultation with, and support by, Flora and Fauna Division in relation to any offset or offset management plan required by the Commonwealth, with respect to the significant residual impact to the black-footed tree-rat (*Mesembriomys gouldii gouldii*).

In September 2022, Ecology Heritage and Partners (EHP) acting on behalf of DHA, provided a draft Black-footed Tree-rat Offset Plan to the Flora and Fauna Division for review and comments were provided. A letter was provided to EHP confirming that Flora and Fauna Division were consulted on the Black-footed Tree-rat Offset Plan (refer Attachment A).

- 2. Please explain the offset management plan that relates to the DHA housing project at Lee Point?**

Under the Commonwealth's EPBC Act approval for the DHA project, offsets for Black-footed Tree-rats were required under two conditions (7 and 8), relating to two different development areas. Condition 7 required an area of land of at least 21.5 ha be transferred to the Northern Territory Government by the approval holders to offset the loss of Black-footed Tree-rat habitat from the 2CRU development area. 34 ha of land from Lot 9458 has now been incorporated into Casuarina Coastal Reserve.

Condition 8 required a Black-footed Tree-rat Offset Plan to provide a framework for how the clearance of Black-footed Tree-rat habitat would be offset, and:

1. include a review of relevant approved conservation advice, recovery plans and threat abatement plans;
2. identify threats to the Black-footed Tree-rat, and potential recovery actions and research opportunities; and
3. specify a process for developing Black-footed Tree-rat Offset Projects, and a staged process for submitting proposed Black-footed Tree-rat Offset Projects and milestones for completion of Black-footed Tree-rat Offset Projects to the Commonwealth Department for approval by the relevant Commonwealth Minister.

**3. Please outline where this offset management plan is being implemented?**

The Territory Government is not directly involved in the implementation of the Offset Plan. Questions about the implementation of the plan should be directed to the proponent (DHA) and/or the Commonwealth Government.

**4. What procedures are in place relating to the offset management plan implementation?**

As per question 3.

**5. Where can the public access these procedures?**

As per question 3.

**6. Has any land been transferred to the NT Government because of the Black-footed Tree-rat offset plan?**

Condition 7 of the Commonwealth approval required an area of land of at least 21.5 ha be transferred to the NTG by the approval holders to offset the loss of Black-footed Tree-rat habitat from the 2CRU development area. 34 ha of land from Lot 9458 has now been incorporated into Casuarina Coastal Reserve.

**7. If any land has been transferred to the NT Government because of this offset plan, how many hectares and where?**

As per question 6.

**8. Who is responsible for the implementation of the offset management plan?**

DHA, as the proponent under the Commonwealth EPBC Act approval.

**9. What monitoring is in place relating to the implementation of the offset management plan?**

As per question 3.

- 10. Were there any other locations in Darwin investigated to in relation to the environmental offset?**

As per question 3.

6 October 2022

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Dear Jared

**Re: Black-footed Tree-rat *Mesembriomys gouldii gouldii* Offset Plan for the Lee Point Development**

I am writing to confirm that the Flora and Fauna Division of the Department of Environment Parks and Water Security (DEPWS) have provided advice to Ecology Heritage and Partners Pty Ltd on a programs of work that are likely to provide a conservation benefit to Black-footed Tree-rats in the Darwin peri-urban area.

Our advice primarily concerned using the offset to support research on information gaps to inform landscape scale planning for Black-footed Tree-rat conservation across the Darwin region to reduce cumulative impacts of changing land use.

The information gained from the proposed research would be used by the Division in a Strategic Environmental Plan for the Greater Darwin Region, which is being developed in collaboration with Department of Infrastructure Planning and Logistics. This Plan aims to minimise cumulative impacts from incremental development on black-footed tree-rat and other threatened species in the Darwin Region. A lack of knowledge of some aspect of the species' ecology is currently a major bar to effective conservation planning for these species.

The EHP offset plan was reviewed twice by the Division. The Division is supportive of the general concepts proposed in the plan. We note that the plan would benefit from further detail, including clearly defining outcomes and pathways to translating the proposed work into conservation gains for the species.

Yours sincerely



Alaric Fisher

Executive Director, Flora and Fauna Division