

30 March 2022

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Crystal Falknau  
Coordinator  
North Queensland Conservation Council (NQCC)  
PO Box 364  
TOWNSVILLE, QLD 4810

Dear Crystal

**Re: regarding Ross River Dam to Douglas Water Treatment Plant Pipeline Renewal  
Project EPBC: 2021/9002 correspondence 18 February 2022.**

Thank you for your correspondence and feedback regarding Council's draft EPBC Act Preliminary Documentation for this project.

The draft Preliminary Documentation underwent public consultation between 7 February 2022 and 18 February 2022 as per the requirements of Section 95A(3) of the EPBC Act. The key items from NQCC's submission and Council's response are detailed as follows.

#### **Rehabilitation of impacted habitat for the Black-Throated Finch**

Key concerns from the submission included:

- Concerns were identified regarding Council's commitment to rehabilitate 30% of the disturbance footprint.
- It was requested that a commitment be made of no net habitat loss as a result of the Project.
- It was identified that timing of habitat rehabilitation is considered critical and requested that rehabilitation should occur at the time that impacts occur.

Rehabilitation (revegetation) efforts for the Black-throated finch habitat shall commit to rehabilitating (revegetating) approximately 30% of the disturbance footprint with a diversity of local native grasses that are known as foraging grasses for the black-throated finch in the ground layer with the aim of restoring the area to be suitable for foraging.

The commitment to complete approximately 30% revegetation is driven by the permanent operational needs and protection requirements of the new pipeline, and the requirements of Defence for the ongoing operation of the Mount Stuart Training Area, making up the remaining 70% of the disturbance footprint.

A minimum area required to maintain the pipeline easement and fire break will remain cleared during operation as a requirement for land management.

Council will engage a suitably qualified contractor to design, implement, manage and monitor the rehabilitation (revegetation) commitment for the Project following the completion of construction and re-instatement activities.

The restoration and reinstatement through resspreading of existing topsoils and grass seeds will be undertaken progressively as areas of construction are completed with additional treatments at watercourses.

## **Offsetting of impacts to Black-throated Finch**

Key concerns from the submission included:

- a greater area of habitat for the Black-throated Finch be provided to compensate for the continuing reduction in habitat as a result of ongoing development in Townsville.
- support would only be provided for local or adjacent environmental offsets that include the rehabilitation of suitable habitat of the same size (as a minimum) or larger than that lost as a result of the Project.
- support for offsets that included rehabilitation of suitable habitat nearby, to ensure that the population that depends on this area suffers no net loss of suitable habitat as a result of the project
- timing of the offsets is critical and requested that offsets be available at the time that impacts occur.

The 30% rehabilitation (revegetation) and a financial environmental offset are proposed to compensate for the loss of habitat resulting from the Project. A financial environmental offset is proposed with a suitable organisation to compensate for the impact to approximately 15.5 ha of Black-throated Finch habitat.

Council will conduct a procurement process in accordance with the local government act and regulations to seek offers from suitably qualified organisations to provide proposals that demonstrates how they shall provide a nett benefit and conservation gain for the local Black-throated Finch habitat.

Due to the urgent and critical need for the infrastructure, and the duration of such critical construction programs, the outcomes of the financial offset may not be available at the time of impact, however it is planned to be funded and delivered in a timely manner that complies with Council's procurement policy, achieves the offset goal of providing a benefit

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to the local Black-throated finch habitat and satisfies our obligations as part of this EPBC application.

Thank you for your interest in the project and our environmental management approach.  
Regards

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Blair Middleton".

**Blair Middleton**  
Principle, Major Projects  
Townsville City Council