



7 September 2021

## **Big win for our biodiversity!**

### **First ever pastoral land clearing application referred for environmental impact assessment, heralding the spectre of Big Cotton in the Territory.**

The Environment Centre NT (ECNT) is today celebrating a massive win for our environment, with news that the owners of Ucharonidge Station have referred their application to clear close to 5,000ha of land for an industrial-scale cotton development under the *Environment Protection Act 2019 (NT)*. ECNT understands that this is the first ever pastoral land clearing application referred for environmental impact assessment in the NT. This will ensure that this industrial-scale development is given proper scrutiny by both the regulator and the public.

However, this win only came after sustained pressure [by ECNT and other groups including the Northern Land Council](#). If we hadn't demanded action, this huge cotton development would not have been referred for assessment, and proper scrutiny of its impacts would not occur.

As the cotton industry ramps up its plans to clear thousands of hectares and take billions of litres of the Territory's water, ECNT is warning the Gunner Government that it expects nothing less than a full environmental impact assessment for *all* proposed cotton developments across the Northern Territory, starting with a full assessment of indirect and cumulative impacts of the proposed cotton gin.

#### **Kirsty Howey, Co-Director of ECNT said:**

"Territorians should be celebrating this huge win, as the first ever land clearing proposal is referred for assessment by the NTEPA under our new environmental laws.

"This win has only come after Territorians stood together for our environment.

"In late 2020, the applicant applied to the Pastoral Land Board for a 5000ha land clearing permit to grow cotton on the station.

"ECNT wrote to both the [Pastoral Land Board](#) and NTEPA requesting that the application be referred for assessment under our new environmental assessment laws.

"The land clearing application made no reference to the many threatened species that may occur in the area, including the plains death adder, the endangered Gouldian finch, the vulnerable greater

bilby, and the endangered night parrot. It contained a list of 13 pesticides that would be used on the land, with little information about their impacts.

“This is the second 5000ha application submitted to clear the station within a 12-month period, making the size of the development 10,000ha. The first application seems to have slipped through without requiring any assessment of the impacts on threatened species – questions need to be asked about how this happened.”

“It’s a clarion call to Territorians that Big Cotton is well and truly here in the Territory. With plans for a cotton gin well underway, this could lead to the clearing of thousands of hectares of savannas and grasslands, and to access billions of litres of water from our floodplains, rivers and aquifers. The Gunner Government has already [rushed through changes](#) that reduce the timeframes for public scrutiny for clearing of pastoral land.

“Territorians have made clear time and again that they don’t want a repeat of the Murray Darling disaster.

“While this is a win, we expect nothing less than a full environmental impact assessment for *all* proposed cotton developments across the Northern Territory.

Media contact: Kirsty Howey 0488 928 811