

Our reference: D24/19158



15 February 2024

Longreach Regional Council ABN 16834804112  
c/o Mr James Williams  
Senior Planner  
Precinct Urban Planning  
email: [james@precinctplan.com.au](mailto:james@precinctplan.com.au)

Department of  
**Housing, Local Government,  
Planning and Public Works**

Dear Mr Williams

## REQUIREMENT NOTICE

### RPI24/030: Longreach Regional Council -Thomson River Weir Project

(given under section 44 of the *Regional Planning Interests Act 2014*)

I refer to the assessment application which was properly made on 1 February 2024 under section 29 of the *Regional Planning Interests Act 2014* (RPI Act). The application is seeking a regional interests development approval (RIDA) for a regulated activity: water storage (dam) for the Thomson River Weir Project in the Channel Country strategic environmental area (SEA) (Designated precinct).

#### Application details

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Applicant	Longreach Regional Council
Project	Thomson River Weir Project
Description	Raising of five weirs
Area of regional interest	Channel Country SEA (Designated precinct)
Proposed disturbance area	1.64 ha

#### Site details

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Real property description	Lot 2 SP123565 and Lot 4 SP232181
Local government area	Longreach Regional Council

#### Information Requirement

Pursuant to section 44 of the RPI Act, you are advised that further information is required to assist in the assessment of the application against the assessment criteria contained in the RPI Act and the Regional Planning Interests Regulation 2014 (RPI Regulation).

The further information required is detailed in **Attachment A**.

The period in which the information must be provided is a maximum of three months from the date of this notice. An extension to this period may be requested if necessary.

Another requirement notice may be given if, for example, the response to this requirement notice does not provide sufficient information to assess and decide the application or in response to matters raised in a submission.

I will contact you to arrange a meeting to discuss the required information identified in **Attachment A**.

### **Public notification requirement**

Pursuant to section 34(4) of the RPI Act, it has been determined that the application requires notification. The reason for the decision is that the delegate for the chief executive has determined that it is in the public interest for the application to be publicly notified.

In accordance with section 35 of the RPI Act, you are required to:

- publish a notice about the application '*at least once in a newspaper circulating generally in the area of the land*' as prescribed in section 13 of the RPI Regulation
- where not the owner of the land, give the owners of the land notice about the application.

Please provide proof of delivery of notice about the application to landowners to [RPIAct@dasilgp.qld.gov.au](mailto:RPIAct@dasilgp.qld.gov.au)

Public notification must be undertaken within 10 business days of providing the response to the requirement notice to the Department of Housing, Local Government, Planning and Public Works (DHLGPPW). The notification period is 15 business days after the notice about the application is first published, with the closing date being a day that is after the end of the notification period.

The approved form for public notification is available on DHLGPPW's website at [rpi-regional-interests-dev-approval-template.doc \(live.com\)](#)

Please provide a copy of the notice as it appears in the newspaper circulating generally in the area to [RPIAct@dasilgp.qld.gov.au](mailto:RPIAct@dasilgp.qld.gov.au)

You are also referred to the RPI Act Statutory Guideline 06/14 Public notification of assessment applications at [RPI Act - Statutory Guideline 06/14 \(windows.net\)](#) for further information.

If you require any further information, or have any queries, please contact Morag Elliott, Manager, Planning Group, DHLGPPW on 3452 7653 or by email at [RPIAct@dasilgp.qld.gov.au](mailto:RPIAct@dasilgp.qld.gov.au) who will be pleased to assist.

Yours sincerely



Phil Joyce  
**Director**  
**Development Assessment Division**  
**Planning Group**

Encl. Attachment 1

**ATTACHMENT A**

**Information required for assessment against SEA criteria – Schedule 2, Part 5 of the Regional Planning Interests Regulation 2014**

	<p><b><u>Issue:</u></b></p> <p>As stated in the application material, the proposed raising of the five weirs by approximately one metre is an unacceptable use, being a new/augmented water storage (dam) in a strategic environmental area (SEA) (designated precinct).</p> <p>It is noted that, as the weirs existed prior to the commencement of the <i>Regional Planning Interests Act 2014</i> (RPI Act), ongoing maintenance/restoration works at current heights and inundation levels would be exempt regulated activities under s25 of the RPI Act.</p> <p>However, any changes to the weirs or inundation levels from that designed/constructed prior to the commencement of the Regional Planning Interests Regulation 2014 requires a Regional Interests Development Approval.</p> <p>s49 of the RPI Act identifies the criteria that must be considered when deciding an application and includes ‘<i>any criteria for the decision prescribed under a regulation</i>’.</p> <p>Prescribed solution 15(1)(b)(i) of the Regional Planning Interests Regulation 2014 requires an application to demonstrate that an activity is not an unacceptable use.</p> <p>s49(2) of the RPI Act does however provide for the chief executive to ‘<i>consider any other matter the chief executive considers relevant</i>’ ie any other matter not already identified in s49(1).</p> <p>The application material does not provide sufficient information regarding ‘<i>any other matter</i>’ that may be considered in deciding the application.</p> <p><b><u>Actions:</u></b></p> <p>Provide:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) information relating to ‘<i>any other matter</i>’ than those identified in s49 (1) of the RPI Act that may be considered relevant in deciding the application for an unacceptable use in the SEA (designated precinct)</li> <li>(b) details of why these matters would be considered relevant in deciding the assessment application.</li> </ul>
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**Further information that may be sought, pending the response to the above Issue and further discussions, are identified in the following table:**

1.	<p><b><u>Issue:</u></b></p> <p>s4.2.1.3 Riparian Function of the Supporting Information Report prepared by Precinct Urban Planning, dated January 2024 (Supporting Report) states that the ‘<i>Construction activities associated with the proposed development will be confined to the area immediately surrounding the weirs, with laydown and temporary site offices located in areas of cleared or sparse vegetation ...</i>’</p> <p>Figure 4 – Extract of project layout plan at s3.2 and Figure ES-2 Project layout at Appendix A of the Supporting Report include references to ‘<i>Construction disturbance footprint</i>’ surrounding all of the weirs, however Table 3-2 Summary of Project construction aspects includes that ‘<i>it is expected that two temporary</i></p>
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	<p><i>site offices will be required – one in proximity to the Town Weir and Anabranh Weirs 1 and 2 and on in proximity to Anabranh Weirs 3 and 4’.</i></p> <p>s5.2 Vegetation clearance states that the laydown and temporary site offices ‘<i>will be located on already cleared/sparingly vegetated areas ... without the need for any clearance...</i>’ but it is unclear whether these areas have been included in the proposed area of 1.64 ha.</p> <p>Only direct clearing appears to have been stated in terms of area and it is not clear if areas to be used for machinery/equipment storage, maintenance and materials/waste areas have been determined and considered within the impact assessment.</p> <p><b><u>Actions:</u></b></p> <p>(a) Clarify whether the ‘Construction disturbance area’ surrounding all weirs includes all laydown areas, including those used for machinery/equipment storage, maintenance, materials/waste storage, etc, and temporary site offices and if not, amend the relevant plans to show the proposed locations of these activities.</p> <p>(b) Clarify whether the proposed disturbance area of 1.64 ha includes areas in which construction areas, laydown areas and temporary site offices are to be located and if not, amend the proposed disturbance area to include the overall project impact, including construction footprint, laydown/equipment footprint and likely riparian vegetation loss (through inundation).</p> <p>(c) Advise whether minimisation and mitigation has been undertaken on the impacts of laydown areas, including those used for machinery/equipment storage, maintenance, and materials/waste storage etc., and if so, how has it been undertaken.</p> <p>(d) Clarify whether all laydown areas, including those used for machinery/equipment storage, maintenance, and machinery materials /storage, been included on the calculation of overall clearing impacts.</p>
2.	<p><b><u>Issue:</u></b></p> <p>The application material includes a number of supporting studies. Of particular relevance is the Thomson River Weir Raising – Flood Impact Assessment, Water Technology 25 October 2023. This report provides adequate information to assess impacts on flooding extent, flooding height and flow velocities across the channels and floodplains.</p> <p>The application supporting material does not provide information on potential impacts of the increase in storage on the frequency of ‘no-flow’ and ‘low flow’ days past the Longreach weir.</p> <p><b><u>Actions:</u></b></p> <p>Provide additional information comparing the current situation with the proposed situation in regard to the change in the number of ‘no-flow’ days and ‘low flow’ days past the Longreach Weir. As guidance, the Cooper Creek Resource Operations Plan Nov 2013 describes a low flow as a flow of less than 100ML/day.</p>
3..	<p><b><u>Issue:</u></b></p> <p>The ecological changes created by the existing weir structure on Thomson River are likely to have stabilised at a contemporary equilibrium. This means that the existing weir pool is likely to act as a quasi-permanent waterhole with</p>

	<p>the drying downstream sections of the waterway acting as inter waterhole intermittent flow areas.</p> <p>The impacts of the interruption of past fish migration/connectivity created by the existing weir are ongoing. While fish can traverse up and downstream when the weir is at drown-out (headwater and tailwaters at similar elevations/heights) the crossing of the barrier at lower flow times is and will be restricted unless suitable passage mechanisms are provided.</p> <p><b><u>Actions:</u></b></p> <p>To enable assessment of the barrier effects of the existing and ungraded weir on the passage of aquatic fauna, provide information on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) the likely delays in commencement to flow compared with the existing structure</li> <li>(b) whether the fishway will be provisioned in priority to the rest of the weir wall or if it will be across the entire weir wall. If the fishway spans the weir wall, provide information on features are to be incorporated to enable adequate and safe passage for the two turtle species present</li> <li>(c) the reasons for not including the anabranches as locations of fauna passage (note that the <i>Fisheries Act 1994</i> defines waterways) and how turtles and other aquatic fauna will be able to traverse these features.</li> <li>(d) the impacts on connectivity and water quality including downstream.</li> </ul>
4.	<p><b><u>Issue:</u></b></p> <p>The density and composition of the vegetation downstream of the weir does not appear to vary from that upstream of the barrier. This is strongly suggestive of available sub-surface water availability in this area.</p> <p>Information provided does not adequately describe the likely impacts to vegetation and habitat that will result from the proposal, including in relation to inundation, bank stability, and sediment mobilisation.</p> <p><b><u>Actions:</u></b></p> <p>To enable assessment an assessment of the impacts on biodiversity values by the proposed raising of the Longreach Weir System and increased height of the weir pool, provide information on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) the expected extent of anticipated increased/greater periods of inundation of existing riparian vegetation at the anticipated at Full Supply Level, and the likely survivorship / destiny for this vegetation. The provided information states that trees were noted within the proposed future inundation zone (s5.3); however no indication of the number of trees or their location has been provided. This loss of vegetation is recognised as occurring until equilibrium is reached however no detail of the extent of this impact or the time frame to achieve equilibrium has been provided</li> <li>(b) the likely impacts of the increased inundation areas on the breeding sites for the turtles species noted from the existing weir pool and the potential drowning of eggs</li> <li>(c) the likely changes to bank stability created by both the increased water level and the predicted riparian tree 'drowning' deaths/loss</li> <li>(d) the likely impacts of increased wake damage created by watercraft use especially on bank stability</li> <li>(e) the likelihood and management of weed infestation on the waterway banks due to the loss of native vegetation driven by inundation or increase bank instability/erosion. It is noted that discussion is provided around weeds invading the construction footprint, but not the waterway banks</li> </ul>

	<p>(f) the impacts of downstream scouring in areas identified as having higher flow velocities than are currently experienced in terms of extent of riparian tree impacts (pursuant to Appendix C).</p> <p>(g) impacts of high flow rates for additional sediment mobilisation, which includes consideration as to where such sediments are likely to settle and whether any downstream deeper aquatic 'refuges' may be compromised (pursuant to Appendix C)</p> <p>(h) changes to riparian vegetation continuity combining changes due to clearing, flooding of trees and downstream scouring.</p>
5.	<p><b><u>Issue:</u></b></p> <p>Background water quality in the study area was characterised by taking grab samples of water from a range of sites, within and up and downstream of the proposed weir plus an additional location outside the weir area. While the site locations appear suitable, the study provides a snapshot only and relies on a single sample at each site to describe water quality. Additional sampling data is needed to describe potential variation in water quality such as across seasons (wet and dry).</p> <p>All available water quality data should be described and summarised. Water quality data from Water Monitoring Information Portal was not included in the desktop search. An example is the site 003202A Thomson River water level at Longreach. Only flow data appears to have been considered and not water quality for this site. Additionally, if the Longreach Regional Council hold water quality data on the existing weir, this data should be included in the baseline study.</p> <p><b><u>Actions:</u></b></p> <p>Provide:</p> <p>(a) a review and analysis of existing water quality data held by the Queensland government and Longreach Regional Council, where available</p> <p>(b) additional sampling data obtained from field sampling and/or desktop review, to adequately characterise water quality across seasons (wet and dry)</p> <p>(c) information considering relevant Environmental Values and guidelines, including human and stock drinking water quality guidelines all constituents, with reference to water quality. It is noted that human and stock drinking water guidelines require analysis of total metal concentrations.</p>
6.	<p><b><u>Issue:</u></b></p> <p>The application supporting material, including the Aquatic Ecology Assessment, does not describe potential changes in water quality that may occur during inundation of riparian areas as a result of the project. Vegetation that is flooded and breaks down can cause changes in water quality such as the release of nutrients and anoxic conditions. The release of nutrients following inundation may result in localised and downstream impacts to water quality during initial inundation.</p> <p><b><u>Actions:</u></b></p> <p>Provide estimates of nutrient loads and potential impacts to water quality following inundation and breakdown of organic matter.</p>
7.	<p><b><u>Issue:</u></b></p>

	<p>Sediment samples were collected but not analysed. Accordingly, there is no information presented to describe the chemistry of sediments in the weir.</p> <p><b><u>Actions:</u></b></p> <p>(a) Provide physical and chemical analysis of sediment samples collected during the study.</p> <p>(b) Identify contaminants of potential concern and discuss likely impacts to water quality as a result of land disturbance and following inundation.</p>
8.	<p><b><u>Issue:</u></b></p> <p>A number of water quality indicators exceeded water quality guidelines (e.g. phosphorus, copper and aluminium). There was no indication given as to how the proposal would influence these either positively or negatively.</p> <p>Impact assessment needs to identify and consider impacts to all relevant Environmental Values and Water Quality Objectives.</p> <p><b><u>Actions:</u></b></p> <p>(a) Identify all relevant Environmental Values and the likely effect of the proposal on Water Quality Objectives, including site-specific Water Quality Objectives where available.</p> <p>(b) Describe how the proposal would influence water quality for indicators that currently exceed water quality triggers.</p>