

Environment Centre NT launches Supreme Court action against Northern Territory Government deforestation permit

- **Case centres around 20,432 hectare clearing permit granted at Maryfield Station**
- **Supreme Court case challenges process followed by NT EPA and Pastoral Land Board**
- **Clearing will increase greenhouse gas emissions, destroy forest, threaten wildlife**

The Environment Centre NT has launched ground-breaking legal proceedings in the NT Supreme Court against the NT Government's decision to grant a 20,432 hectare land clearing permit at Maryfield Station in November 2017.

Our case is that the process followed by the NT Environmental Protection Authority (NT EPA) and Pastoral Land Board to grant the permit was unlawful. In particular, they failed to take into account principles of ecologically sustainable development and climate change impacts. The matter is listed for a directions hearing today.

A key aspect of the case relates to the decision of the NT Environmental Protection Authority (NT EPA) that the environmental risks associated with the clearing did not warrant a full environmental impact assessment.

"Deforestation is exploding across the Northern Territory, joining the clearing frenzy sweeping Australia," said Environment Centre NT Director Shar Molloy. "This is tragic for wildlife, for rivers and the many Territorians that love our special outdoors and way of life."

"In the past two years there has been a 10-fold increase in land targeted for clearing in the NT.*

"Deforestation is also terrible for the climate, as forests are flattened by bulldozers then set ablaze, releasing greenhouse gas emissions.

"We estimate the clearing of Maryfield Station alone could contribute 2 to 3 megatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent into the atmosphere. That's equates to about over 15% of the Territory's entire annual greenhouse gas emissions.

"This huge clearing permit granted should never have been granted. It will wipe out intact forest and woodland, threatens native wildlife, and will increase the NT's greenhouse gas emissions. It is the biggest clearing permit ever granted in the NT. For the NT EPA to find a full environmental assessment was not necessary is completely untenable.

"The NT has incredibly weak controls on deforestation, with authority to approve permits resting with the Pastoral Land Board, consisting primarily of agricultural business people. This is a heavily conflicted arrangement. It's like putting the foxes in charge of the henhouse".

“We strongly believe that even under these very weak arrangements, proper legal process was not followed for the granting of the Maryfield Station permit.”

The Environment Centre NT is calling for a major overhaul of the NT’s environmental regulations controlling deforestation and a clear plan and target to rapidly bring down the Territory’s greenhouse gas emissions.

“The NT needs an urgent overhaul of its environmental laws and a clear climate plan with emission reduction targets to stop this unfolding tragedy. Chief Minister Michael Gunner needs to freeze the issuing of any more permits while these critical steps are taken.”

The Environment Centre NT will be represented by the Environmental Defenders Office NT.

For further comment contact:

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*<https://nt.gov.au/property/land-clearing/current-applications-and-approvals-for-pastoral-land-clearing>