

DPE Planning
(Attn: Iwan Davies)
Lodged via Major Project Planning Portal

Re: SSI-10033 – Shoalhaven Hydro Expansion Project – Environmental Impact Assessment for Public Exhibition

Dear Mr Davies,

Thank you for the above referral dated 8 November 2022 seeking DPI Fisheries advice on the publicly exhibited Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Shoalhaven Hydro Expansion Project.

DPI Fisheries is responsible for ensuring that fish stocks are conserved and that there is no net loss of key fish habitats upon which they depend. To achieve this, DPI Fisheries ensures that developments comply with the requirements of the *Fisheries Management Act* (FM Act) (namely the aquatic habitat protection and threatened species conservation provisions in Parts 7 and 7A of the Act, respectively), and the associated *Policy and Guidelines for Fish Habitat Conservation and Management* (2013).

The Fitzroy Falls Reservoir is in the same catchment of Wildes Meadow Creek, which is a location where the Critically Endangered Fitzroy Falls Spiny Crayfish (FFSC) (listed under the FM Act) currently occurs.

DPI Fisheries threatened species mapping, publicly available via the DPI Fisheries Spatial Data Portal, shows that Fitzroy Falls Reservoir is within the expected distribution range for this species. These maps have been prepared by DPI Fisheries scientists are based on current and historical records of this species and an assessment of its expected distribution range.

DPI Fisheries provides the following comment on the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for this proposal as it relates to the Critically Endangered Fitzroy Falls Spiny Crayfish:

- 1) The FFSC is within the mapped expected distribution range for the FFSC. This is reasonable as it is hydrologically connected to an area where the species is currently found, and FFSC specimens have historically been found below the Fitzroy Falls Reservoir.
- 2) Section 6.5 of Appendix F of the EIS states that a survey targeting the FFSC in the Fitzroy Falls Reservoir was conducted on 19 February 2019. The EIS provides no information on who conducted the survey or the specific methods used to sample for the FFSC. The EIS also provides no results of this survey, other than to state that 'no FFSC specimens were caught during the survey program'. Without such information, DPI Fisheries cannot assess the

adequacy of the survey. DPI Fisheries requests that information on the survey design, methods used to sample for FFSC and the results of this survey are provided at the Response to Submissions Stage for this proposal.

- 3) The EIS has used the results of this survey, and a desktop review to that state that 'it is reasonable to suggest that the FFSC is unlikely to inhabit the Fitzroy Falls Reservoir'. DPI Fisheries is currently conducting some research on the FFSC in Wildes Meadow Creek, and we consider that there is insufficient information available to make such a claim. There is a chance that the species could be found in the reservoir and given it is mapped in the expected distribution for the FFSC, the EIS should have taken the approach of assuming presence of this Critically Endangered species.
- 4) The EIS has considered that impacts on water quality, flow and water level would be avoided at the Fitzroy Falls Reservoir and has therefore determined that the FFSC is unlikely to be impacted by the proposal.

In this assessment of potential impacts on the FFSC, no consideration has been given to potential risks from the transfer of water from Lake Yarrunga to the Fitzroy Falls Reservoir. Particularly those associated with the transfer of predators such as eels into the Fitzroy Falls Reservoir, which is hydrologically connected to the Wildes Meadow Creek, where the FFSC is currently found.

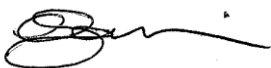
DPI Fisheries research records do not indicate the presence of eels in Fitzroy Falls Reservoir or Wildes Meadow Creek. However, eels are present within Lake Yarrunga.

DPI Fisheries requests an assessment on the potential to transfer eels from Lake Yarrunga to Fitzroy Falls Reservoir at the Response to Submissions Stage of this proposal. This will need to include consideration of current or future operations and the installation mitigation measures that could mitigate this potential risk to the FFSC – e.g. screens at Lake Yarrunga or Bendeela Pondage intake outlets, monitoring for eels within Bendeela Pondage etc.

- 5) Considering that Fitzroy Reservoir is within the expected distribution range for the FFSC, an Assessment of Significance on this species should be conducted as part of the environmental assessment for this proposal.

For any further information , please contact me on 4222 8342 or carla.ganassin@dpi.nsw.gov.au.

Sincerely



Carla Ganassin

Senior Fisheries Manager, Coastal Systems

DPI Fisheries