

Planning and Development (Conditional Environmental Significance Opinion – numerous blocks, Belconnen and Gungahlin - Replacement of Overhead Wires between the Bruce Substation and Gold Creek Substation) Notice 2017

Notifiable Instrument NI2017–187

Made under the

Planning and Development Act 2007, s 138AD (Requirements in relation to environmental significance opinions)

1 Name of instrument

This instrument is the *Planning and Development (Conditional Environmental Significance Opinion – numerous blocks, Belconnen and Gungahlin - Replacement of Overhead Wires between the Bruce Substation and Gold Creek Substation) Notice 2017*.

2 Conditional Environmental Significance Opinion

- (1) On 6 April 2017, the Conservator of Flora and Fauna, pursuant to section 138AB(4) of the *Planning and Development Act 2007* (the **Act**), gave the Applicant a conditional environmental significance opinion in relation to the replacement of the existing overhead earth wires with a new hybrid aerial cable, between the Bruce substation and Gold Creek substation.
- (2) In this section:
Conditional environmental significance opinion means the opinion in the schedule.

Note: under section 138AD(6) of the Act, the conditional environmental significance opinion and this notice expire 18 months after the day this notice is notified.

Ben Ponton
Chief Planning Executive
18 April 2017

ENVIRONMENTAL SIGNIFICANCE OPINION

In accordance with section 138AB(4) of the *Planning and Development Act 2007* (the Act), I provide the following environmental significance opinion:

APPLICANT

ActewAGL Distribution, as represented by Trevor Fitzpatrick, Associate Director Purdon Planning Pty Ltd.

APPLICATION and DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

The applicant has applied under section 138AA of the Act to the Conservator of Flora and Fauna for an environmental significance opinion to the effect that the development proposal set out in the submission is not likely to have a significant adverse environmental impact (the application).

The development proposal is for the replacement of the existing overhead earth wires associated with the ActewAGL 132KV network with a new hybrid aerial cable known as optical ground wire in the section of the transmission network between the Bruce zone substation and the Gold Creek zone substation as described in the submission.

LOCATION

Numerous blocks within the Belconnen and Gungahlin Districts as detailed within the application. The 132KV line subject to this application commences at Block 35 Section 8 Bruce, traverses numerous blocks in Kaleen, Mitchell, District of Gungahlin, Crace, and Nicholls to the zone substation located within Block 1 Section 2 Ngunnawal.

MATTERS TO WHICH THIS OPINION APPLIES

This opinion applies only the development proposal as described in the application.

OPINION

Provided the works are undertaken in the manner consistent with the following conditions, they are unlikely to cause a significant adverse environmental impact.

This opinion is granted subject to the following conditions made under s138AB(4) of the Act.

- Stringing equipment and light vehicles used for travelling between poles are cleaned prior to arriving at part of the line that is physically separated by roads, or entering a reserve, to reduce the risk of weed spread.
- No native vegetation is to be cleared at stringing locations.
- Work is not to occur when the ground conditions are wet.
- Vehicles must remain on existing formed vehicle tracks.
- That the contractor contacts the Ranger in Charge, North District (phone 6207 1679 or 6205 0526) a minimum of seven days prior to entering any of the reserves.
- That the contractor contacts the Manager of the horse paddocks, Territory Agistment (phone 6226 5767), a minimum of seven days prior to commencement of works in the Kaleen Horse Paddocks.

Attached is a Statement of Reasons for the decision.



Dr A. Lane
Conservator of Flora and Fauna

06 April 2017

STATEMENT OF REASONS REASONS FOR THE DECISION

The proposed development is a proposal mentioned in Schedule 4 of the *Planning and Development Act 2007* – Development proposal for an activity requiring an EIS Schedule 4, being:

Part 4.3, item 1(a) development that may impact on a species or ecological community that is endangered, a species that is vulnerable; protected; or has special protection status;

The Bruce to Gold Creek section of the ActewAGL 132KV transmission network is approximately 11 km in length with 27 towers and 29 poles that support the 132kV transmission line. The line traverses

- Natural Temperate Grassland, an ecological community listed as endangered under the provisions of the Commonwealth's *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC) and the ACT's *Nature Conservation Act 2014* (NCA);
- Yellow Box-Blakely's Red Gum Grassy Woodland, an ecological community listed as critically endangered under the EPBC and endangered under the NCA;
- Striped Legless Lizard (*Delmar impar*) habitat, a species listed as vulnerable under the EPBC and the NCA; and
- Golden Sun Moth (*Synemon plana*) habitat, a species listed as endangered under the NCA and critically endangered under the EPBC;

Part 4.3, item 3 proposal for development on land reserved under s 315 for the purpose of a wilderness area, national park, nature reserve or special purpose reserve.

The following support structures are within nature reserve:

- Towers 12 to 15 (Crace Grasslands),
- Towers 22 to 26 (Gungaderra Grasslands), and
- Poles 38 and 39 (Percival Hill).

The proponent wants the application for the development approval assessed in the merit track on the grounds that the proposal is not likely to have a significant adverse environmental impact, and has applied to the Conservator of Flora and Fauna to that effect.

Meaning of *significant* adverse environmental impact

An adverse environmental impact is *significant* if—

- (a) the environmental function, system, value or entity that might be adversely impacted by a proposed development is significant; or
- (b) the cumulative or incremental effect of a proposed development might contribute to a substantial adverse impact on an environmental function, system, value or entity.

In deciding whether an adverse environmental impact is *significant*, the following matters must be taken into account:

- (a) the kind, size, frequency, intensity, scope and length of time of the impact;
- (b) the sensitivity, resilience and rarity of the environmental function, system, value or entity likely to be affected.

In deciding whether a development proposal is likely to have a significant adverse environmental impact it does not matter whether the adverse environmental impact is likely to occur on the site of the development or elsewhere.

It has been determined that the proposal is unlikely to have a significant environmental impact, based on the documentation submitted, known values of the site, and provided the works and ongoing management are carried out in accordance with the conditions attached to this ESO.

Project description

The proposal is for the replacement of the existing overhead earth wires associated with the ActewAGL 132KV network with a new hybrid aerial cable known as optical ground wire in the section of the transmission network between the Bruce Zone Substation (located on Block 35 Section 8 Bruce) to the Gold Creek zone substation (Block 1 Section 2 Ngunnawal). The new hybrid cable is to enable ActewAGL to immediately identify the location of any outage and direct repair crews to the correct location.

The cable is to be upgraded for a distance of approximately 11 km between 27 towers and 29 poles. The new cable will be strung using stringing machines located at opposite ends of the target segment at the zone substations, as well as tower 9, tower 20, and pole 28.

Using light vehicles, crews will access each tower along the alignment using existing formal and informal access tracks, install temporary rollers on each tower and connect the existing overhead earth wire. The new optical ground wire will then be connected to the existing earth wires. As the existing earth wire is pulled out by the stringing machines, the new optical wire will be pulled onto the temporary rollers.

Work crews will then access each tower a final time to clip the optical wire in and remove the temporary rollers

Each stringing machine requires a work area of approximately 10m². Five separate stringing machine locations are required. One at either end of the line adjacent the terminal towers at the substation sites, plus adjacent to Tower 9, Tower 20, and Pole 28. The locations of stringing machines have been determined based on a combination of Occupational Health and Safety, site accessibility, efficiency, and consideration of environmental concerns.

Works are expected to take 1 day for each section between stringing machines and no construction compound is required as the existing sub-station sites will be used for this purpose.

Documentation Submitted

- ActewAGL OPGW Maintenance Works – Multiple Sections Environmental Due Diligence Report (Purdon Planning, September 2016);
- ActewAGL OPGW Maintenance Works – Application for an Environmental Significance Opinion Report – Bruce zone substation to Gold Crekk zone substation (Purdon Planning, April 2017);
- OPGW Cable Specifications;
- Map of Territory Plan land uses;
- Form 1M.

Natural conservation values present

The Bruce Zone Substation and towers 1 and 2 are located within the Canberra Stadium precinct. This area is somewhat modified though a native overstorey is present.

Towers 3 to 10 are located within the Kaleen Horse Paddock complex. Kangaroo Grass (*Themada triandra*) dominated grassland is present within the paddock that contains tower 3. All towers in this section are located in exotic and native pasture within an area that has been modelled as supporting native grassland prior to European settlement. As such they are all in areas of potential Striped Legless Lizard habitat, though the area around poles 3 to 8 has yet to be surveyed. Lizards were recorded a few decades ago in the general vicinity of poles 9 and 10. Some large Apple Box trees occur in the vicinity of Poles 9 and 10 suggesting that the hill here probably supported open woodland rather than Natural Temperate grassland. Nevertheless, where grassland adjoins open woodland (such as at Kenny) Striped Legless Lizard have been found, though usually at a lower density.

Towers 12 to 15 are within the Crace Grasslands Nature Reserve and the area is known to support Natural Temperate Grassland, Striped Legless Lizard and Golden Sun Moth.

Tower 16 is located within a paddock to the north of Crace Grasslands. The area around the tower has recently been degraded but still retains habitat value for the Striped Legless Lizard.

Towers 17 to 20 are within the Gungahlin Drive road reserve adjacent to Gungaharra Grassland Nature Reserve, and towers 22 to 27 are within the reserve proper. High quality Striped Legless Lizard habitat is present in both the Crace Grasslands Nature Reserve and the Gungaharra Grasslands Nature Reserve (Eco Logical 2013; ACT Government 2016). Golden Sun Moth and Perunga Grasshopper have also previously been recorded in both reserves and the Striped Legless Lizard habitat extends into the road reserve.

Poles 28 and 29 are outside reserve but are located within critically endangered Yellow Box Blakely's Red Gum woodland and in an area mapped as Striped Legless Lizard habitat.

From Pole 30 to the Gold Creek Zone Substation the line traverses urban open space and a golf course, except for Poles 38 and 39 which are within Percival Hill Nature Reserve. Pole 37, which is outside reserve, is located within an area mapped as Striped Legless Lizard habitat. There is also a small patch of Natural Temperate Grassland in the vicinity of Pole 37.

Potentially Significant Environmental Impacts

Two stringing machines are required at Tower 9. A field survey confirmed that the sites chosen for the location of the stringing machines are heavily grazed with no grass tussocks present. The proposed work areas are unlikely to provide important Striped Legless Lizard habitat in their current condition as the ground cover is mostly non-native pasture grasses

The extent of works is small relative to the size of potential habitat and a significant impact should be avoided. To minimise impacts vehicles should stick to existing tracks, though the grass on the tracks is of a sufficient height that it could be utilised, but probably not for hibernation over the winter months, and in warmer months probably has less habitat value than neighbouring paddocks.

The stringing location at Tower 20 is fragmented from the Gungaharra Grasslands Nature Reserve by Gungahlin Drive. This location is unlikely to provide habitat for

any listed species due to a combination of the fragmentation and the grass management in the Gungahlin Drive easement.

Poles 28 is outside reserve but are in an area mapped as Striped Legless Lizard habitat and is critically endangered yellow Box Blakley's red Gum woodland. Two stringing locations are required at this pole. In both work areas there is sufficient scope to microsite the works to locations with a lower cover of native vegetation. There is no intention to lop or remove and native woody vegetation and it will be a condition of approval that the stringing operation is to avoid clearing any native vegetation at this location.

Vehicles are required to remain on existing tracks to reduce the likely impact on the adjoining areas. There are also research and monitoring sites and structures adjacent to the vehicle tracks in the reserves which would be damaged if driven over by vehicles.

It is considered that a significant impact would be avoided provided works are in accordance with the ESO application and the following additional conditions:

- Stringing equipment and light vehicles used for travelling between poles are cleaned prior to arriving at part of the line that is physically separated by roads, or entering a reserve, to reduce the risk of weed spread.
- No native vegetation is to be cleared at stringing locations.
- Work is not to occur when the ground conditions are wet.
- Vehicles must remain on existing formed vehicle tracks.
- That the contractor contacts the Ranger in Charge, North District (phone 6207 1679 or 6205 0526) a minimum of seven days prior to entering any of the reserves.
- That the contractor contacts the Manager of the horse paddocks, Territory Agistment (phone 6226 5767), a minimum of seven days prior to commencement of works in the Kaleen Horse Paddocks.

It has been determined that if the works are undertaken in a manner consistent with the above conditions attached to the ESO, they are unlikely to cause a significant adverse environmental impact.