

Planning and Development (Conditional Environmental Significance Opinion – Numerous blocks, Belconnen, Molonglo Valley, Weston Creek and Curtin – Evoenergy Transmission Line Replacement) Notice 2019 (No 1)

Notifiable instrument NI2019–8

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, Molonglo Valley, Weston Creek and Curtin – Evoenergy Transmission Line Replacement) Notice 2019 (No 1)*.

2 Conditional Environmental Significance Opinion

(1) On 27 November 2018, 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 replacement, on Numerous blocks, Belconnen, Molonglo Valley, Weston Creek and Curtin, of overhead earth wires associated with Evoenergy's 132KV network.

(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 the notice is notified.

Ben Ponton
Chief Planning Executive
4 January 2019

Schedule

See Section 2(2)

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

Evoenergy, 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 Evoenergy's 132KV network with a new hybrid aerial cable known as optical ground wire in the section between the West Belconnen Substation and the Woden Substation located at north Lyons as described in the submission.

LOCATION

Numerous blocks Belconnen, Molonglo and Weston Creek Districts and the suburb of Curtin (as detailed within the application). The lines traverses Kama Nature and the Molonglo River Park Reserve.

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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.

- Works are to be undertaken outside of the breeding season for the Superb Parrot and Brown Tree Creeper (September to January). If this is not possible an on-site meeting must be held with the ACT Government's Conservation Research Unit to discuss how the potential impacts can be minimised.
- All machinery and vehicles engaged in the stringing operation to be cleaned of soil and plant material prior to entering the reserves.
- Parts of the route, such as the section between Lyons and the Molonglo River have heavy infestations of African Love Grass. In order to minimise the spread of weeds into areas of conservation significance, the towers within Kama Reserve and then from 16 -12 should be done first, or alternatively vehicles are to be re-cleaned prior to entering these areas if they have traversed other sections of the route.
- All access is to be by existing access tracks except where noted in the documentation submitted.
- Rehabilitation (utilising native grass species) and weed control will occur at the stringing location if bare soil is exposed, or wheel or other rutting occurs.

Attached is a Statement of Reasons for the decision.



Ian Walker
Conservator of Flora and Fauna

27 November 2018

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 West Belconnen to Woden section of the Evoenergy 132KV transmission network that is subject to these works is approximately 14.71 km in length with 46 poles/towers that support the 132kV transmission line. The line traverses

- Habitat for Pink Tailed Worm Lizard (*Aprasia parapulchella*), a species listed as vulnerable 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.
- Hoary Sunray (*Leucochrysum albicans* var. *tricolor*) a species listed as endangered under the EPBC.
- breeding locality of the Superb Parrot (*Polytelis swainsonii*) listed a species listed as vulnerable under the provisions of the EPBC and NCA;
- Brown Treecreeper (*Climacteris picumnus*) listed as vulnerable under the provisions of the EPBC and NCA.

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 lines traverse the Kama Nature Reserve and the Molonglo River Park Reserve, an area of Special Purpose Reserve along the Molonglo River which will become nature reserve in the near future.

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 Evoenergy 132KV network with a new hybrid aerial cable known as optical ground wire in the section of the transmission network between the West Belconnen Substation (located on Block 1559 District of Belconnen) to the Woden Substation (located on Block 2 Section 63 Lyons). The new hybrid cable is to enable Evoenergy 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 14.71 km between 46 towers/poles. The new cable will be strung using stringing machines located adjacent to the Substations, and on Block 1372 District of Belconnen (near Tower 16).

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. In these locations the stringing machine may require two work areas, depending on the angle of the wire, to ensure each pole is not overloaded with tension. The location of the stringing machine on Block 1372 District of Belconnen has been determined based on a combination of Occupational Health and Safety, site accessibility, efficiency, and consideration of environmental concerns and can be micro-aligned to reduce impacts on any ecological values.

Works are expected to take 1-2 days 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

- Evoenergy OPGW Maintenance Works – Application for an Environmental Significance Opinion Report – West Belconnen to Woden (Purdon Planning, 3 October 2018);
- Map of Territory Plan land uses;
- Form 1M.

Natural conservation values present

Segment A of the proposal runs from the West Belconnen Substation (on Parkwood Road) through the Magpies Golf Club, over Stockdill Drive and over the vineyards at Block 1582 Belconnen District and includes Towers 1 to 11. This section is predominantly exotic grasslands with all trees have been cleared from the easement. There is some mapped EPBC listed Box-Gum Woodland within Block 1600 Belconnen however no trees will be impacted by the works and there will no ground disturbance in this section.

Segment B runs from the vineyards to south of Coppins Crossing Road (Poles 12 to 23). This section contains Pink-Tailed Worm Lizard as well as ACT and EPBC Listed Box Gum Woodland, however, the location of these species/community means there would be no impact from the maintenance works of the transmission towers.

Towers 12 -16 are within the core Central Molonglo breeding locality of the Superb Parrot. Tower 16 is the proposed location of a stringing site. The vulnerable Brown Treecreeper has also bred in tree hollows near Towers 15 and 16 in recent years.

Block 1419 Belconnen is Kama Nature Reserve. This reserve is an environmental offset area that contains EPBC Listed Box Gum Woodland and Hoary Sunray. There is a well-used fire trail along this section and there will be no impact on the known values. The reserve also contains Natural Temperate Grassland and high quality Pink Tailed Worm Lizard Habitat but these values are some distance from the electrical easement and will not be impacted by the works.

Tower 22, within Block 12 Molonglo, is directly adjacent to a water course and an area of Pink Tailed Worm Lizard habitat. The habitat will not be impacted, but it is also noted that this block is to be subject to residential development as the proposed suburb of Whitlam.

Segment C runs from Coppins Crossing Road to Tuggeranong Parkway (Towers 24 to 37) through a cleared section of pine forest. The transmission line passes over nature reserve. The towers within the Molonglo River Reserve are in areas outside of Pink Tailed Worm Lizard Habitat.

Segment D runs from Tuggeranong Parkway to Woden Substation (Poles 38 to 46). This section traverses a cleared section of pine forest and Government Horse Paddocks. There are no known ecological values near the transmission lines.

Impact on the Reserve

There is unlikely to be any long term impacts on the nature reserves as the works are minor in nature and will be undertaken within 1-2 days. Access will be on existing tracks where possible. The stringing station will be located at Tower 16, outside of the reserve areas.

Potentially Significant Environmental Impacts

It is considered that, provided all works are undertaken in accordance with the environmental commitments in the ESO report and the following conditions, the proposal will not result in a significant environmental impact.

- Works are to be undertaken outside of the breeding season for the Superb Parrot and Brown Tree Creeper (September to January). If this is not possible an on-site meeting must be held with the ACT Government's Conservation Research Unit to discuss how the potential impacts can be minimised.

The biggest concern relates to the potential spread of weeds. This can be reduced by the implementation of the following conditions:

- All machinery and vehicles engaged in the stringing operation to be cleaned of soil and plant material prior to entering the reserves.
- Parts of the route, such as the section between Lyons and the Molonglo River have heavy infestations of African Love Grass. In order to minimise the spread of weeds into areas of conservation significance, the towers within Kama Reserve and then from 16 -12 should be done first, or alternatively vehicles are to be re-cleaned prior to entering these areas if they have traversed other sections of the route.

- All access is to be by existing access tracks except where noted in the documentation submitted.
- Rehabilitation (utilising native grass species) and weed control will occur at the stringing location if bare soil is exposed, or wheel or other rutting occurs.

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.