



ACT
Government

Environment, Planning and
Sustainable Development

ENVIRONMENTAL SIGNIFICANCE OPINION - Demolition of former Tidbinbilla Visitors Centre (ESO 202500007)

In accordance with section 140 (4) of the *Planning Act 2023* (the Act), I provide the following environmental significance opinion:

APPLICANT

Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, as represented by Mr Mark Overton, Director, Place Delivery.

APPLICATION and DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

The applicant has applied under section 140 (4) 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 demolition of the old Tidbinbilla Visitors Centre due to health and safety risks as described in the submission.

LOCATION

Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve
Block 240, Paddys River.

MATTERS TO WHICH THIS OPINION APPLIES

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

OPINION

Provided the works are undertaken in a manner consistent with the following conditions in addition to the mitigation measures contained in the supporting application for an ESO, they are unlikely to cause a significant adverse environmental impact.

This opinion is granted subject to the following conditions made under s140 (4)(b) of the Act:

1. Conditions of approval including mitigation measures as stated in the application.

2. Access to the site must be granted to Conservation Officers if a random compliance inspection is requested by the Conservator of Flora and Fauna.

Attached is a Statement of Reasons for the decision.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Burkevics', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Bren Burkevics
Conservator of Flora and Fauna

5 March 2025

STATEMENT OF REASONS REASONS FOR THE DECISION

The proposed development is a proposal mentioned in Schedule 1 of the *Planning (General) Regulation 2023* – requiring environmental impact statement, being:

Part 1.2, item 16 - proposal that is likely to have a significant adverse environmental impact on 1 or more of the following:

- (a) a critically endangered species;*
- (b) an endangered species;*
- (c) a vulnerable species;*
- (d) a conservation dependent species;*
- (e) a regionally threatened species;*
- (f) a regionally conservation dependent species;*
- (g) a provisionally listed threatened species;*
- (h) a listed migratory species;*
- (i) a threatened ecological community;*
- (j) a protected native species;*
- (k) a Ramsar wetland;*
- (l) any other protected matter*

The following threatened species and communities are potentially present on the broader site:

- Box Gum Woodland - Nationally listed – critically endangered
- Scarlet Robin - ACT listed – vulnerable
- Rosenberg Monitor - NSW listed – vulnerable

Part 1.2, item 18 - proposal for development in a reserve, unless the proposal is for minor public works to be carried out by or for the Territory in accordance with a minor public works code approved by the conservator of flora and fauna under the Nature Conservation Act 2014, section 318A;

The proposed works are within Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve.

The proponent is seeking an environmental significance opinion to remove the requirement for an environmental impact statement 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 for an opinion 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 demolition of the old Tidbinbilla Visitors Centre (TVC). Built in 1999 and opened in 2000, the TVC was permanently closed on 26 May 2023 due to health and safety concerns relating to a history of maintenance issues including water ingress, structural issues, and the presence of mould.

The work will involve the demolition and disposal of the current building, the removal of all external structures and infrastructure and the removal and disposal of any redundant underground services associated with the TVC.

Works will include the following:

- a) Decommissioning of the standalone LPG tank including removal of the underground gas line;
- b) Decommissioning the solar array system;
- c) The underground electricity service cables will be removed and disposed of from the building. The power supply to the temporary visitors centre, the Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve (TNR) depot within the Reserve, boom gate at the entry to the Visitors centre carpark, sewerage plant and worm farm will continue without interruption. This will prevent any disruption to the sewer treatment plant and worm farm.
- d) Exhumation and backfilling of stormwater service from the building to the kerb line fronting the building;

- e) Provide advice on protection for a temporary facility, including necessary changes to the fire system to meet requirements.
- f) Alterations to any other services required to maintain existing services to temporary facility i.e. IT and security.
- g) Septic tank and sewerage system to remain in use for temporary facility. The existing line from TVC will be capped off.

An estimated 2,100m² of disturbance will be required for demolition (1,800m²) and staging (300m²) works. The demolition disturbance area is within the existing building footprint and the staging area is in lower quality area, away from surrounding Box Gum Woodland and mature trees. There are four mature eucalypts within 20m of the proposed works area, with one being very close to the demolition footprint.

Documentation Submitted

- Explanatory note regarding supporting documentation for the application for an Environmental Significance Opinion;
- Statement of requirement for demolition;
- Letter(s) of Authorisation
- Form 1M.

Natural conservation values present

Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve (TNR) is 6,466 hectares adjacent to the Namadgi National Park and is part of the Australian Alps National Parks system protecting much of the alpine, subalpine and montane environments of mainland Australia. TNR contains an area of 'national park' as well as an area of 'special purpose reserve' over those areas that have been developed for recreation, education and research (e.g. the Rock Wallaby breeding program and the Corroboree Frog breeding facility).

Vegetation communities in TNR include subalpine snow gum on the exposed ridges to woodlands, grassland and shrublands in the valley, with tall wet forests in the moist sheltered gullies. These vegetation communities provide habitat for a wide range of native species. Box Gum Woodland, which is nationally listed as critically endangered and listed as endangered in the ACT, is present near to the proposed site.

Over 500 species listed as threatened under the *Nature Conservation Act 2014* have been recorded in TNR, of which the following species are known to occur within proximity to the proposed development area:

- Southern Brown Bandicoot (*Isodon obesulus obesulus*)
- Southern Greater Glider (*Petauroides volans*)
- Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby (*Petrogale penicillata*)

- Koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*)
- Gang-gang Cockatoo (*Callocephalon fimbriatum*)
- Hooded Robin (*Melanodryas cucullata cucullata*)
- Key's Matchstick Grasshopper (*Keyacris scurra*)
- Hoary Sunray (*Leucochrysum albicans tricolor*)
- Spotted-tailed Quoll (*Dasyurus maculatus maculatus*)
- Southern Whiteface (*Aphelocephala leucopsis*)
- White-winged Triller (*Lalage tricolor*)
- Scarlet Robin (*Petroica boodang*)
- Pilotbird (*Pycnoptilus floccosus*)
- Austral Toadflax (*Thesium australe*)

Several threatened bird species have been recorded within proximity of the proposed site, including the Hooded Robin, Scarlet Robin and Pilotbird.

There are also some records of NSW listed threatened Rosenberg's Monitor (*Varanus rosenbergi*) approximately 250m south-east of the site.

Potentially Significant Environmental Impacts

The disturbance area for demolition will be kept to the existing Tidbinbilla Visitor Centre building footprint and the staging area footprint has been carefully chosen to avoid higher quality areas away from Box Gum Woodland and mature trees. Internal mapping from 2024 identifies these areas as non-threatened *Eucalyptus dives* – *Eucalyptus bridgesiana* Tableland Woodland. There are four mature eucalypts within 20m of the proposed works area, with one being very close to the demolition footprint. A tree protection plan will be developed and implemented during construction to ensure impact to these trees is mitigated.

No ground-storey vegetation of significance will be impacted. Storage of materials has potential to smother the 300m² patch of native vegetation in the staging area, however given this is not part of a threatened community and the area will be rehabilitated following works, this impact is unlikely to be significant. The area of disturbed ground-storey vegetation will be rehabilitated with native grass species, including *Austrostipa bigeniculata*, *Austrostipa scabra*, *Bothriochloa macra*, *Themeda triandra* and *Rytidosperma sp*

There are numerous records of Gang-gang Cockatoo, Scarlet Robin, and Hooded Robin within proximity to the TVC, as well as some records of Rosenberg's Monitor approximately 250m south-east of the site. Given the staging area is unlikely to support any unique or high-value habitat resources, and no trees or shrubs are proposed to be removed, the works will not significantly impact these threatened species.

Further to the above, the application includes a range of mitigation measures that will minimise or eliminate the impact of the works including protocols for;

- Tree protection measures;
- equipment cleaning to minimise possibility of weed and contaminant incursion;
- containment of equipment to proposed staging area;
- the removal of spoils from site; and
- rehabilitation of any ground disturbance with native grass species.

Provided the works are undertaken in a manner consistent with the mitigation measures included in the supporting application they are unlikely to cause a significant adverse environmental impact.

This opinion is granted subject to the following conditions made under s140 (4)(b) of the Act:

1. Conditions of approval including mitigation measures as stated in the application.
2. Access to the site must be granted to Conservation Officers if a random compliance inspection is requested by the Conservator of Flora and Fauna.

It has been determined that if the works are undertaken in a manner consistent with the above conditions attached to the ESO in addition to the mitigation measures contained in the supporting application for an ESO, they are unlikely to cause a significant adverse environmental impact.