

ENVIRONMENTAL SIGNIFICANCE OPINION - Submission report block 1636, Belconnen (ESO 202500035)

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

APPLICANT

Place Logic, as represented by Mr Brett Roantree, Director.

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 preliminary geotechnical investigation works for a future proposed bulk water supply reservoir as described in the submission.

LOCATION

Works are located in Block 1636 Belconnen district.

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.
3. A Construction Environmental Management Plan must be submitted to the Conservator's Office for endorsement prior to works commencing. The CEMP is to include the following:
 - (a) Fauna Management Plan
 - i. A Fauna Management Plan and CEMP must be prepared in accordance with the recommendations outlined in Section 6.2 of the ESO submission report.
 - ii. The *Nature Conservation (Protection of Burrowing Animals During Development) Conservator Guidelines 2025* is to be applied where works may impact on relevant fauna.
 - (b) Habitat rock salvage and placement requirements
 - i. All habitat rocks salvaged during site preparation must be relocated to a nearby area that supports a predominance of native ground storey vegetation suitable for Pink-tailed Worm-lizard (PTWL) habitat.
 - ii. A minimum of 360m² of habitat must be restored through rock placement.
 - iii. Rocks must be distributed to achieve a coverage density of 10–20% across the designated area.
 - iv. Where salvaged rock is insufficient, appropriate supplementary rock material (sized between 10–30cm) must be sourced externally. All externally sourced rock must be clean, free of soil, and devoid of weed seeds to prevent contamination.
 - v. The proposed relocation site must be mapped and assessed by a qualified ecologist prior to rock placement to confirm its suitability for PTWL habitat restoration. Habitat restoration works must be undertaken to the satisfaction of the Conservator.
 - (c) Site protection and fencing
 - i. The development footprint, as defined in Figure 9 of the ESO submission report, must be clearly delineated with star pickets and high visibility bunting prior to the commencement of any works.

- ii. Fencing must remain in place until all construction activities are completed.
- iii. “No Entry – Environmentally Sensitive Area” signage must be installed at regular intervals along the fence line to prevent unauthorized access.

(d) Fire management

- i. On days of elevated fire danger (Fire Behaviour Index [FBI] greater than 25) a fire suppression water tank of at least 400L with a pump and hose should be mounted to a 4x4 vehicle or trailer and accompany the drill rig, excavations, or any earth moving equipment that is creating tracks, if works occur during the bushfire danger period.
- ii. All works must cease under a Total Fire Ban.

Attached is a Statement of Reasons for the decision.



Bren Burkevics
Conservator of Flora and Fauna

12 August 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 listed species under the NC Act have been recorded within 1km of the site, including:

- Pink-tailed Worm-lizard (*Aprasia parapulchella*)
- Scarlet Robin (*Petroica boodang*)

The proposed development will temporarily impact about 108m² of winter foraging habitat for the Scarlet Robin.

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 development proposal is for preliminary geotechnical investigation works for a future proposed bulk water supply reservoir within Block 1636 Belconnen district. The proposed geotechnical investigation works are required to evaluate ground compaction and other factors for the feasibility of any future construction of the reservoir at the site.

Works will involve drilling 3 boreholes as test pits. Cutting and filling to create a flat work platform for the drill rig is required, with drilling to approximately 5-10m deep. Approximately 105m² of disturbance is expected from the drilling, and will (temporarily) disturb much of the rocks that exist in these locations.

Approximately 780m² of disturbance is expected from machinery accessing the boreholes. Pre-clearance removal and relocation of rocks will be undertaken to minimise disturbance. It is expected there will be little to no restoration work required on the access tracks.

Documentation Submitted

- Borehole access sketch plan
- Explanatory note regarding supporting documentation for the application for an Environmental Significance Opinion;
- Letter(s) of Authorisation
- Form 1M.

Natural conservation values present

Block 1636 is approximately 8,000m² and is zoned *NUZ3: Hills, Ridges and Buffer Areas*. It is located within another rural block. The current land use within and surrounding the site is primarily sheep grazing, with the site having been historically cleared and devoid of any trees. Groundcover vegetation across the site is highly modified and dominated by non-native species. The site of the proposed water reservoir occurs towards the top of a prominent small hill on the block. A large outcrop of rocks and boulders occurs on the upper slopes and top of the ridgeline and is a noteworthy feature of the site.

The works will occur within an area of rocky outcrops which has been mapped as potential habitat for the Vulnerable listed Pink-tailed Worm-lizard (*Aprasia parapulchella*). The Vulnerable-listed Scarlet Robin (*Petroica boodang*) was also observed during site inspections foraging amongst the rocks.

Due to the lack of other habitat features (e.g. trees, waterbodies, fallen timber), the site is unlikely to provide suitable habitat for other fauna.

Potentially Significant Environmental Impacts

Habitat quality within the site has declined from *moderate* to low since its initial mapping in 2004, as noted in the ESO submission report. The report identifies significant overgrazing and the widespread presence of *Weeds of National Significance* and other noxious weed species, which have contributed to this decline in condition. This reduction in habitat condition has, in turn, diminished the ecological significance of the proposed development impacts.

An overall 885m² disturbance footprint is expected from the works, including earthworks for the boreholes totalling 105m², with 780m² of temporary machinery tracks and minor disturbance to access the boreholes. 360m² of disturbance area occurs within the mapped rocky habitat area.

The works will occur within an area of rocky outcrops which has been mapped as potential habitat for the Vulnerable listed Pink-tailed Worm-lizard (PTWL). While the rocky areas provide suitable habitat, the species also requires native groundcover and tussock grasses. Vegetation across the site has been highly disturbed from grazing and resulted in low levels of native grass species. Targeted surveys have failed to detect the PTWL. Based on this, the site is considered as low quality potential PTWL habitat. There is potential that if sheep were removed and the site left unmanaged for a period for native grass re-establishment, the area could form moderate quality habitat for PTWL particularly if targeted weed controls were

implemented. However, in its current state it is unlikely to support the species. As such, the proposal is considered unlikely to significantly impact PTWL.

The proposed development will impact about 108m² of the rocky habitat which provides winter foraging habitat for the Scarlet Robin. This species is primarily a resident in forests and woodlands, but some adults and young birds disperse to more open habitats after breeding, particularly in autumn and winter when many Scarlet Robins live in open grassy woodlands, and grasslands or grazed paddocks with scattered trees. The overall impact to the rocky area is only 1% of the overall area of available potential habitat to the species in the proximity. Given this, and the mobile nature of this species, the overall impact to this species is considered minor and temporary and not likely to be significant.

There is potential for wombats in the lower areas where the tracks cross. The *Nature Conservation (Protection of Burrowing Animals During Development) Conservator Guidelines 2025* is to be applied where works may impact on relevant fauna.

The proponent will prepare and implement a Fauna Management Plan for dealing with the impacts/removal of the rocks, including a pre-clearance survey to capture and relocate fauna outside of the impact area, as well as a process for the salvage and relocation of the rocks. The Fauna Management Plan will form part of a Construction Environmental Management Plan detailing other construction measures and methods, and will be submitted for endorsement by the Conservator prior to works commencing.

Conditions have been included to minimise impacts to Pink-tailed Worm-lizard habitat.

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.
3. A Construction Environmental Management Plan must be submitted to the Conservator's Office for endorsement prior to works commencing. The CEMP is to include the following:

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400L with a pump and hose should be mounted to a 4x4 vehicle or trailer and accompany the drill rig, excavations, or any earth moving equipment that is creating tracks, if works occur during the bushfire danger period.

- ii. All works must cease under a Total Fire Ban.

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.