ACT Government
City and Environment

ENVIRONMENTAL SIGNIFICANCE OPINION – FP1259 – Tidbinbilla Vegetation Management (ESO 202600044)

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

APPLICANT

ACT Parks and Conservation Service, as represented by Mrs Ailish Milner, a/g Director, Fire Management Unit.

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 vegetation management along Tidbinbilla Reserve Road as the main entry point into the reserve, to provide safe passage for visitors, staff and firefighters as described in the submission.

LOCATION

Tidbinbilla Reserve Road
Block 240 District of PADDYS RIVER within Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve

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, 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. All works must be undertaken in a manner consistent with the mitigation measures contained in the application.
2. Access to the site must be granted to Conservation Officers if a compliance inspection is requested by the Conservator of Flora and Fauna.

3. All works undertaken must be consistent with the prescribed mitigation measures outlined in the Ecological Guidelines for Fire, Fuel and Access Management Operations (2026).
4. Mature native trees (trees with a DBH >50cm) must not be removed without a tree clearance plan endorsed by the Office of the Conservator of Flora and Fauna (OCFF).
5. Works must be undertaken outside of spring to reduce impact on nesting birds, unless otherwise endorsed by OCFF.
6. Prior to commencement of works, a suitably qualified ecologist must undertake pre-clearance surveys and flag any protected values within the disturbance footprint.
7. Earthworks or other activities which impact ground-storey vegetation or threatened ecological communities are not permitted, unless otherwise endorsed by OCFF.

Attached is a Statement of Reasons for the decision.

Bren Burkevics
Conservator of Flora and Fauna

30 October 2026

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

Records of the following species listed as threatened under the *Nature Conservation Act 2014* (NC Act) have been identified within 30m of Tidbinbilla Reserve Road:

- Gang-gang Cockatoo (*Callocephalon fimbriatum*)
- Southern Whiteface (*Aphelocephala leucopsis*)
- Scarlet Robin (*Petroica boodang*)

Part 1.2, item 17 – proposal involving -

(a) the clearing of more than 0.5ha of native vegetation in a native vegetation area, other than on land in a future urban area; or
(b) the clearing of more than 5.0ha of native vegetation in a native vegetation area on land in a future urban area

The proposal will impact on approximately 5ha of native vegetation.

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 vegetation management works are within Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve, both the 'National Park' and 'Special Purpose Reserve' areas.

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

Tidbinbilla Nature Reserve (TNR) covers 6,466 hectares, adjacent to the Namadgi National Park and is comprised of 'National Park' and 'Special Purpose Reserve'. TNR plays a vital role in wildlife management and protection. As the proposal is restricted to the main entrance road, Tidbinbilla Reserve Road, the main impact area is within Zone 3, identified as 'Developed Recreation and Education' within the Tidbinbilla Plan of Management 2012.

Vegetation management is an ongoing, cyclical maintenance activity across the CED estate, and this work was previously undertaken in 2017. The objective of the works is to treat the encroaching vegetation to a width of 10m either side of the road footprint to provide a safe travel corridor. The reason for this work is to allow safe passage for visitors, staff and firefighters, for recreational use or in an emergency, such as a bushfire or prescribed burn operations. Additionally, road safety considerations have contributed to this proposal, with vegetation clearing allowing for better line of sight and better visibility of the high numbers of kangaroos in the area.

Vegetation will be cleared mechanically, by means of mulching with an excavator or tractor-mounted mulching head. Ground disturbance will be kept to a minimum with the operator able to trim vegetation between 100mm and 200mm, allowing for retention of groundcover (grass and low shrubs).

Trees greater than or equal to 20cm diameter (10cm for snow gums) at breast height will be retained and only removed if they pose a hazard to the road network. Removal will only occur with approval from a district officer or the Office of Nature Conservation (ONC). Trees greater than 50cm diameter at breast height will be removed only with approval from the Office of the Conservator of Flora and Fauna. Tree branches which overhang the trail and encroach on the road footprint may be pruned with a hand saw, chainsaw or pole saw.

Documentation Submitted

- Parks and Conservation (Fire Management Unit) – ESO Map;
- Supporting documentation for the application for an Environmental Significance Opinion;
- Letter of Authorisation;
- Form 1M.

Natural conservation values present

The 5ha proposed for vegetation clearing is comprised of predominately derived native shrubland and Southern Tableland Dry Sclerophyll Forests. The works will include removal of *Kunzea ericoides*, and other shrubs such as *Acacia spp*. and *Cassinia spp*. as stated in the application.

The following records were identified within 30m either side of Tidbinbilla Reserve Road within TNR:
Records of species listed as threatened under the NC Act:

- Gang-gang Cockatoo (*Callocephalon fimbriatum*)
- Southern Whiteface (*Aphelocephala leucopsis*)
- Scarlet Robin (*Petroica boodang*)
- Little Eagle (*Hieraaetus morphnoides*)

Records of rare or uncommon species:

- Orchid sp (*Spiranthes australis*)
- Emu (*Dromaius novaehollandiae*)
- Flame Robin (*Petroica phoenicea*)
- Rosenberg's Monitor (*Varanus rosenbergi*)
- Grey Currawong (*Strepera versicolor*)

Potentially Significant Environmental Impacts

TNR supports a wide range of wildlife and there are sensitive species known and likely to occur within the project footprint. However, it is unlikely that any vegetation cleared will significantly impact these species or habitat. The proposed works and mitigation measures are generally consistent with the *Ecological Guidelines for Fire, Fuel and Access Management Operations*. It is acknowledged that there are numerous threatened and sensitive ecological values identified within proximity to the maintenance areas identified for clearing within the

submission, as detailed in the “ESO Map” document. Protected species and communities have been identified, and appropriate mitigation measures have been included, such as flagging by suitably qualified ecologists and ground disturbance avoidance through raising the mulching head. Woodland birds do utilise the dense Kunzea next to this section of track, however disturbance to nesting birds will be minimised by avoiding works during spring.

As previously outlined, the main area proposed for vegetation clearing is 5ha comprised of predominately derived native shrubland and Southern Tableland Dry Sclerophyll Forests. The works will be confined to previously disturbed road reserves.

Importantly, no mature native trees or hollow-bearing trees are proposed for removal as part of the vegetation clearing works and a procedure is in place if the requirement for removal is identified during works.

Weed and pathogen hygiene management has been considered with particular focus on equipment use and wash down. Potential impacts to woodland birds nesting and Rosenberg’s Monitors has been clearly addressed, by limiting seasonal work patterns for woodland birds and avoiding and protecting termite mounds for Rosenberg’s Monitors.

Conditions have been included to ensure that the works will not needlessly impact threatened species, native woodland birds and other rare or protected species which may be present in the area.

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