
ENVIRONMENTAL SIGNIFICANCE OPINION - Gungaderra Trough Installation (ESO 202600020)

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 Mr Wade Fuller, Works Supervisor.

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 the installation of 1.6 km of plumbed line and four concrete troughs along the western edge of Gungaderra Grasslands Nature Reserve to facilitate strategic bushfire grazing in the outer asset protection zone for the suburb of Mitchell, as described in the submission.

LOCATION

Blocks 644 and 783 of Gungahlin district.

MATTERS TO WHICH THIS OPINION APPLIES

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

OPINION

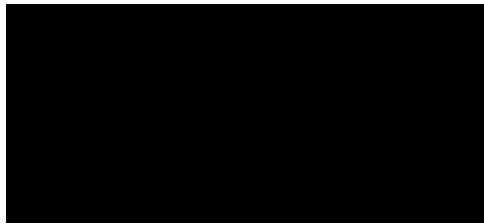
Provided the works are undertaken in a manner consistent with the following conditions, in addition to the mitigation measures contained in the supporting application for an ESO, they are unlikely to cause a significant adverse environmental impact.

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

1. The works must be undertaken in accordance with the conditions of approval and mitigation measures 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. The works are within a Bushfire Prone Area and the following conditions apply:
 - a) No work is permitted on site when a Total Fire Ban is declared;
 - b) On days of High fire danger rating (FBI 30 or greater), all hot works and works that could emit a spark must cease and be deferred until conditions are less risky. The proponent must assess appropriate mitigation measures, including the availability of fire suppression equipment. The daily rating and a four-day outlook are available during the declared bushfire danger period at <https://esa.act.gov.au/>.
 - c) Hot works include welding, cutting, grinding, or other works involving open flames or which emit a spark, such as excavating hard rock, slashing and brush-cutting.
4. Noting the high potential for Striped Legless Lizards, a fauna-spotter is required to be present ahead of the ripper to check for and relocate fauna.
5. Ripping of areas supporting Natural Temperate Grassland must be undertaken first; alternatively, machinery must be washed and free of propagules before moving between Natural Temperate Grassland and exotic-dominant areas.

Attached is a Statement of Reasons for the decision.



Bren Burkevics
Conservator of Flora and Fauna

15 June 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 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 Gungaderra Grasslands 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 development proposal is for the installation of 1.6 km of plumbed line and four concrete troughs along the western edge of Gungaderra Grasslands Nature Reserve to facilitate strategic bushfire grazing in the outer asset protection zone for the suburb of Mitchell.

This new infrastructure is required to support PCS management of the site and to meet objectives outlined in the Bushfire Operations Plan. The new troughs will improve grazing management by allowing pulse grazing in the already fenced paddocks and minimising impacts on seeding C4 grasses during the spring and summer season. The only natural water source, the dam, is not reliable.

Works will involve installing 1.6 km of 38 mm blue line agricultural plumbing pipe via trenching. A tractor will be used to dig a 30 cm deep trench and lay the pipe in a single pass, and will then drive over the impacted area to compress the soil. Four 1000 L concrete troughs will be placed on granite pads 100 mm thick and 3 m in diameter. Most of the trenching works will be contained to existing trail and slashing networks to minimise impacts, and will also occur in exotic-dominant areas with low diversity. Any disturbed areas will be restored by hand seeding with a mixture of compatible local native grasses.

Documentation Submitted

- Explanatory note regarding supporting documentation for the application for an Environmental Significance Opinion;
- Proposed trough and pipeline locations;
- Letter(s) of Authorisation
- Form 1M.

Natural conservation values present

Gungaharra Grasslands Nature Reserve is a 297 ha reserve which protects a large remnant of critically endangered Natural Temperate Grassland (NTG) and Box Gum Woodland (BGW). The reserve provides habitat for the largest known population of the vulnerable Striped Legless Lizard (*Delma impar*) and one of the few known habitats for the endangered Perunga Grasshopper (*Perunga ochracea*).

The following species listed under the NC Act are known or occur within the reserve:

- Gang-gang Cockatoo (*Callocephalon fimbriatum*)
- Perunga Grasshopper (*Perunga ochracea*)
- Scarlet Robin (*Petroica boodang*)
- Striped Legless Lizard (*Delma impar*)
- Key's Matchstick Grasshopper (*Keyacris scurra*)
- Golden Sun Moth (*Synemon plana*)

Several orchid species have also been recorded in the reserve. All orchids are protected under the NC Act.

Potentially Significant Environmental Impacts

The four troughs are relatively small and the on-ground impacts of installation are likely to be negligible. The 1.6 km plumbing is more concerning, as it requires earthworks with the potential to directly injure or kill fauna and/or reduce the quality of Natural Temperate

Grassland. However, the alignment is largely restricted to existing disturbed areas and the proposed mitigation measures are appropriate to manage these risks.

It is recommended that works be undertaken during winter, when vulnerable Striped Legless Lizards are less active, to reduce impacts on the species.

Conditions have been included to ensure that the works minimise impacts on the vulnerable Striped Legless Lizard and reduce the risk of introducing weeds into the reserve.

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

1. The works must be undertaken in accordance with the conditions of approval and mitigation measures 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. The works are within a Bushfire Prone Area and the following conditions apply:
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4. Noting the high potential for Striped Legless Lizards, a fauna-spotter is required to be present ahead of the ripper to check for and relocate fauna.
5. Ripping of areas supporting Natural Temperate Grassland must be undertaken first; alternatively, machinery must be washed and free of propagules before moving between Natural Temperate Grassland and exotic-dominant areas.

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.