



## ACT Heritage Council

# HERITAGE ADVICE

## *Environmental Significance Opinion*

ACTPLA Reference: ESO202400059  
Heritage Reference: Belconnen-B1553  
Contact Officer: DB  
Received by Council: 15<sup>th</sup> January 2025  
Due date: 28<sup>th</sup> February 2025

**TO: Territory Planning Authority**  
Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate  
[EPDImpact@act.gov.au](mailto:EPDImpact@act.gov.au)

Block:	Section:	Division / District:	Heritage Places:
1553	-	Belconnen	MRC121, LMWQC IF3, LMWQCC Site 3 and LMWQCC PAD 1.

Status of Place: Registered Heritage Places, Aboriginal Places  
Description of Works: Facility expansion and upgrade Stage 1  
Report Details: “*Lower Molonglo Water Quality Control Centre: Statement of Heritage Effect*”. (CHMA, September 2023), and “*Molonglo Water Quality Control Centre: Biosolids Management Cultural Heritage Assessment*” (CHMA 2022)  
Council Advice provided by: Director (Approvals and Advice)

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Pursuant to Section 140 of the *Planning Act 2023* and Section 60 of the *Heritage Act 2004*, the ACT Heritage Council advises that:

The proposal is **unlikely to have a significant adverse environmental impact, subject to conditions** described below.

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### Background:

On 16<sup>th</sup> January 2025, the Territory Planning Authority (TPA) referred an application for an Environmental Significance Opinion (ESO) to the ACT Heritage Council (the Council) for entity advice (ESO202400059).

ESO202400059 relates to a proposal to upgrade the Lower Molonglo Water Quality Control Centre (LMWQCC) within Block 1553 Belconnen. The proposal is to deliver an augmented secondary treatment process for LMWQCC to meet system performance requirements, ensure compliance with licence requirements, and provide capacity to meet future population growth in stages up to 2070.

The Council has previously issued advice and approvals relating to the proposed upgrade works at the LMWQCC, including:

- An ESO202300028 was issued on 17 August 2023 for the original proposal relating to the expansion of the LMWQCC, which concluded that the proposal was unlikely to have significant adverse heritage impacts subject to conditions, including the requirement to seek a Statement of Heritage Effect (SHE) approval for a final attempt

to locate and salvage the Aboriginal place 'LMWQC IF1' prior to any impacts occurring; and

- A SHE approval was issued on 2 February 2024 for proposed damage to LMWQCC IF1', and conditions of that approval included that a letter report detailing the results of the salvage is provided to the Council for its records prior to any works beginning.

At this time, no letter report detailing the results of the search has been received by the Council.

The current ESO application is an amended version of the proposal previously considered by the Council as part of ESO202300028. The application is supported by reports that were prepared for the SHE approval and ESO202300028, including "*Lower Molonglo Water Quality Control Centre: Biosolids Management*" (CHMA September 2023) and "*Molonglo Water Quality Control Centre: Biosolids Management Cultural Heritage Assessment*" (CHMA 2022).

Of relevance to the current application is an earlier CHA for proposed electrical upgrades (CHMA 2018), which included heritage survey of the northern and western stockpile and laydown areas of the current proposal.

### **Assessment:**

The upgrade to the LMWQCC includes the provision of two new 21 ML Membrane Bioreactors (MBR) with the existing bioreactors being retained and operated in parallel to the new technology. Future projects will deliver additional stages (2 and 3) and will see the conversion of the existing bioreactors to MBRs. Additionally, the removal of approximately 93 trees is expected across the project area, and new laydown and stockpiling areas are proposed.

The ESO Report by Icon Water states that all Stage 1 works are located within previously disturbed areas, with the exception of laydown areas. The amended proposal has additional development areas for laydown and stockpiling purposes.

Following review, the proposed stockpile and laydown areas appear to directly impact one registered Aboriginal place, being:

- MRC121, an Aboriginal place, originally recorded in the 1980s as a scatter of 18 artefacts. The site has been inspected several times since its initial recording, with two artefacts identified at MRC121 in heritage survey in 2022. The 2022 assessment also concluded that the site area is disturbed, and that artefacts present may have been introduced to the site as part of imported construction materials. In this context, the site was assessment to be of low heritage significance and low conservation value.

From information provided, it is also understood that there are no other reasonably practicable alternatives to the above heritage impact; given operational constraints within the site, and as alternative locations are likely to have more significant Aboriginal heritage impacts.

A further three Aboriginal places also occur adjacent to the additional development areas, being archaeological sites recorded as LMWQC IF3, LMWQCC Site 3 and LMWQCC PAD 1. Subject to measures being adopted during works, such as protective fencing to demarcate each heritage area, these Aboriginal places are unlikely to be impacted by the proposed works.

CHMA (2022) presents a number of recommendations for works associated with biosolids management, including for MRC121 and LMWQC IF3. These recommendations include that final attempt should be made to locate and salvage the artefacts associated with these places

ahead of any proposed impacts. The implementation of these recommendation requires a Statement of Heritage Effect (SHE) approved under Section 61H of the *Heritage Act 2004*.

**Decision and Conditions:**

Following review, and as a Council delegate, I advise that the proposal is unlikely to have a significant adverse environmental impact, as while works will impact one registered Aboriginal place, the affected heritage site is small scale, disturbed and was previously assessed to be of low heritage significance.

However, as the proposal would damage one Aboriginal place, a *Heritage Act 2004* approval is required prior to the commencement of any works. Measures to also required to ensure that adjacent Aboriginal places will not be damaged as a result of works. The following heritage conditions are therefore identified:

1. Prior to the commencement of works, a Statement of Heritage Effect (SHE) approval under Section 61G of the *Heritage Act 2004* must be obtained for impacts to MRC121. This SHE application must be prepared in consultation with Representative Aboriginal Organisations, and must also describe measures to mitigate heritage impacts, including the collection of surface artefacts prior to the commencement of works;
2. Prior to the commencement of works, the conditions of SHE approvals issued by the Council must be met, including the SHE approval issued on 2 February 2024 for damage to LMWQCC IF1’;
3. Prior to the commencement of works, protective fencing must be installed to demarcate LMWQC IF3, LMWQCC Site 3 and LMWQCC PAD 1, and each heritage area is to be identified as an exclusion zone in which no activity is permitted. To ensure this outcome, protective fencing must:
  - a. Be demarcated by a qualified archaeologist and Representative Aboriginal Organisations;
  - b. Consist of star pickets and high visibility flagging (or similar appropriate temporary fencing) and be placed so that it adequately protects the Aboriginal place;
  - c. Once installed, the location and adequacy of protective fencing is to be visually confirmed by the qualified archaeologist and Representative Aboriginal Organisations;
  - d. Be documented following installation, with the Council notified of the completion of this action; and
4. For the duration of works, the Unanticipated Discovery Plan (CHMA 2023) must be adhered to.



Meaghan Russell  
**Director (Approvals and Advice) (as delegate for),  
ACT Heritage Council**

3 March 2025