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**ENVIRONMENTAL SIGNIFICANCE OPINION - BLOCK 12 RENDEZVOUS CREEK –  
GUDGENBY COTTAGE REMOTE AREA POWER SUPPLY**

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

**APPLICANT**

Evoenergy, as represented by Mr Thomas Atkins, Environmental and Technical Regulatory Compliance Officer.

**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 construction of an off-grid Remote Area Power System and associated infrastructure as described in the submission.

**LOCATION**

Block 12 District of Rendezvous Creek, Namadgi National Park.

**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 proposed works may be subject to random compliance inspection by Conservation Officials as requested by the Conservator of Flora and Fauna.

2. All works are to be undertaken in accordance with the endorsed Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). The CEMP should include details of the bund around the fuel tank.

Attached is a Statement of Reasons for the decision.

Bren Burkevics  
Conservator of Flora and Fauna

17 May 2024

## 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 Namadgi National Park.

The proponent wants the application for the development approval assessed in the merit track 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 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**

Proposed works are for the construction of a new off-grid 10kV solar photovoltaic (PV) array, battery system, underground low voltage (LV) cable and conduit, diesel generator and 1,000 L diesel fuel tank, servicing the Gudgenby Cottage, located within Rural Block 12 Rendezvous Creek. Collectively, these components will form a Remote Area Power System (RAPS).

The new RAPS will replace the current overhead system running from the RAPS at Gudgenby Homestead to the Gudgenby Cottage. The current system is inadequate for supplying the Cottage with a reliable power supply during periods of increased demand in Winter.

The new RAPS will be housed inside a 10ft shipping container and comprised of a lithium-ion battery system, solar PV array, Diesel generator and 1000L fuel tank. Works will include trenching of approximately 130 metres between the RAPS and Gudgenby Cottage for installation of underground conduit and low voltage cables to power the RAPS.

The project also includes decommissioning and removal of existing overhead infrastructure made redundant by the new RAPS. Infrastructure to be removed includes 3 timber distribution poles and overhead conductors.

**Documentation Submitted**

- Conservator Advice;
- Heritage Advice;
- Project Report;
- Letter(s) of Authorisation
- Form 1M.

**Natural conservation values present**

Namadgi National Park conserves a wide variety of ecosystems and contributes to regional ecological connectivity through its links to reserves within NSW.

The site proposed for the RAPS project is characterised by a modified, open grassed area. The perennial ground cover of the site is dominated by native species however the floristic value is quite low, it therefore does not meet the criteria for Natural Temperate Grasslands. There are no other known threatened or protected communities located within the project footprint.

The broader surrounding Namadgi National Park conserves a wide variety of ecosystems and contributes to regional ecological connectivity through its links to reserves within NSW. The ecosystems include:

- low open woodland covering much of the park with Snow Gum woodland in the high mountain areas;
- open grasslands and frost hollows on the eastern side of the park in the Orroral and Boboyan valleys;
- tall wet forests with Alpine Ash and fern gullies in sheltered locations, especially on the western side of the park;
- wetlands including sedge fens in the valleys and sphagnum moss bogs on the peaks that are important for water catchment and as habitat for the endangered Northern Corroboree Frog (*Pseudophryne pengilleyi*), and
- sub-alpine peaks and alpine communities above 1600m.

At least 35 species of mammals, 14 species or subspecies of frog, over 41 species of reptiles, four native fish species and over 130 species of birds have been recorded in Namadgi National park/within a 500m radius of the development site. There are 12 animal species listed as threatened under the *Nature Conservation Act 2014*:

- Northern Corroboree Frog (*Pseudophryne pengilleyi*)
- Two-Spined Blackfish (*Gadopsis bispinosus*)
- Trout Cod (*Maccullochella macquariensis*)
- Macquarie Perch (*Macquaria australasica*)
- Murray River Crayfish (*Euastacus armatus*)
- Hooded Robin (*Melanodryas cucullate*)
- Brown Treecreeper (*Climacteris picumnus*)
- Varied Sitella (*Daphoenositta chrysoptera*)
- Little Eagle (*Hieraaetus morphnoides*)
- White-Winged Triller (*Lalage sueurii*)
- Smoky Mouse (*Pseudomys fumeus*)
- Spotted-Tailed Quoll (*Dasyurus maculates*)

Three vegetation communities in Namadgi have been identified as requiring special protection and management. These are:

- *Natural Temperate Grassland of the Southern Tablelands of NSW and the ACT*
  - Montane and Subalpine Bog (forming a significant component of the Commonwealth listed *Alpine Sphagnum Bogs and Associated Fens*)
  - Black Cypress Pine Tableland Open Forest.

Several rare and unusual species occur in Namadgi, but only two plant species are formally recognised as threatened: *Gentiana baeuerlenii* (a sub-alpine herb) and *Corunastylis ectopa* (Brindabella Midge Orchid). Both are declared threatened under ACT and Commonwealth legislation.

The Ginini Flats Wetlands is included on the *List of Wetlands of International Importance* (Ramsar) in recognition of its significant ecological characteristics and is the only Ramsar Wetland in the ACT.

## **Potentially Significant Environmental Impacts**

The site chosen for the project is within the already disturbed area surrounding Gudgenby Cottage. The project works will be confined to previously disturbed areas in an open grassed area with low environmental value approximately 120 m to the southeast of the Cottage. Ground disturbance of the electrical LV cable connecting the PV array to the Gudgenby Cottage will be limited to a 0.5 m wide trench running parallel to the existing access track.

Vehicle movements will be restricted to a corridor within the area of the proposed RAPS to minimize potential impacts to ground surfaces. Furthermore, works will not occur during significant wet weather or in waterlogged soils to prevent bogging, rutting and damage to ground surfaces. No trees will be removed or affected by the works as proposed.

Visual impacts of the shipping container housing the PV Array have been considered and the shipping container will have exterior colour and/or cladding sympathetic to the surrounding environment. Remaining potential impacts have been well mitigated by the proposal which includes measures for weed management, soil and erosion run off and bushfire. The only remaining risk of the project is from potential diesel spill from the diesel tank. This is to be mitigated by the construction of a bund around the fuel tanks with details to be included in Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).

A condition has been included to ensure the details of the bund are included in the CEMP.

1. The proposed works may be subject to random compliance inspection by Conservation Officials as requested by the Conservator of Flora and Fauna.
2. All works are to be undertaken in accordance with the endorsed Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). The CEMP should include details of the bund around the fuel tank.

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.