



**ENVIRONMENTAL SIGNIFICANCE OPINION - BLOCK 1442 BELCONNEN –
TRANSMISSION LINE 977-1 WOOD POLE REPLACEMENT (ESO 202500021)**

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

APPLICANT

GHD, as represented by Ms Lauren Xuereb.

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 replacement of wooden poles on transmission line 977/1 as described in the submission.

LOCATION

BLOCK	DISTRICT
1442	Belconnen
86	Kowen
66	Kowen

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. The Conservator must approve a Construction and Environmental Management Plan prior to commencement of works.
3. The Hoary Sunray (*Leuchochrysum albicans*) population at pole 238 must be protected by exclusion fencing before any construction works are commenced.
4. The exclusion fence must display clear signage indicating the area is environmentally sensitive and that no entry is permitted.
5. No native trees with a diameter at breast height of 5cm or greater are to be removed.
6. Disturbed areas will be remediated with suitable native grasses.
7. The proponent will undertake weed control across all disturbed areas for a period of 24 months after the completion of works.
8. The proponent will implement the Conservator Guidelines for Burrowing Animals, where appropriate.
9. Access to the site must be granted to Conservation Officers if a random compliance inspection is requested by the Conservator of Flora and Fauna.

ADDITIONAL CONDITIONS RELATED TO STRUCTURE 16 LOCATED IN JARRAMLEE NATURE RESERVE (NR)

10. Only vehicles and machinery essential to replace the pole and remove the pines should enter the reserve and should drive in and reverse out rather than turning around.
11. No entry after rain events or if vehicles / machinery are leaving wheel ruts greater than 5cm as per the PCS Standard Operating Procedure.
12. Contact should be made prior to entry with the Ranger in Charge -Michelle Ralph 0481 220 209, as well as notifying the Agistee - Noel Davis 0407 910 919.
13. Consideration should be given to the possibility of stock in the area and no gates are to be left open.
14. Any damage to the fence must be repaired by the contractor before leaving the site.
15. Any damage to the NR from vehicles and machinery will need to be rehabilitated in consultation with PCS).

Attached is a Statement of Reasons for the decision.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. Burkevics". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "B" and a stylized "B" for the last name.

Bren Burkevics
Conservator of Flora and Fauna

24 July 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 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;

Of the 10 poles being replaced, one is located within the Jarramlee Nature Reserve, one is located within the Kowen Escarpment Nature Reserve, six within Kowen Forest and two within Molonglo 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

Line 977-1 is a 54 km, 132 kV transmission line that connects the Canberra 330 kV and Queanbeyan 132 kV substations. The alignment largely traverses through New South Wales (NSW) but approximately 12.5 km is located in the ACT.

Works are proposed to replace 10 wooden poles with concrete structures. Recent condition assessments indicated that the wooden structures along Line 977-1 are in poor condition due to deterioration from wood rot, decay and termite attacks posing a risk of structure failure and subsequently risks to network stability and public safety. One structure included in the works (structure 16) straddles the ACT – NSW border. The removal of this structure within the ACT has been assessed in this ESO however, the installation of the new structure 16 is within NSW and therefore is subject to a separate environmental assessment under the NSW legislation.

Works will include the establishment of a cleared 30m radius around each structure, establishment of 10m x 20m construction benches, vegetation trimming, upgrades to existing access tracks and structure replacements of all 10 wooden poles. The proposal also includes rehabilitation of disturbed areas.

The establishment of construction areas and benches will involve;

- minor vegetation clearing
- removal of surface rocks
- levelling where required
- establishment of material laydown area
- establishment of environmental and safety controls
- delivery of construction plant, equipment and materials.

Vegetation Trimming and Access Track Maintenance works are to include;

- Trimming and removal of vegetation using chainsaws, brush cutters or similar, as required.
- removing dead and fallen trees from the track surfaces.
- slashing of verges and weed spraying along the access tracks.
- grading and/or reshaping of existing tracks within the existing access track width and repairing uneven surface to allow safe access for vehicles.
- construction of swale drains and culverts.
- laying and compaction of crushed rock or gravel to improve track surface and safety.
- minor vegetation clearing where required to clear path within existing track corridor.
- upgrading access tracks to meet required vehicle standards in accordance with Transgrid's *Transmission Line Construction Manual* (Transgrid, 2019).

Structure replacement of the wooden poles includes;

- Crane removal of existing wooden structures other than pole 16 which will be sawn off at ground level and left insitu to minimise ground disturbance to Jarramlee Nature Reserve.
- Construction of foundations for replacement structures by boring an excavation of about 1 m wide and 3 to 6 m deep.
- Crane installation of new concrete structures and stabilisation with concrete or compacted road base with the final 35 cm below natural ground level to be backfilled with the excavated material and compacted to direct surface water runoff away from the structure.

Documentation Submitted

- TL977-1 ESO Submission;
- Structure and Block information supporting document
- Letter(s) of Authorisation
- Form 1M.

Natural conservation values present

The proposed works traverse through three Nature Reserves – Jarramlee NR, Kowen Escarpment NR and Molonglo Gorge NR. Jarramlee Nature Reserve supports native grassland and patches of natural temperate grassland. Habitat in the reserve supports the second largest population of Golden Sun Moth (GSM) in the ACT and scattered populations of Pink-tailed Worm-lizard (PTWL). Scattered woodland also provides habitat for threatened birds. The nature reserve is an approved environmental offset under EPBC Act strategic approval EPBC SA024 for the West Belconnen Urban Development.

The Kowen Escarpment and Molonglo Gorge nature reserves form part of an important regional habitat corridor, connecting habitat from Googong Dam through to north of the ACT and surrounding NSW. Kowen Escarpment Nature Reserve supports populations of threatened flora species Hoary Sunray, Pale Pomaderris and potential habitat for the endangered Canberra Spider Orchid. Koalas have historically been sighted within woodland of the Kowen Escarpment Nature Reserve, the nearest record having been recorded about 130 m east of structure 223 in 1992. A large portion of the reserve comprises of Kowen Forest, the ACT's largest commercial pine plantation.

Molonglo Gorge Nature Reserve comprises 40 hectares of threatened box-gum woodland. The reserve supports several populations of threatened flora and provides habitat for threatened and migratory woodland birds such as the Scarlet Robin.

Potentially Significant Environmental Impacts

Although works pass through three Nature Reserve areas the sites proposed for the refurbishment work are largely located within the existing and previously disturbed transmission line easement. While several threatened species have the potential to occur in these areas, no threatened fauna communities were recorded within the works areas and the highly disturbed nature and heavy weed infestation of the areas where works are to occur make it unlikely the area is providing any habitat features for local fauna species.

The only threatened species confirmed during the site inspections by the Conservator's ecology team in April and May 2024 was the EPBC Act and NC Act listed hoary sunray. A population of about 12 plants was located within 15m of structure 238 however, the population is located within an apparent turning circle and will be completely avoided through establishment of an exclusion zone.

GSM and PTWL) could potentially occur at structure 16 within Jarramlee Grasslands Nature Reserve. Habitat for these species is present in the form of grass species, and embedded rocky habitat. Removal of suitable habitat for excavations, and general movement of construction in impact areas has the potential to injure or crush individual specimens and could result in a minor reduction in available habitat. However, the works required at structure 16 do not involve any earthworks that would directly destroy or remove areas of rocky habitat for PTWL and works will be undertaken outside of the seasonal flying period for GSM (November to January) to minimise impacts to the species.

Trimming and removal of vegetation will be carried out using chainsaws and brush cutters and will be kept to previously disturbed areas. No trees removals are required for the works and an additional condition has been applied to ensure no native trees with a diameter at breast height of 5cm or greater will be removed during track maintenance and vegetation trimming. Only virgin excavated material (VENM) or excavated natural material (ENM) will be used for any filling required to reduce risk of soil contamination.

The largest risk related to the project is further weed infestation of the disturbed areas. These areas are already heavily affected by weed incursion including three weeds of national significance: serrated tussock (*Nassella trichotoma*), chilean needle grass (*Nassella neesiana*), and blackberry (*Rubus fruticosus*). None of these weeds are notifiable, but each require containment under the *Pest Plants and Animals Act 2005*. Serrated tussock was observed at structure 238 and 244, Chilean needle grass at structure 16 and blackberry at structures 16, 224, 225, 264, and 266. Two

additional weeds declared under the *Biosecurity Act 2023* as requiring containment were also recorded in the works area - St John's Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*) at structures 238, 244, 264 and 266 and Saffron Thistle (*Carthamus lanatus*) at structure 264. The proposal includes mitigation measures to manage this risk including;

- Wash down procedures to reduce the spread of weeds via vehicles and machinery.
- Cleaning of vehicle tyres, undersides and radiator grills before leaving a property.
- Cleaning of footwear and minimising soil movement between locations.
- When working through Kowen Escarpment, works will begin at structure 223 and progress towards structure 244 to reduce the potential for spread of weeds from more heavily weed infested areas to areas of lower weed infestation.
- All herbicide selection will be in accordance with Transgrid requirements.

In addition to these mitigation measures a condition has been applied to the ESO requiring the proponent to undertake ongoing weed management post works across disturbed areas for a further 24 months

Further conditions have been applied to ensure protection of the Hoary Sunray population located in the impact area of structure 238 and minimise impacts to Jarramlee Grasslands Nature Reserve.

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5. No native trees with a diameter at breast height of 5cm or greater will be removed.
6. Disturbed areas will be remediated with suitable native grasses.
7. The proponent will undertake weed control across all disturbed areas for a period of 24 months after the completion of works.
8. The proponent will implement the Conservator Guidelines for Burrowing Animals, if any burrows are located within areas impacted by works.
9. Access to the site must be granted to Conservation Officers if a random compliance inspection is requested by the Conservator of Flora and Fauna.

ADDITIONAL CONDITIONS RELATED TO STRUCTURE 16 LOCATED IN JARRAMLEE
NATURE RESERVE (NR)

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13. In consideration of the possibility of stock in the area, no gates are to be left open.
14. Any damage to the fence must be repaired by the contractor before leaving the site.
15. Any damage to the NR from vehicles and machinery will need to be rehabilitated in consultation with PCS (Michelle Ralph).

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.