
ENVIRONMENTAL SIGNIFICANCE OPINION - Molonglo Valley NES Patch GG Forb enhancement (ESO 202600025)

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 Richert Ahlers, Ecologist.

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 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 native grassland restoration within the Arboretum Woodland Conservation Area as described in the submission.

LOCATION

Block 7, Molonglo Valley District. This block is partially Designated Land, and any relevant conditions will be coordinated through a National Capital Authority Works Approval submission. This ESO applies only to the relevant sections of Territory Land.

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 supporting application for an ESO and the supplied Construction Environmental Management Plan.
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. Earthworks must not be undertaken within the drip lines of remnant trees.

Attached is a Statement of Reasons for the decision.



Bren Burkevics
Conservator of Flora and Fauna

21 August 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*

The location of the development contains:

Two ecological communities listed as threatened:

- Natural Temperate Grassland of the South Eastern Highlands (NTG)
- Yellow Box-Blakely's Red Gum Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland (Box Gum Woodland)

One animal species listed as threatened under the *Nature Conservation Act 2014*:

- Pink-tailed Worm-lizard (*Aprasia parapulchella*)

Pink-tailed Worm-lizard and NTG are not present within the immediate mapped area; however, both are known to occur within the broader Molonglo Valley. Box Gum Woodland occurs on the block; however, the development area does not currently meet the listing criteria.

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 adverse environmental impact, based on the documentation submitted, the 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 native grassland restoration of 0.49 hectares within the Arboretum Woodland Conservation Area. Restoration will be managed by the ACT Parks and Conservation Service (PCS), with the aim of establishing a high forb diversity node. Works will be undertaken across two exotic-dominant sites, with very low native species diversity.

Works involve soil scraping and direct seeding, including:

- a) Removal of 10–15 cm of topsoil containing high nutrient soils and high weed-load seed banks. Soil or spoil from the scrape sites will be spread thinly across exotic-dominated pasture adjacent to the scrape sites within the conservation area. The spoil site or sites will be stabilised with tree and shrub plantings.
- b) Direct seeding of the scraped restoration sites with a high diversity of native forbs and grasses. Restoration sites, which will become future high forb diversity nodes, will be strategically located to maximise forb dispersal potential. Slashing and raking will be undertaken adjacent to the scrape sites to increase resource availability by reducing vegetation structure, litter and competition with exotic species.
- c) Installation of stock-proof fencing around all scrape sites. The spoil restoration plantings will be individually protected with mesh guards to allow for future biomass control.
- d) Ongoing maintenance of the restoration sites (i.e. weed control, erosion control and watering).

An associated Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) has been provided. Under the Molonglo Valley Plan for the Protection of Matters of National Environmental Significance (NES Plan, 2011), CEMPs are required to be prepared to ensure that unforeseen direct or indirect impacts from construction activities within the Molonglo Valley development area and the river corridor are avoided or appropriately managed where avoidance is not possible.

Documentation Submitted

- Supporting documentation for the application for an Environmental Significance Opinion;
- Construction Environmental Management Plan;
- Letter of Authorisation;
- Form 1M.

Natural conservation values present

Pink-tailed Worm-lizard (PTWL) and NTG are known to occur within the broader Molonglo Valley. All works are located outside the riparian zone and outside mapped PTWL habitat.

The block contains areas of critically endangered Box Gum Woodland, however, the sites proposed for restoration works are heavily infested with exotic weeds and do not currently meet the listing criteria. The dominant species on the site include Wild Oats (*Avena sp.*) as well as Phalaris (*Phalaris aquatica*), Pigeon Grass (*Setaria sp.*), Paspalum (*Paspalum dilatatum*), Saffron Thistle (*Carthamus lanatus*), St John's Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*) and other introduced weeds.

Potentially Significant Environmental Impacts

This restoration work will help establish more resilient ecological communities within the Molonglo Valley and support the ongoing protection of matters of national ecological significance. While 0.49 hectares will be disturbed, the areas proposed for soil scraping do not currently meet the criteria for listing as a threatened ecological community and are unlikely to support important habitat for rare or threatened species. The mitigation measures and controls detailed in the supporting documents are supported.

Conditions have been included to ensure that potential impacts to remnant trees are minimised.

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 supporting application for an ESO and the supplied Construction Environmental Management Plan.
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. Earthworks must not be undertaken within the drip lines of remnant trees.

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.