Rye Park Wind Farm

Fact Sheet
4
September 2020

Biodiversity (Vegetation)

Why was the assessment undertaken?

Native vegetation and habitat can be impacted as a result of the siting of wind turbines and associated infrastructure.

A Biodiversity Development Assessment Report (BDAR) (contained at Appendix G.4 of the Modification Application Report) was prepared by Umwelt to assess the modification of the wind farm development footprint and addition of the external road upgrades development footprint. The BDAR assessed the change in potential impacts on biodiversity from the Approved Project to the Modified Project.

A revised BDAR (Contained at Appendix B of the RTS Report) (Revised BDAR) was undertaken to assess the further modifications to the wind farm development footprint, external road upgrades development footprint and addition of the development footprint for the permanent met masts as part of the Response to Submissions (RTS) phase of the Project.

What was the approach?

The BDAR and Revised BDAR were prepared in accordance with the Biodiversity Assessment Method (BAM) assessment under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* (BC Act) as the Project seeks to modify a major project approval. The BDAR and Revised BDAR also had regard to applicable guidelines including:

- Threatened Biodiversity Survey and Assessment: Guidelines for Developments and Activities – Working Draft (DEC, 2004);
- NSW Guide to Surveying Threatened Plants (OEH, 2016); and
- Draft Koala Habitat Protection Guidelines and Koala Habitat Protection SEPP (DPIE, 2020).

In addition to general ecosystem surveys, targeted surveys were undertaken over a 12-month period for both threatened flora and fauna species.

Photo: Brittle Gum - Broad-leaved Peppermint - Red Stringybark open forest

What did we find and how does it compare to the approved project?

For the Final Modified Project, total clearing required is 516.83 ha of vegetation (inclusive of non-native vegetation), a reduction of 57.89 ha compared to the Modified Project. This represents a decrease for the Indicative Development Footprint – Wind Farm of 53.1 ha and a decrease for the Indicative Development Footprint – External Roads of 13.96 ha compared to the Modified Project.

The table below contains details of the changes of the amount of clearing required as part of the Approved Project, Modified Project and Final Modified Project.

Project Component	Approved Project	Modified Project	Final Modified Project	Change from the Modified Project to the Final Modified Project	Change from the Approved Project to the Final Modified Project
Indicative Development Footprint – Wind Farm	256.8 ha	542.1 ha	489 ha	Decrease by 53.14 ha	Increase by 232.2 ha
Indicative Development Footprint – External Roads	–	32.62 ha	18.66 ha	Decrease by 13.96 ha	–
Indicative Development Footprint – Permanent Met Masts	–	–	9.17 ha	–	–
Total Indicative Development Footprints	256.8 ha	574.76 ha	516.83	Decrease by 57.93 ha	Increase by 260.03 ha

Compared with the Approved Project, the Final Project has a reduced impact on:

- White Box Yellow Box Blakely's Red Gum Woodland Grassland Critically Endangered Ecological Community (CEEC) under the BC Act. Impact will be reduced by 12.70 ha compared to the Approved Project. This is an additional reduction of 1.56 ha compared with the Modified Project; and
- habitat for striped legless lizard, the superb parrot, and golden sun moth listed under the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cwth) (EPBC Act).

However, the Final Modified Project has an increased impact on matters listed within the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Approval (EPBC Approval) including:

- *White Box Yellow Box Blakely's Red Gum Woodland and Derived Native Grassland* Critically Endangered Ecological Community (CEEC) under the EPBC Act. Impacts on this CEEC for the Final Modified Project is 26.23 ha more than the impact threshold of 9.5 ha as identified in Condition 3 of EPBC Approval 2014/7163 granted subject to conditions on 6 December 2017 (EPBC Approval). However, this is 4.8 ha less than impacts proposed under the Modified Project; and
- hollow bearing trees suitable for the superb parrot. Compared to the 170 hollow bearing trees authorised in the EPBC Approval, the Final Modified Project will impact on an additional 63 hollow bearing trees.

Although the development footprints have increased in size compared with the Approved Project, numerous measures such as modifying ancillary infrastructure were employed to avoid significant biodiversity values.

The Project is being re-referred under the EPBC Act on the basis of Box Gum Woodland CEEC and hollow bearing tree impacts. The EPBC approval process will be undertaken independently of the State process.

What are the proposed mitigation strategies?

To ensure biodiversity impacts are managed and further minimized, a Biodiversity Management Plan will be prepared in accordance with the existing conditions of the Development Consent. A specific Roadside Vegetation Management Plan will also be prepared in accordance with the conditions of the EPBC Approval.

Tilt Renewables is concurrently preparing a strategy detailing how the Project will secure the required biodiversity credits to compensate for the loss of biodiversity values.

Assessment against development consent

Tilt Renewables is proposing to update the consent in line with the new definition of hollow-bearing trees under the BAM so the original intent of the micro-siting condition can be fully exercised.

The Final Modified Project can comply with the other existing conditions of the Development Consent relating to biodiversity.

Biodiversity Credits

Biodiversity impacts of the development will be offset through the establishment of land-based offsets through purchasing of credits through the market. For further information see the following website:
www.bct.nsw.gov.au/biodiversity-offsets-program

For more information, please visit the dedicated public exhibition website **informryeparkwf.com** or call us anytime to ask questions using: **1800 WE TILT (938 458)**
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