

Biodiversity Fact Sheet



In September 2022 a modification application was submitted to the Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) for the Liverpool Range Wind Farm (Mod-1 Project). In response to submissions received during the public exhibition period we have made a number of changes to the Project. These changes are reflected in the Response to Submissions (RTS) Report and the Amendment Report. The reports will be assessed by DPE who will then make a determination on the application. These reports contain information about how the RTS Project is different from the Approved Project, and how these changes would affect the environment and how they can be managed.

This factsheet sets out potential impact of the RTS Project on native vegetation, habitat, birds and bats. It also shows what we are proposing to do to manage these impacts.

The impacts presented are a worst-case scenario. With the measures proposed the RTS Project's impacts should be reduced or mitigated.

What changes have been made to the Mod-1 Project?

Following a detailed review of submissions received during the public exhibition process held in September 2022 several key changes have been made to the Mod-1 Project layout that are aimed at reducing impacts to biodiversity. The key changes include:

- Reduction in the number of turbines from 220 down to 185 – this results in a reduction in impacts to higher quality Box Gum Woodland Critically Endangered Ecological Community (CEEC)
- Reduction in the maximum blade tip height from 250 m to 215 m and reduction in the rotor diameter from 220 m to 172 m – this increases the area between turbines for birds and bats to move without obstruction
- Steepened cut/fill batters along wind farm access tracks to reduce ground disturbance and associated vegetation removal, where geotechnical conditions allow
- Incorporating electrical infrastructure (e.g. STATCOMs) and reduced spacing between adjacent underground cabling to reduce the need for multiple adjacent underground cables next to access tracks. This in-turn reduces the extent of ground disturbance and associated vegetation removal

Photo: Regent Honeyeater



What impacts on biodiversity should I expect?

Native vegetation

Native vegetation and habitat can be impacted by wind turbines, access tracks, transmission lines, and other required infrastructure.

The total impacts to native vegetation and habitat as well as the associated biodiversity offset obligations have been calculated on the entire permanent and temporary disturbance areas of the proposed infrastructure layout, as shown in Figure 1 below. It should be noted that the temporary disturbance areas will however be rehabilitated and native vegetation will likely recruit and regenerate over time in those areas.

The RTS Project would impact approximately 1,629 hectares of native vegetation covering 11 plant community types. This is an increase of approximately 1,228 hectares from the Approved Project. This includes removal of approximately 428 hectares of NSW-listed Box Gum Woodland CEEC, an increase of approximately 227 hectares from the Approved Project.

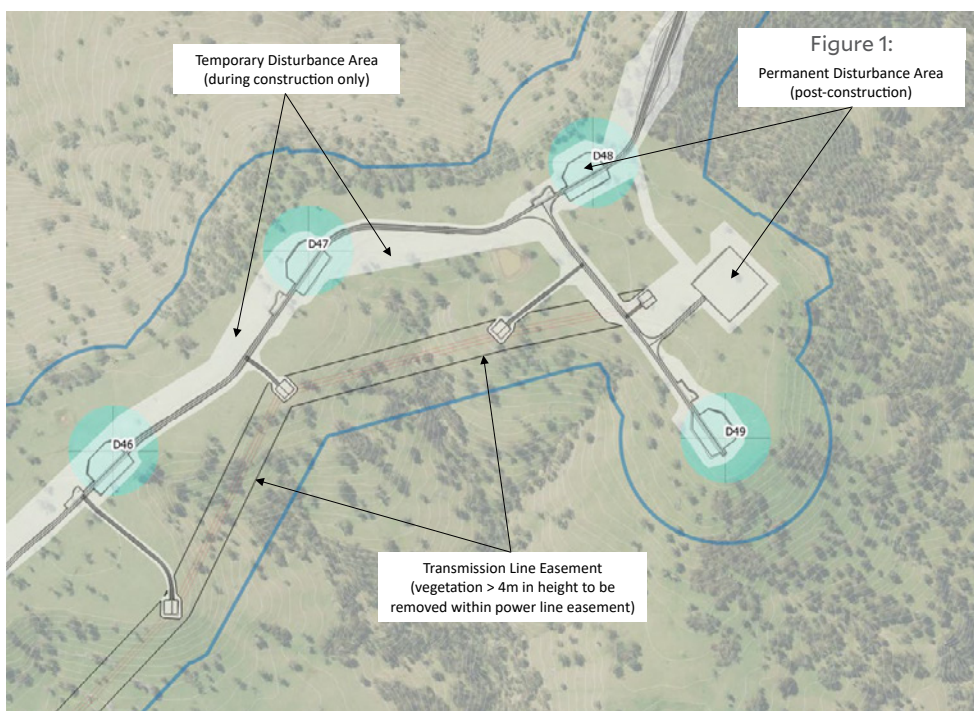
These increases are due to the following:

- The Approved Project underestimated the amount of ground disturbance and vegetation removal required. With improved data from recent wind farm construction experience and 3D terrain modelling, the RTS Project better accounts for the scale of vegetation impacted by the required infrastructure.
- Inclusion of native vegetation removal associated with the anticipated public road upgrades, which were not accounted for by the Approved Project.
- The state government classification of native vegetation expanded since the Approved Project to incorporate a broader range of vegetation conditions.

Most of the increased disturbance area and vegetation removal is caused by cabling requirements. Current industry practice is to place underground cabling next to access tracks. The Approved Project assumed cabling could be located under the access tracks but ground conditions may preclude this. Instead, the RTS Project takes a worst case approach and assumes all cabling will be located beside the access tracks. During the detailed design phase we will make all reasonable attempts to reduce the access track footprint further to minimise the impact on the environment and offset requirements.

In total, approximately 90% of the impacted NSW Box Gum Woodland CEEC is in low condition or derived grasslands (i.e. not woodlands).

This vegetation removal includes habitat for seven NSW-listed species (two plant, one mammal, two bat, and one bird).



Native bats and birds

In the Project area, there are bird and bat species with either small populations, low fertility rates or who are localised to the site. Impacts on individuals within these species can have a significant effect. The RTS Project needs to target mitigation to avoid adverse impacts on these species as a whole. Table 1 shows which bird and bat species are considered to be of high risk from the RTS Project. The mitigation proposed will target these and other at risk species to manage potential impacts.

Birds and bat species with a moderate or high risk rating	
Barking owl – High	Dusky woodswallow – Moderate
Large bent-winged bat – High	Painted honeyeater – Moderate
Powerful owl – High	Superb parrot – Moderate
Regent honeyeater – High	Wedge-tailed eagle – Moderate
Swift parrot – High	Little eagle – Moderate
White-throated needletail – High	Eastern cave bat – Moderate
Black-chinned honeyeater – Moderate	Yellow-bellied sheath-tail-bat – Moderate
Corben's long-eared bat – Moderate	Large-eared pied bat – Moderate

Understanding these risks enables the RTS Project to target mitigation. We will continue to seek ways to reduce the risk on these and other species through the construction and operation of the Project.



Managing our impact

We are proposing to use cleared areas and farm access tracks to locate wind farm infrastructure wherever practicable. This approach enables the RTS Project to reduce its impact on the environment.

We will continue to seek ways to avoid or minimise our impact on the environment during the detailed design phase and into construction so we can increase the net benefit of the RTS Project.

Consistent with other Projects, impacts on native vegetation and habitat cannot be totally avoided. Where impacts cannot be avoided we are actively seeking offsets to mitigate impacts in accordance with NSW and Commonwealth government guidelines. Our preference is to secure land-based offsets, and where this is not possible, payment into the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Fund.

We have made significant progress in securing biodiversity offsets for the RTS Project. We have purchased nearly 3,500 ha of land, and are in negotiations to purchase another 2,200 ha of land with the purposes of setting up new offset sites. We have also agreed to work in partnership with existing landholders to set up new offset sites and to purchase a large number of biodiversity credits from the credit market. We want to hear from more landholders whose land may contain relevant plant community types and habitats so that we can offset impacts locally.

As the RTS Project enters operations we will also implement a Bird and Bat Adaptive Management Program which will focus on managing impacts on high risk species.

A new EPBC Approval will be sought due to the changes proposed to the Approved Project, including the potential impacts to Box Gum Woodland and other protected bird and bat species.



Photo: a Powerful owl

Next steps:

We are aiming to lodge the Response to Submissions (RTS) report, Amendment Report, and all updated environmental impact assessments with DPE in June 2023. These reports will detail the consultation completed to-date, how submissions received during public exhibition have been addressed, and will clearly show the changes to the design and layout of the Project. DPE will review the documentation and make a determination on the Modification Application.

We are also seeking Commonwealth approval under a separate approvals process under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. The project will be assessed by way of Public Environment Report (PER) which will be subject to a public exhibition process managed by the Commonwealth Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW). Further details on the timing of this will be provided via our website and newsletters.

To stay up to date on progress of the Project visit:

Modification Application:

www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/major-projects/projects/mod-1-turbine-and-infrastructure-changes

EPBC Approval:

epbcpublicportal.awe.gov.au/all-referrals/project-referral-summary/?id=dc3fd301-9a6b-ed11-81ac-00224818aa21

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To view the Project online and to subscribe to the newsletter, visit:

www.liverpoolrangewindfarm.com.au



If you would like to read more about biodiversity impacts, see the Amendment Report.

For more information, please visit the website below

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