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ADVERTISED PLAN

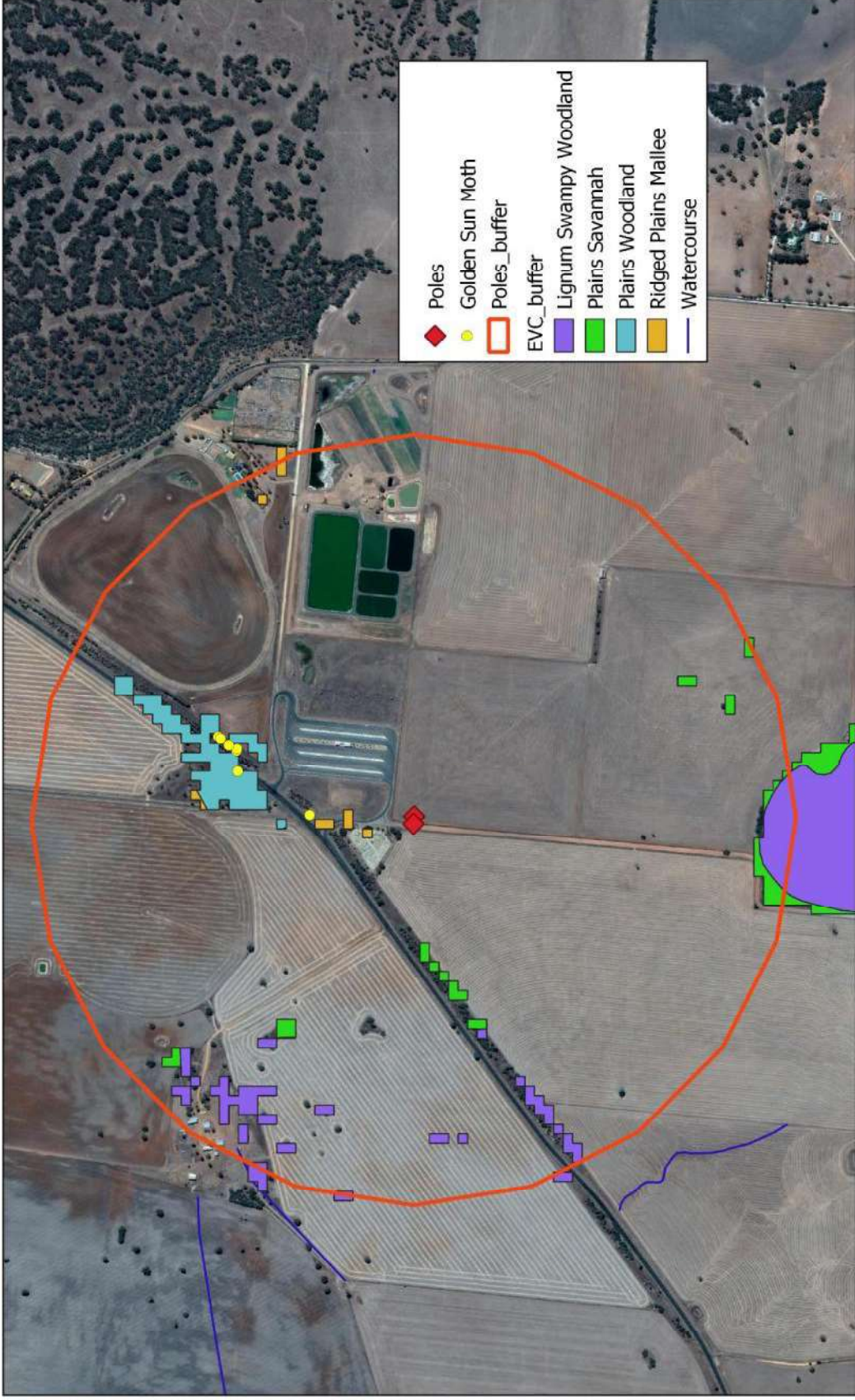


Biodiversity Snapshot

STUDY AREA NAME: Nhill Solar Farm		Date: 27/02/2019
BIOREGION	Wimmera	
LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREA	Hindmarsh Shire	
Catchment Management Area	Wimmera CMA	
SUMMARY / COMMENTS		
Summary of findings and recommendations	<p>Summary</p> <p>Four ecological vegetation classes (EVCs) were modelled to occur within 1km of the proposed alignment (refer to Figure1). No EVC are modelled to occur at the proposed pole locations.</p> <p>Golden Sun Moth (EPBC) has been recorded within 300m of the proposed pole locations.</p> <p>It has been assumed that native grasses are present, based on the photograph provided by Powercor, (refer to Appendix 1) where a new pole is to be placed on the road reserve. This will entail the removal / destruction of approx. 1²m of vegetation. The extent of removal is too small to enter into the NVIM tool and therefore does not require sourcing an offset.</p> <p>Recommendations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilise existing roads / tracks to access pole locations • Vehicles are confined to roads / tracks while undertaking on-site operations • Timing of operations is confined to dry weather conditions <p>Providing the above recommendations are implemented, the replacement of poles as outlined in the project brief will not require the removal or destruction of native vegetation or impact on Golden Sun Moth.</p>	
DESKTOP REVIEW RESULTS		
<p>* EPBC Act Protected Matters Search (DoEE)</p> <p><i>1km buffer</i></p> <p><i>Results include terrestrial species / communities only</i></p>	<p>Threatened Ecological Communities: 4</p> <p>Listed Threatened Species: 18</p> <p>Migratory Species: 9</p>	
Proximity to wetlands	N/A	

Habitat Corridors	No habitat corridors are present within or adjacent to the alignment.
Surrounding land use	Agriculture
EVC's & Significant flora and fauna records <i>Source: NatureKit & VBA (DELWP).</i> <i>Refer to Figure 1</i>	Ecological Vegetation Class: 4 <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ridged Plains Mallee EVC_96 (Endangered) 2. Plains Savannah EVC_826 (Endangered). 3. Lignum Swampy Woodland EVC_823 (Vulnerable) 4. Plains Woodland EVC_803 (Endangered) Threatened Flora: N/A Threatened Fauna: Golden Sun Moth <i>Synemon plana</i> (EPBC, FFG)
Reviewed report/s	N/A
LEGISLATIVE IMPLICATIONS	
EPBC Act 1999	State based records indicate there is one <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> (EPBC Act) listed fauna within 300m of the pole locations in 2009. Golden Sun Moth <i>Synemon plan</i> Critically Endangered No EPBC listed ecological communities are present within the alignment. <i>There are no obligations under the EPBC Act if the recommendations as outlined above are implemented.</i>
EES Act 1978	An EES would be required if the impacts were deemed to potentially have a detrimental effect for species / communities of regional or state significance. <i>An EES is <u>not required</u> as there is not a 'trigger' of any referral criterion (refer to Appendix 2 for trigger criteria).</i>
FFG Act 1988	Golden Sun Moth <i>Synemon plana</i> observed in 2009 <i>No species will be impacted by the proposed works.</i>
Permitted clearing of native vegetation Clause 52.17	Applies to native vegetation when there is a need to remove and / or impact native vegetation is unavoidable. Refer to Appendix 3 for the assessment pathway. <i>Initial analysis of the assessment pathway indicates that the removal, destruction or loping of native vegetation is not relevant for the works proposed.</i>
Catchment Management Authority Regional Strategies	Wimmera Regional Catchment Strategy 2013-2019.
Local Government Environmental Planning Overlays	N/A

* Search results for EPBC Act threatened species is based on the likelihood of suitable habitat to occur in the search area only. It does not imply that there has been a definite record for the species.



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Figure 1. Nhill Solar Farm



Database Searches

Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act Protected Matters Search – An online tool, provided by the Commonwealth Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts which identifies matters of national environmental significance that *may* occur in, or *may* relate to the area nominated.

Ecological Vegetation Classes (EVCs) – A vegetation classification system developed by DSE for Victoria. EVCs are groupings of vegetation communities based on floristic, structural and ecological features. It should be noted that this database is incomplete and used only as a guide.

Victorian Biodiversity Atlas - data provided from the DELWP, lists all the flora and fauna species which have been identified within the search area from previous studies.

Naturekit - data provided from the DELWP, provides GIS layers and information on the presence of Ecological Vegetation Class's and general flora and fauna data.

Legislation

Environmental Effects Act 1978

The *Environmental Effects Act 1978* provides for assessment of proposed projects (works) that are capable of having a significant effect on the environment. The Act does this by enabling the Minister administering it to decide that an Environmental Effects Statement (EES) should be prepared.

The Minister might typically require a proponent to prepare an EES when:

- there is a likelihood of regionally or State significant adverse effects on the environment
- there is a need for integrated assessment of potential environmental effects (including economic and social effects) of a project and relevant alternatives, and
- normal statutory processes would not provide a sufficiently comprehensive, integrated and transparent assessment.

The EES process provides for the analysis of potential effects on environmental assets and the means of avoiding, minimising and managing adverse effects. It also includes public involvement and the opportunity for an integrated response to a proposal.

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999

Any action that has, will have, or is likely to have a significant impact on a matter of national environmental significance, as defined under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) requires approval from the Commonwealth Environment Minister. Matters of National Environmental Significance relevant to this study may include nationally threatened species (plants and animals), migratory species, and endangered ecological communities.

Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988

The provisions of the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* (FFG Act) bind all public agencies, public landowners and land managers. Removal of any native plants protected under the FFG Act requires a permit from the DSE, where this occurs on public land. It is understood that such a permit is not required for such works on private land. The Act allows for the listing of potentially threatening processes. Any actions that may result in a potentially threatening process should be avoided or managed appropriately.

Clearing of native vegetation- Biodiversity assessment guidelines

In Victoria, a planning permit is usually required to remove, destroy or lop native vegetation. Landholders / managers must apply for a planning permit from their local council. If a permit is granted, a native vegetation offset must be obtained before the native vegetation is removed, to compensate for the impact of the removal on biodiversity.

The Guidelines for the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation (2017) are incorporated into the Victoria Planning Provisions and all planning schemes in Victoria. The Guidelines replace the previous incorporated document titled Permitted clearing of native vegetation – Biodiversity assessment guidelines (Department of Environment and Primary Industries, September 2013).

There are three assessment pathways for an application to remove native vegetation: Basic, Intermediate and Detailed. The assessment pathway reflects the potential impact the removal has on biodiversity. These pathways are determined by:

- amount of native vegetation (in hectares)
- whether any large trees are to be removed, and
- location of the native vegetation.

Extent of native vegetation	Location category		
	Location 1	Location 2	Location 3
Less than 0.5 hectares and not including any large trees	Basic	Intermediate	Detailed
Less than 0.5 hectares and including one or more large trees	Intermediate	Intermediate	Detailed
0.5 hectares or more	Detailed	Detailed	Detailed

Proponents can refer to the online-tool Native Vegetation Information Management to understand which risk-pathway the application will be assessed under. The biodiversity report produced by NVIM can be used as part of an application under a Basic and Intermediate risk pathway, whereas a site assessment by an accredited quality vegetation assessor is required as part of an application under the Detailed-risk pathway.

Catchment Management Authority – Regional Catchment Strategies

A primary function of a Catchment Management Authority is to prepare a Regional Catchment Strategy (RCS) for its region and coordinate and monitor its implementation. The strategies describe the natural assets of a region, and how they are interrelated, outlining what needs to be done to manage and use the assets in a sustainable way.

The RCS is an important planning and working document for all organisations and people involved in natural resource management in the region, including government agencies and councils, water authorities, industry, Landcare and community groups. Its main focus is the land, water and biodiversity in the region. It provides a framework for effort, an investment guide, a means of integrating policy and an action plan for catchment works.

Local Government – Environmental Planning Overlays / Vegetation Protection Overlays

Appendix 1- Site Photographs

ID	Site Photograph	Comments
1		<p>Potentially native grass (stipa) in the foreground on the road reserve.</p> <p>New pole is required on the opposite of the road (right of photo) to access solar farm in paddock.</p> <p>Sub-station is located in the far lower left of photo.</p>

Appendix 2- EES Act Triggers

Referral criteria: individual potential environmental effects

Individual types of potential effects on the environment that might be of regional or State significance, and therefore warrant referral of a project, are:

- potential clearing of 10 ha or more of native vegetation from an area that:
 - is of an Ecological Vegetation Class identified as endangered by the Department of Sustainability and Environment (in accordance with Appendix 2 of Victoria's Native Vegetation Management Framework); or
 - is, or is likely to be, of very high conservation significance (as defined in accordance with Appendix 3 of Victoria's Native Vegetation Management Framework); and
 - is not authorised under an approved Forest Management Plan or Fire Protection Plan
- potential long-term loss of a significant proportion (e.g. 1 to 5 percent depending on the conservation status of the species) of known remaining habitat or population of a threatened species within Victoria
- potential long-term change to the ecological character of a wetland listed under the Ramsar Convention or in 'A Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia'
- potential extensive or major effects on the health or biodiversity of aquatic, estuarine or marine ecosystems, over the long term
- potential extensive or major effects on the health, safety or well-being of a human community, due to emissions to air or water or chemical hazards or displacement of residences
- potential greenhouse gas emissions exceeding 200,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent per annum, directly attributable to the operation of the facility.

Referral criteria: a combination of potential environmental effects

A combination of *two or more* of the following types of potential effects on the environment that might be of regional or State significance, and therefore warrant referral of a project, are:

- potential clearing of 10 ha or more of native vegetation, unless authorised under an approved Forest Management Plan or Fire Protection Plan
- matters listed under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988*:
 - potential loss of a significant area of a listed ecological community; or
 - potential loss of a genetically important population of an endangered or threatened species (listed or nominated for listing), including as a result of loss or fragmentation of habitats; or
 - potential loss of critical habitat; or
 - potential significant effects on habitat values of a wetland supporting migratory bird species
- potential extensive or major effects on landscape values of regional importance, especially where recognised by a planning scheme overlay or within or adjoining land reserved under the *National Parks Act 1975*
- potential extensive or major effects on land stability, acid sulphate soils or highly erodible soils over the short or long term
- potential extensive or major effects on beneficial uses of waterbodies over the long term due to changes in water quality, streamflows or regional groundwater levels
- potential extensive or major effects on social or economic well-being due to direct or indirect displacement of non-residential land use activities
- potential for extensive displacement of residences or severance of residential access to community resources due to infrastructure development
- potential significant effects on the amenity of a substantial number of residents, due to extensive or major, long-term changes in visual, noise and traffic conditions
- potential exposure of a human community to severe or chronic health or safety hazards over the short or long term, due to emissions to air or water or noise or chemical hazards or associated transport
- potential extensive or major effects on Aboriginal cultural heritage
- potential extensive or major effects on cultural heritage places listed on the Heritage Register or the Archaeological Inventory under the *Heritage Act 1995*.

Appendix 3 - Permitted vegetation clearing pathways

Step 1
Do I need a permit?

Local council can confirm if you need a permit to remove native vegetation. Organise a pre-application meeting with your local council to help answer the following questions:

- Am I removing native vegetation? Appendix 1 will help you to determine if the vegetation is native.
- Do I qualify for an exemption? There are a range of exemptions that mean a permit is not required to remove native vegetation. Refer to the exemption guidance on the [DELWP website](#).
- Are there any other requirements? Check with your local council whether any schedule, Native Vegetation Precinct Plan or environmental overlay applies. Also check whether the vegetation could be protected under other local, state or federal legislation.

If you need a permit to remove native vegetation, continue to Step 2.

Step 2
What is my assessment pathway?

Use the Native Vegetation Information Management removal tool ([NVIM removal tool](#)) to map the native vegetation and determine your assessment pathway: <https://nvim.delwp.vic.gov.au/>.

Note: If you are removing 0.5 ha or more of native vegetation you are automatically in the Detailed Assessment Pathway. This is approximately a rectangle of 100 metres long and 50 wide or 7 large scattered trees or 16 small scattered trees.



Step 3
Do I need an accredited native vegetation assessor?

If you are in the Basic or Intermediate Assessment Pathway you do not need to appoint an accredited native vegetation assessor. You can complete the application yourself using [the NVIM removal tool](#).

You need an accredited native vegetation assessor to complete a site assessment report.

Step 4
Can I reduce my impacts, offset requirements and costs?

Use information in the NVIM removal tool to minimise impacts on native vegetation. Try not to remove areas of native vegetation with higher condition and strategic biodiversity value scores, large trees (allow space for a tree protection zone within 15 metres of the tree trunk) and areas shown as Location 2 and 3 on the *Location map*.

Use information from the site assessment and work with the accredited native vegetation assessor to minimise impacts.

Step 5
Prepare the application

Follow the prompts in the NVIM removal tool to provide additional information that is required for your application.

The tool will calculate your offset requirement and you must decide how you will secure the offset – on your own property, or purchased through a broker. Check the costs to secure the offset before proceeding with the application.

Download the *Native vegetation removal report* (NVR report). The report will form part of your planning permit application.

Obtain a NVR report for the Detailed Assessment Pathway from the accredited native vegetation assessor.

Work with the accredited assessor to complete the application.

Step 6
Lodge the application

Check you have completed all application requirements and attached any necessary information.

Examples of statements you could use in the application are provided in Appendix 4 of guidelines

Lodge the planning permit application with your local council.