

Briefing Note

To: James Moverley, Circular Economy Project Lead
From: Giles Flower, Senior Approvals and Environment Advisor
Date: 9 August 2023
Subject: Vegetation inspection, proposed Regional RON location

James,

Last Thursday 3 August 2023 I inspected the proposed location for the Regional Renewable Organics Network (RRON) facility at Barwon Water's Black Rock Water Reclamation Plant property at Connewarre.

The purpose of this inspection was to assess whether a detailed flora and fauna assessment by an ecological consultant is warranted for the site.

I inspected the vegetation across the entire site, looking for evidence of remnant, regrowth or re-emergent native vegetation that would need to be further assessed to determine whether it triggers any statutory or planning approvals.

The area covers three distinct zones – cleared areas for roadways and depot yards, flat 'lawn' type areas, and mounded landscaping areas.

Roadway and yards

There are no ecological values in roadways, carparks and storage areas, and no further assessment of these areas for vegetation is required.



Figure 1 – roadway areas

Lawn areas

The expansive flat areas with a lawn appearance have no natural vegetation values. These areas are exclusively populated with exotic lawn species and introduced broadleaf species or weeds.

Winter is a suboptimal time for surveying for native grasses, however the thick and healthy cover of exotic lawn and weed species precludes the likelihood of any native species growing or establishing in these areas. The area is used sporadically for foraging by common bird species.



Figure 2 – lawn area

Revegetated mounds

The area encroaches on constructed mounds along the WRP driveway, which have been revegetated with native species for landscaping purposes. These trees have established well, but there is no native understorey at all. In many cases, a native grass and herb understorey will establish under revegetation trees. However, in the case of the mounds at this location, the understorey is completely dominated by blanket weed, exotic grasses and other weeds.

Removal of planted native vegetation does not require a planning permit under Clause 52.17 of the planning scheme which covers native vegetation impacts. There are no provisions within the zoning of the location that impact on this. Nor are there any planning overlays over the location. Thus, no further assessment of the vegetation is required.

It should be noted that works elsewhere in the Black Rock WRP property are currently being undertaken and are impacting on planted native vegetation along Black Rock Rd. These works have attracted community interest, as the vegetation may be used for roosting birds. From an approvals perspective, the minimal vegetation impacts are unlikely to impact on bird populations, as there is ample suitable habitat nearby,



Figure 3 – revegetation mounds

Conclusion

From my inspection of the extent of the proposed RRON site, there are no native vegetation values at the site that will trigger a planning permit. The small trees growing on the revegetation mounds may provide some minor roosting or foraging resources for fauna, but removal will not trigger any approvals. The removal of plantings can be supplemented by putting aside other areas at the WRP for revegetation replacement.

It is recommended that further surveys or assessments for native vegetation at the particular location for the RRON are not required.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you wish to discuss this further.

Kind regards,



Dr. Giles Flower

Senior Approvals and Environment Advisor
cc. Alister Green, GHD