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Briefing Note

To	Laura Jeffrey
E	laura.jeffery@squadronenergy.com
Cc	Oliver McCarthy
E	oli.mccarthy@squadronenergy.com
From	Rebecca Sutherland
Date	6 July 2026
Subject	**Berrybank Terminal Station Augmentation – ecological due diligence assessment**

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Purpose

The purpose of this briefing note is to outline the findings of the ecological due diligence assessment undertaken by Umwelt Australia Pty Ltd. (Umwelt) of the Berrybank Terminal Station (BBTS) augmentation (the Project), as proposed by Moreton Hill Wind Farm Nominees Pty Ltd (MHWF Nominees).

The scope of the ecological due diligence assessment (hereafter, this Assessment) included the identification of ecological values relevant to the Project and the potential impacts the Project may have upon those values to inform and support the planning permit application under the Golden Plains Planning Scheme for the Project.

Key Findings and Further Assessment Requirement

- The area assessed for this assessment (hereafter the assessment area) is a highly modified environment that does not support any patches of native vegetation, scattered trees, threatened ecological communities or potential habitat for threatened species. No such values are likely to be impacted by the Project.
- No referral is required under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act); no referral is required under the *Environment Effects Act 1978* (EE Act) (considering only biodiversity criteria); and no permit to take is required under the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* (FFG Act).
- Planning approval **is not** required for native vegetation removal as no native vegetation (that constitutes a patch under The Guidelines) was present on site.
- Planning approval **is** required for removal of any vegetation within the Environmental Significance Overlay (ESO2) despite the quality of the vegetation present being low, although exemptions are likely to apply.
- No further ecological assessment is required to be undertaken for the Project.

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P 1300 793 267 E info@umwelt.com.au W umwelt.com.au NSW | ACT | WA | QLD | VIC | SA Umwelt (Australia) Pty Ltd ABN 18 059 519 041

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Recommended Next Steps

- Submit this briefing note, along with a planning permit application for the Project under the Golden Plains Planning Scheme.
- Ahead of construction of the Project, prepare construction environmental management documentation (such as a construction environmental management plan (CEMP)) outlining mitigation measures to control noxious weed and pest animal species and to prevent an increase in the population of the weed species as a result of the construction of the Project.
- Ahead of operation of the Project, incorporate the Project into the existing operational environmental management documentation for the BBTS.

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1.0 Introduction

Umwelt was engaged by MHWF Nominees to conduct an ecological due diligence assessment of the proposed Berrybank Terminal Station (BBTS) augmentation (the Project) to facilitate the connection of the Moreton Hill Wind Farm (MHWF) to the National Electricity Market (NEM).

The objectives of this assessment were to:

- determine ecological values likely to be impacted by the Project, as well as associated permit and approval requirements,
- recommend strategies to avoid and mitigate further impacts to ecological values where relevant, and
- determine the requirement for further assessment (if required) and provide recommended next steps.

1.1 Project Description

The Project is located at the existing BBTS site, at 39 Willowvale Road, Mount Bute, approximately 12 km north-east of Lismore and 24 km south-east of Skipton, within the Golden Plains Shire Local Government Area (LGA). The BBTS is located within the boundary of the land parcel established for development of the existing BBTS (Lot 1 on Plan PS838361).

The Project involves undertaking modifications to the existing BBTS to facilitate the connection of the MHWF to the NEM, including the construction of an additional line bay and control building on an extended hardstand, extension of the perimeter access track and asset protection zone (APZ), the laying of approximately 100 m of underground 220 kV cable, and the establishment of a temporary construction laydown area located the north-east of the proposed new line bay. All Project works would be contained within the indicative development footprint, which is in-turn located within of the existing BBTS site (see - indicative development footprint highlighted in *purple*).

1.2 Ecological Setting and Land Use Planning Particulars

Located within the Victorian Volcanic Plain Bioregion, Ecological Vegetation Class (EVC) modelling indicates that the BBTS site is likely to have supported EVC132: Plains Grassland prior to clearance, with no native vegetation modelled to occur at the site currently. Several threatened species records

occur in the landscape surrounding the BBTS site including Spiny Rice-flower (*Pimelea spinescens* subsp. *spinescens*), Small Milkwort (*Comesperma polygaloides*), Striped Legless Lizard (*Delma impar*), Fat-tailed Dunnart (*Sminthopsis crassicaudata*), and several avifauna, though notably there are no threatened species records within 900 m of the BBTS itself.

The north-western portion of the Project site is subject to Clause 42.01 - Environmental Significance Overlay (Schedule 2 – Watercourse Protection) (ESO2) of the Golden Plains Planning Scheme (the Planning Scheme).

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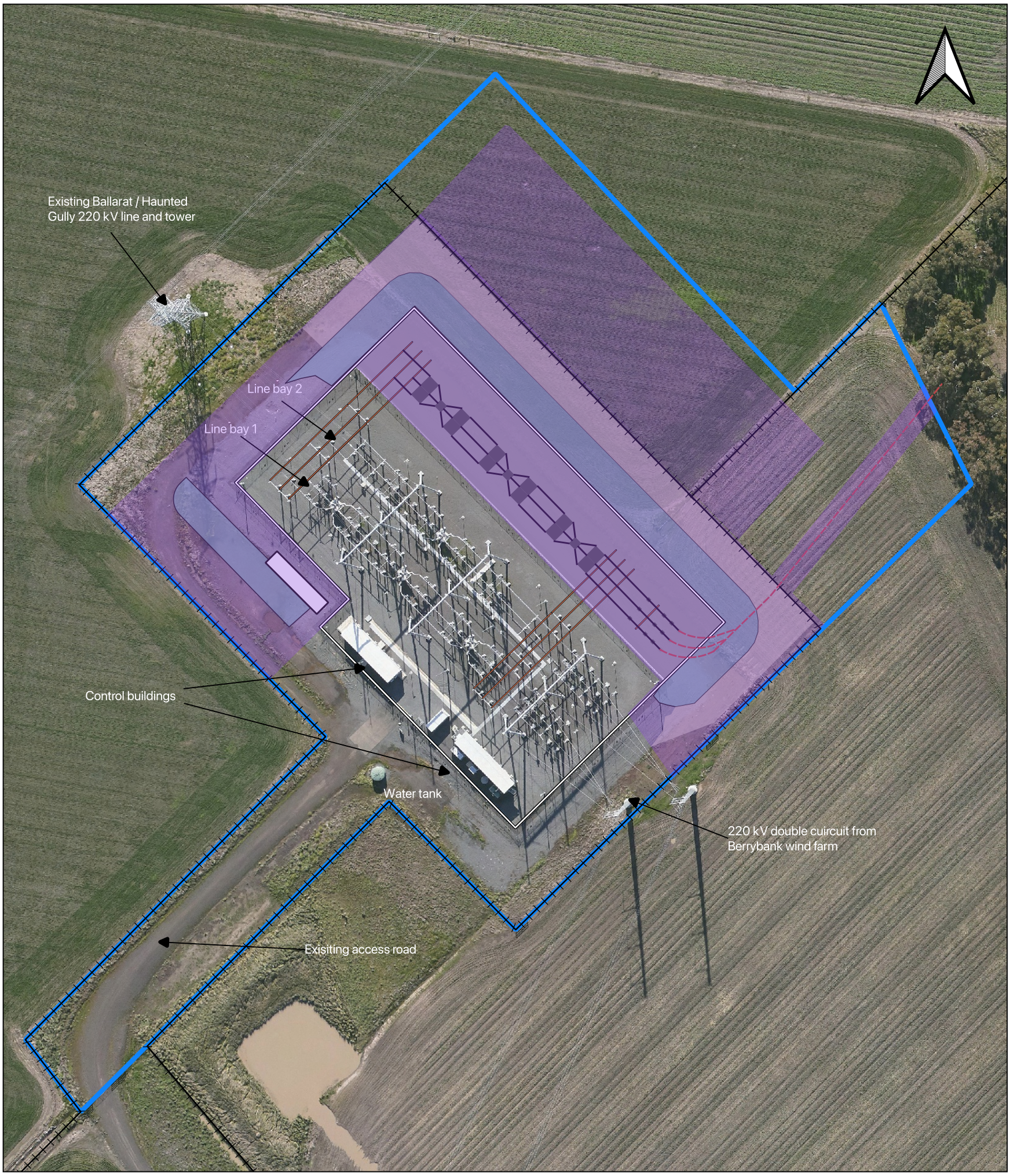
Figure 1 - Proposed switchyard extension



Legend

- WF 220 kV alignment
- Extended Farm Fence
- Extended Security fence
- Extended Access track & APZ buffer
- Proposed Control building
- Line Bay Componants
- 220kV Busbar
- Extended hardstand area
- Extended Blue Metal Apron
- 220kV Riser Points
- Site boundary & parcel

0 50 100 m

Company: MHWF Nominees Pty Ltd				SQUADRON ENERGY
Title: Berrybank Terminal Station - Proposed extension				
Date: 28/05/2026	Projection: GDA 2020	Dwg No: BBTS-002	Rev: A	Ver: 1
Drawn By: REF	Checked By: PL	Sheet: 1 OF 1	Proj Code: MHWF	Size: A3

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1.0 Method

An initial desktop review was undertaken ahead of the site assessment to determine ecological values relevant to the assessment area. This review included review of modelled EVCs and threatened species records occurring in the vicinity of the BBTS site.

A site-based general vegetation and habitat assessment of the indicative development footprint was undertaken by a Vegetation Quality Assessment (VQA)-accredited Umwelt ecologist on 3 June 2026 to determine the nature and extent of the vegetation and habitat present, including:

- mapping native vegetation observed in accordance with the Guidelines for the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation (DEECA (Vic), 2025) (the Guidelines) including patches of native vegetation, large canopy trees and scattered trees,
- undertaking Habitat Hectare assessment for any patches of native vegetation recorded in accordance with the Vegetation Quality Assessment Manual v1.3 (DSE (Vic), 2004),
- assessing the presence of threatened ecological communities in accordance with the listing advice for those communities,
- recording the nature and extent of potential habitat for threatened flora and fauna, along with any incidental threatened species observations, and
- recording characteristic floral taxa observed.

Ecological values (where present) were assumed to be impacted by the Project where they were intersected by the indicative development footprint.

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2.0 Results

2.1 Ecological Values Within the BBTS Site

The indicative development footprint is a highly modified environment that **does not** support any patches of native vegetation, scattered trees, threatened ecological communities or potential habitat for threatened species.

Adjacent to the existing terminal station, the indicative development footprint is dominated by perennial exotic grasses, principally Couch (**Cynodon dactylon*) and Cocksfoot (**Dactylis glomerata*), 40% cover), with a variety of exotic forbs including Capeweed (**Arctotheca calendula*), Spear Thistle (**Cirsium vulgare*) and Soursob (**Oxalis pes caprae*) – with the latter two being listed noxious weeds under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* (CaLP Act). Scattered ruderal native flora species were observed in low densities, including Wallaby Grass (*Rytidosperma* spp.), Windmill Grass (*Chloris truncata*), native rush species (*Juncus* spp.), and Jersey Cud-weed (*Laphangium luteoalbum*), representing less than 5% of the perennial vegetation cover present and less than 1 % cover overall. Extensive ground disturbance and compaction was observed throughout this area including extensive areas of gravel sheeting. This disturbance is likely to be associated with the construction of the existing terminal station (**Photo 3.1**).

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To the north-east of the indicative development footprint is cropland. This area was recently sown at the time of assessment and so was predominantly characterised by bare ground. This area is subject to continual sowing and harvesting disturbance.

Neither area is considered to constitute any threatened ecological community (TEC). Most notably, the vegetation present lacks the dominant cover of native tussock grasses that characterise both the Natural Temperate Grassland of the Victorian Volcanic Plain TEC, and the Western (Basalt) Plains Grassland Community TEC (as listed under the EPBC Act and FFG Act respectively).

Neither area is considered to constitute potential habitat for threatened species with extensive and ongoing disturbance and dominance by exotic perennial flora species appearing to constrain recruitment of native ground layer flora beyond particularly ruderal species, as mentioned above. Further, the structurally simplified vegetation of the ground layer is also lacking habitat features such as soil cracks, defined native tussock structure, and basalt floaters, and is unlikely to form habitat for any threatened fauna species.



Photo 2.1 Photo of the indicative development footprint showing an area adjacent to the terminal station dominated by exotic vegetation (left), and an area of recently sown cropland (right) dominated by bare ground

2.2 Project Impacts and Legislative/Policy Obligations

As the indicative development footprint does not intersect with any patches of native vegetation, scattered trees, threatened ecological communities or potential habitat for threatened species, none of these ecological values are expected to be impacted as a result of the proposed works.

Project impacts are expected to be limited to the removal of areas dominated by exotic grasses and crops within the indicative development footprint.

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Legislative and policy implications are summarised in below.

Table 2.1 Legislative and policy implications associated with Project impacts

Legislation/ policy	Implications
Commonwealth	
EPBC Act	**No referral required under the EPBC Act:** Where a project is likely to have a significant impact upon Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES), it is required to be referred to the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment via the National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA) for a decision on whether the project requires further assessment under the EPBC Act. As the Project is not likely to have a significant impact upon any MNES, a referral under the EPBC Act is not required.
State	
EE Act	**No referral under the EE Act is required (considering biodiversity criteria only)**: Where a project triggers one individual or at least two combination referral criteria specified in the Ministerial guidelines for assessment of environmental effects under the EE Act (DTP (Vic), 2023), a project is required to be referred to the Victorian Minister for Planning via the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) for a decision on whether an Environment Effects Statement (EES) is required. With the Project having negligible impact to ecological values, no biodiversity-related referral criteria have been triggered by Project impacts and therefore a referral under the EE Act is not required (based on biodiversity criteria only).
FFG Act	**No permit to take under the FFG Act is required**: Under the Act, a permit to take is required to remove threatened flora, threatened flora communities and other protected flora (namely, Orchids) from Crown land. As no threatened flora listed under the FFG Act, and no protected flora listed under the FFG Act will be removed, a permit to take under the FFG Act is not required.
Planning and Environment Act 1987 (P&E Act)	**Planning approval for native vegetation removal is not required:** The P&E Act regulates the use and development of land in Victoria, including planning approval for vegetation including native vegetation removal. The Project is not considered to require planning approval for native vegetation removal as no native vegetation assessable under the Guidelines is to be removed, destroyed or lopped, and therefore no associated permit requirement is triggered under Clause 52.17 of the Planning Scheme. **Planning approval for any vegetation removal within the ESO2 is required:** The Environmental Significance Overlay that covers part of the Project Area requires a permit for the removal of any vegetation, regardless of whether it is classified as native vegetation. A conservative approach is therefore proposed to include this as a permit trigger within the Project's permit application despite the vegetation present having potential to apply under exemptions. The areas of exotic vegetation and crops within the ESO2 (as described in **Section 2.1**) that are proposed to be removed are likely to be exempted under Schedule 2 to Clause 42.01 of the Planning Scheme, with the 'fire protection', 'noxious weeds', and 'planted vegetation' exemptions having potential to apply to the vegetation recorded within the indicative development footprint.
The Guidelines	**Assessment under the Guidelines, and native vegetation offsets not required:** The Guidelines guide how impacts on biodiversity should be considered, including whether a permit should be granted when assessing a planning permit application. As no native vegetation assessable under the Guidelines (i.e. patches of native vegetation and scattered trees) will be impacted by the proposed works, assessment under the Guidelines and native vegetation offsets are not required.
CaLP Act	**Environmental management required during construction and operation of the Project:** The CaLP Act defines requirements to avoid land degradation, conserve soil, protect water resources, and eradicate and prevent the spread and establishment of noxious weed and pest animal species. Mitigation measures to control noxious weed and pest animal species and to prevent an increase in the population of the species as a result of the Project will be required to be incorporated into environmental management documentation (e.g. a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) for the Project).
Wildlife Act 1975 (Wildlife Act).	The Wildlife Act establishes procedures to protect and conserve Victoria's wildlife. Although the risk of displacing/disrupting wildlife associated with the proposed works is negligible, should the relocation of wildlife be required by the Project, any persons engaged by the Project to relocate or otherwise handle wildlife will need to hold the appropriate authorisation under the Wildlife Act.

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3.0 Conclusion

An ecological due diligence assessment of the Project was completed, including site assessment undertaken on 3 June 2026. The Project is considered to have negligible impact upon ecological values.

Key findings, determination of further assessment requirement, and recommended next steps are presented on **page 1** of this briefing note.

4.0 References

DEECA (Vic). (2025). *Guidelines for the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation (version 1.1)*. East Melbourne: Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (Victorian Government)

DSE (Vic). (2004). *Vegetation quality assessment manual – guidelines for applying the habitat hectares scoring method (version 1.3)*. East Melbourne: Department of Sustainability and Environment (Victorian Government)

DTP (Vic). (2023). *Ministerial guidelines for assessment of environmental effects under the Environment Effects Act 1978*. Melbourne: Deartment of Transport and Planning (Victorian Government)

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