

Australian Capital Territory

Planning and Development (Conditional Environmental Significance Opinion – Block 1553, Belconnen – Weather Station Relocation) Notice 2022

Notifiable instrument NI2022–138

made under the

Planning and Development Act 2007, s 138AD (Requirements in relation to environmental significance opinions)

1 Name of instrument

This instrument is the *Planning and Development (Conditional Environmental Significance Opinion – Block 1553, Belconnen – Weather Station Relocation) Notice 2022*.

2 Commencement

This instrument commences on the day after its notification day.

3 Environmental significance opinion

- (1) On 1 February 2022, the Conservator of Flora and Fauna, pursuant to section 138AB (4) of the *Planning and Development Act 2007* (the *Act*), gave the Applicant a conditional environmental significance opinion in relation to relocation of a weather station by Icon Water at the Lower Molonglo Water Quality Control Centre, on Block 1553, Belconnen.

- (2) In this section:

conditional environmental significance opinion means the opinion in the schedule.

Note Under section 138AD (6) of the Act, the environmental significance opinion and this notice expire 18 months after the day the notice is notified.

George Cilliers
Delegate of the planning and land authority
22 March 2022

Schedule

See section 3(2)

ENVIRONMENTAL SIGNIFICANCE OPINION

In accordance with section 138AB(4) of the *Planning and Development Act 2007* (the Act), I provide the following environmental significance opinion:

APPLICANT

Impact Assessment and Approvals, Icon Water Limited, as represented by Ms Michelle Swanepoel.

APPLICATION and DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

The applicant has applied under section 138AA of the Act to the Conservator of Flora and Fauna for an environmental significance opinion to the effect that the development proposal set out in the submission is not likely to have a significant adverse environmental impact (the application).

The development proposal is for the relocation of the weather station located near the eastern side of the Sewerage Treatment Plant on Block 1553 Belconnen, as described in the submission.

LOCATION

Block 1553 Belconnen

MATTERS TO WHICH THIS OPINION APPLIES

This opinion applies only to the development proposal as described in the application.

OPINION

Provided the works are undertaken in a manner consistent with the mitigation measures contained in the supporting application for an ESO, they are unlikely to cause a significant adverse environmental impact.

Attached is a Statement of Reasons for the decision.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ian Walker', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ian Walker
Conservator of Flora and Fauna

01 February 2022

STATEMENT OF REASONS REASONS FOR THE DECISION

The proposed development is a proposal mentioned in Schedule 4 of the *Planning and Development Act 2007* – Development proposal for an activity requiring an EIS Schedule 4, being: Section 4.3 Item 1.

A review of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Protected Matters search tool (PMS) indicates that there are two critically endangered ecological communities that may occur within 1 km of the site. These are:

- Natural Temperate Grassland of the Southeastern Highlands
- White Box-Yellow Box-Blakely's Red Gum Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland

The proponent wants the application for the development approval assessed in the merit track on the grounds that the proposal is not likely to have a significant adverse environmental impact, and has applied to the Conservator of Flora and Fauna to that effect.

Meaning of *significant* adverse environmental impact

An adverse environmental impact is *significant* if—

- (a) the environmental function, system, value or entity that might be adversely impacted by a proposed development is significant; or
- (b) the cumulative or incremental effect of a proposed development might contribute to a substantial adverse impact on an environmental function, system, value or entity.

In deciding whether an adverse environmental impact is *significant*, the following matters must be taken into account:

- (a) the kind, size, frequency, intensity, scope and length of time of the impact;
- (b) the sensitivity, resilience and rarity of the environmental function, system, value or entity likely to be affected.

In deciding whether a development proposal is likely to have a significant adverse environmental impact it does not matter whether the adverse environmental impact is likely to occur on the site of the development or elsewhere.

It has been determined that the proposal is unlikely to have a significant environmental impact, based on the documentation submitted, known values of the site, and provided the works and ongoing management are carried out in accordance with the conditions attached to this ESO.

Project description

Icon Water owns and operates the Lower Molonglo Water Quality Control Centre (LMWQCC), located on 446 Stockdill Drive, Holt ACT.

Icon Water has submitted an Environmental Significance Opinion (ESO) and received approval (ESO202138201) to install underground and overhead High Voltage (HV) power lines including poles, fittings, 11kv transformers and Ring Main Units.

Additional works have been identified after the submission of the original ESO, which need to occur which were not assessed in the original submission. The additional works assessed in this ESO is the relocation of an existing weather station present at the eastern side of the STP. The weather station will be adversely influenced by the proposed overhead HV power lines and therefore needs to be re-located to another suitable location within the LMWQCC boundary.

Documentation Submitted

- Application for Environmental Significance Opinion
- Icon Water Environmental Significance Opinion dated 4 November 2021;
- Map of current and proposed site of the weather station

Natural conservation values present

The greater LMWQCC site is located immediately adjoining the confluence of the Murrumbidgee and Molonglo Rivers. The Molonglo River is located approximately 50 m south of the plant and is the waterway which the plant directly outlets treated effluent into, under a licence to discharge with the Environment Protection Authority (EPA). The Murrumbidgee River is located approximately 200 m to the North West of the plant. The Molonglo River flows north into the Murrumbidgee River, which eventually flows to the Burrinjuck Dam towards Yass in NSW.

The general vegetative surrounds of LMWQCC are natural, grassy or vegetated with two broad native vegetation communities, being quite dense *Casuarina cunninghamiana* riparian vegetation and open Grassy Box Gum Woodland, amongst grassy and rocky potential *Aprasia parapulchella* habitat.

Cultural values present

A Cultural Heritage Assessment was undertaken by Cultural Heritage Management Australia (CHMA) in November 2018. Assessment of the site reveals the presence of Aboriginal heritage values at various locations across the site. Items of heritage value such as artefact scatterings are present in the surrounds. A minimum 10 m buffer is to be implemented around two known sites in proximity to the proposed weather station, to prevent any impacts to any heritage artefacts or values is to occur. Prior to any activities in the area, both sites will be demarcated with para webbing or similar fencing.

Impact on the Environment

The installation of the weather station mast does not involve heavy machinery. It uses a handheld auger bit to drill a 300 mm diameter hole, 900 mm deep into the ground. Concrete is poured to fix the mast in place. It is also secured with three star pickets with guywires for stability (schematic of the proposed structure is shown in Figure 3). The construction works are short in duration and will only need to take place over the course of less than a week.

The normal maintenance works on the weather station will require access on a quarterly basis, or when repairs are necessitated. The quarterly site visits are used to calibrate the equipment using portable tools operated by ALS brought on the back of a utility vehicle. ALS are the contractor engaged by Icon Water to undertake monitoring at various sites around the Canberra sewer and water network.

The works will also necessitate the removal of four (4) juvenile *Eucalyptus Blakelyi* (previously planted as replacement trees) to prevent interference with the collection of weather data. To replace the four juvenile trees, Icon Water will be planting a total of eight (8) trees as follows.

- Tree replacement on Block 1553 will be based on a 1:2 ratio, equating to 8 trees to be planted.
- The replacement species will be a mix of Yellow Box (*Eucalyptus melliodora*) and Blakely's Red Gum (*Eucalyptus blakleyi*). Species selection has been based on site surrounds and previous advice from PCS.

Potentially Significant Environmental Impacts

The proposed location for the weather station is considered the most feasible to achieve its objectives, whilst not adversely impacting potentially protected habitats or heritage zones. This chosen area has limited obstructions and ample flat space for the Weather Station to be installed, whilst differing in elevation by only 23 m from the original site.

Access to the new site will be via the existing LMWQCC Gate 1 through the Admin Building carpark, with the proposed route using an already established track to the weather station site running alongside the LMWQCC perimeter fence.

The proposed project is predicted not to have a significant environmental impact, for the following reasons:

- Footprint of the proposed installation is minimal <50 m².
- Heritage sites/items identified and demarcated before works commence onsite.

- All access restricted to a clearly identified track to reduce/eliminate impact on known sensitive areas.
- Proposed replanting for a maximum of 4 juvenile trees that may need to be removed.
- An Unexpected Finds Protocol will be in place in the event Flora & Fauna, Heritage, contamination or other unexpected items are identified on site.

It has been determined that if the works are undertaken in a manner consistent with the mitigation measures contained in the supporting application for an ESO, they are unlikely to cause a significant adverse environmental impact.