



Your ref: SSD-79717209
Our ref: DOC26/126751

Rita Hatem
Senior Environmental Assessment Officer
Department of Planning Housing and Infrastructure

By email: Rita.hatem@planning.nsw.gov.au

Dear Rita

Garoo Solar Farm and Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) – SSD-79747209 – Environmental Impact Statement

Thank you for your request dated 3 March 2026 seeking advice from the Conservation Programs, Heritage & Regulation Group (CPHR) of the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) on the exhibited Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for Garoo Solar Farm and BESS.

We have reviewed the exhibited Biodiversity Development Assessment Report (BDAR) and EIS against the Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) provided by the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) dated 4 March 2025.

To fully comply with the Biodiversity Assessment Method 2020 (BAM), CPHR recommends the proponent:

- include assessment of all mapped scattered trees in the scattered tree module in the BAM Calculator (BAM-C) and
- complete additional flora and fauna surveys.

CPHR provided advice on the Land Category Assessment on 4 June 2025 (DOC25/467851-2). We note this has not been revised to date. Where changes to the draft Native Vegetation Regulatory (NVR) map land categorisation are proposed, we recommend a free formal map review is sought to mitigate risk to the proponent.

Our assessment and advice are included **Attachment 1**. CPHR will review the updated BDAR and BAM-C cases and provide advice on the Serious and Irreversible Impacts (SAIL) assessment during the Response to Submissions (RTS).

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CPHR met with the accredited assessor and other project representatives on 17 March 2026 to discuss the assessment issues in **Attachment 1**. We will continue to work with the proponent and their accredited assessor to resolve issues.

CPHR commends the proponent on their site selection and avoidance of impacts to biodiversity.

Review of the Water Resources Impact Assessment indicates that flood emergency management strategies will be drafted at the post approval stage. The proponent has successfully addressed the SEARs requirements, and no further action is required as outlined in **Attachment 2**.

If you have any further questions about this issue, please contact the Conservation Planning and Assessments team – North at rog.nw@environment.nsw.gov.au.

Yours sincerely



Allison Treweek
Senior Manager North
Conservation Planning and Assessment
Conservation Programs, Heritage and Regulation Group (CPHR)

30 March 2026

Attachment 1 - CPHR Biodiversity Assessment Summary for Garoo Solar Farm and BESS BDAR (SSD-79747209)

In preparing this advice CPHR has reviewed the following documents:

- Garoo Solar Farm and BESS BDAR (ERM, 29 January 2026)
- Garoo_GIS Package_BDAR_20250819.zip
- Garoo_BDAR_Additional_20260306.zip

Key Assessment Issues

1.	<i>Scattered tree assessed does not comply with the BAM</i>	<p>Several scattered trees identified in the BDAR have not been included in the BAM-C scattered tree assessment module.</p> <p>The BDAR scattered tree assessment concludes that 40 scattered trees will be directly impacted by the development (Table E-6; Appendix D). This data does not correlate with the polygon for “VZ 2 scattered trees” shown in Figure 4-3 of the BDAR, or the spatial data layer “<i>Impact_requiring_offset_EEC</i>”. CPHR is unable to determine which trees have been adequately assessed under the scattered tree streamlined module or as vegetation zone under the full BAM.</p> <p>Isolated trees within Tamarang Creek occur on category-2 vulnerable regulated land and do not meet the definition of a scattered tree. The full BAM must be applied.</p> <p>Recommended action:</p> <p><i>1.1 Review the scattered tree assessment against trees included in VZ_2_scattered trees and update data in the BAMC</i></p> <p><i>1.2 Reassign isolated trees within Tamarang Creek to a vegetation zone and apply full BAM</i></p> <p><i>1.3 Revise any impacted species-credit-species polygons accordingly</i></p>
	<i>Extent and Timing</i>	<i>RTS</i>
2.	<i>Flora species have not been adequately surveyed</i>	<p>Threatened flora survey has not been conducted in areas of impact for vegetation zone 1 (Plant Community Type (PCT) 599 open woodland) or vegetation zone 3 (PCT 599 derived native grassland).</p> <p>Recommended action:</p> <p><i>2.1 Where survey has not been conducted for a species, reassess for the presence of suitable habitat to determine whether survey is required and either undertake survey, assume presence, or seek an expert report, and prepare a species polygon when required.</i></p>
	<i>Extent and Timing</i>	<i>RTS</i>
3.	<i>Fauna species have not been adequately surveyed</i>	<p>The following fauna species have not been adequately surveyed for in areas of impact for vegetation zone 1 (PCT 599 open woodland) and/or vegetation zone 3 (PCT 599 derived native grassland):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pink-tailed legless lizard (<i>Aprasia parapulchella</i>) • Hunter Valley delma (<i>Delma vescolineata</i>) • Border thick-tailed gecko (<i>Uvidicolus sphyurus</i>) • Pale-headed snake (<i>Hoplocephalus bitorquatus</i>)

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eastern pygmy-possum (<i>Cercartetus nanus</i>) • Squirrel glider (<i>Petaurus norfolcensis</i>) • Bush stone-curlew (<i>Burhinus grallarius</i>) <p>The Threatened Biodiversity Data Collection (TBDC) requires the species polygon boundary for the eastern cave bat to align with all PCTs on the subject land that are within 2 km of identified potential roost habitat features. Figure 5-5 indicates suitable roosting habitat is >2 km from the development footprint. The polygon can be removed from the assessment.</p> <p>Recommended action:</p> <p><i>3.1 Where survey has not been conducted for a species, reassess for the presence of suitable habitat to determine whether survey is required and either undertake survey, assume presence or seek an expert report and prepare a species polygon where required.</i></p> <p><i>3.2 Remove the species polygon for eastern cave bat from assessment and BAM-C.</i></p>
	<i>Extent and Timing</i>	<i>RTS</i>

4.	<i>Native vegetation extent and patch size is underestimated</i>	<p>Mapping for native vegetation extent does not appear to include native vegetation on the subject land, or all scattered trees and potential native non-woody vegetation within the assessment area.</p> <p>When determining patch size for a vegetation zone, adjacent areas of native vegetation (woody and non-woody) within the subject land and adjoining land should be included. CPHR considers that vegetation along Tamarang Creek is continuous with areas of native woodland vegetation in the adjoining land to the north. Similarly, woody vegetation zones in the east are continuous with vegetation along Sugarloaf Creek.</p> <p>Recommended action:</p> <p><i>4.1 Recalculate native vegetation extent and patch size for each vegetation zone and update the BAM-C.</i></p>
	<i>Extent and Timing</i>	<i>RTS</i>

5.	<i>Land Category Assessment (LCA) has not been revised following advice provided by CPHR on 4 July 2025</i>	<p>The LCA has not documented how the absence of critically endangered (CE) flora and critically endangered ecological communities (CEECs) was determined.</p> <p>CPHR recommends accepting the category 2 – regulated land categorisation near the Garoo Road entrance, as displayed on the draft NVR map as it reflects the Department’s understanding of the land category based on the <i>Local Land Services Act 2013</i>.</p> <p>Recommended action:</p> <p><i>5.1 To minimise risk, the proponent may seek a formal map review where the land category has been changed from category 2 – regulated to category 1 – exempt land.</i></p>
	<i>Extent and Timing</i>	<i>RTS</i>

Attachment 2 - CPHR Flooding Assessment Summary for Garoo Solar Farm and BESS BDAR (SSD-79747209)

In preparing this advice CPHR has reviewed the following documents:

- Garoo Solar Farm and BESS Environmental Impact Statement, (ERM, 30 January 2026).
- Garoo Solar Farm Project - Water Resources Impact Assessment (ENGEY, 4 November 2025).

The Project Area is transversed in the east portion by two ephemeral creeks (Tamarang Creek and Sugarloaf Creek), whereas overland flow paths characterise the western portion. The Area has not been identified as flood prone land within the Tamworth Regional Local Environmental Plan 2010. The SEARs Letter required to prepare a Flood Impact Risk Assessment (FIRA) in accordance with the Flood Risk Management Guide LU01, follow the provisions of the NSW Flood Risk Management Manual 2023 and consider the existing council studies. The Letter also requested to describe the existing and post development flood behaviour for the full range of events, including the 5% Annual Exceedance Probability (AEP), 1% AEP, Probable Maximum Flood (PMF) and 0.5% AEP or 0.2% AEP. In addition, the FIRA should include the hydraulic categorisation, flood hazard mapping, and consider impacts of climate change.

The flood model simulated the existing and developed conditions for the full range of flood events up to the PMF, included the existing culverts and bridges. The Project infrastructure includes ancillary infrastructure, such as the BESS, substations, proposed roads and a new bridge. Under the existing conditions for a 1% AEP flood event, modelling indicates the floodwaters are confined within the creeks and areas with overland flow, where typical depths reach up to 3 m and less than 0.50 m, respectively. Model outputs indicate that for a 1% AEP flood event, the proposed infrastructure increases the existing flood depths of up to 0.1 m due to modified flow conditions and higher runoff rates associated with the solar panels. For the existing and developed scenarios, the Assessment included mapping of the flood depth, velocity, flood hazard categories and hydraulic categorisation for the full range of flood events. Whereas for a 1% AEP flood event, the predominant flood hazard categories is H1 to H3, with higher hazards within defined watercourses and overland flow paths.

The Project infrastructure has been proposed to be above the 1% AEP flood level plus a 500 mm freeboard. Also, erosion and sediment controls will be implemented to minimise scouring and erosion. Regarding flood emergency management during large flood events, early warning systems, communication protocols, triggers for closure, evacuation and recovery procedures will be proposed at the post approval stage. Finally, a climate change sensitivity analysis was undertaken, and it was found there is generally minor differences in flood extent for the climate change scenarios.

In summary, the submitted EIS and the associated Assessment have successfully addressed the SEARs requirements.