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Your ref: SSI-70279722

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Dear Erin

Mount Piper to Wallerawang Transmission – Environmental Impact Statement

Thank you for your request via the NSW Major Projects Planning Portal dated 27 August 2025 to the Conservation Programs, Heritage and Regulation Group (CPHR) of the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (NSW DCCEEW) inviting comments on the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Mount Piper to Wallerawang Transmission Line Environmental Impact Statement (SSI-70279722).

CPHR has reviewed the EIS and Biodiversity Development Assessment Report (BDAR) and considers that the BDAR requires some minor revisions to ensure that it is compliant with the Biodiversity Assessment Method (BAM).

Priority issues identified during our review are:

- The assessment of native vegetation cover is not in accordance with section 3.2 of the BAM.
- Inconsistencies between the BDAR vegetation mapping, spatial data and BAM-Calculator (BAM-C) should be addressed.
- Further survey is required for the purple copper butterfly (*Paralucia spinifera*).
- The species polygons for threatened forest owls can be refined in response to recent updates in the Threatened Biodiversity Database Collection (TBDC).
- The BDAR requires explicit commitments to minimising prescribed impacts to threatened birds and the squirrel glider (*Petaurus norfolcensis*).

We have reviewed the Serious and Irreversible Impact Assessment (SII) assessment for the large-eared pied bat (*Chalinolobus dwyeri*) and consider that the impact to potential breeding habitat is minor, and therefore, unlikely to have a SII on the species.

We wish to commend Transgrid and their accredited assessors on their continued engagement on this project and the quality of the BDAR that has been prepared.

The BDAR does not contain a partial loss assessment, and we understand that the proponent has committed to a credit obligation based on full loss for the proposed development. We remain open to attending a site visit to resolve any outstanding issues if required.

CPHR's biodiversity recommendations are provided in **Attachment A** and detailed comments are provided in **Attachment B**.

If you have any questions about this advice, please do not hesitate to contact Candice Larkin, Principal Project Officer, via candice.larkin@dcceew.nsw.gov.au or (02) 8217 2065.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Sarah Carr', with a stylized, cursive script.

Sarah Carr
Director North West
Conservation Programs, Heritage and Regulation Group

25 September 2025

Attachment A – CPHR's Recommendations

Attachment B – CPHR's Detailed Comments

CPHR's recommendations

Mount Piper to Wallerawang Transmission Line – Environmental Impact Statement

BAM	Biodiversity Assessment Method
BAM-C	Biodiversity Assessment Method Calculator
BDAR	Biodiversity Development Assessment Report
CPHR	Conservation Programs, Heritage and Regulation
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
IBRA	Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation of Australia
NVR	Native Vegetation Regulatory Map
PCT	Plant Community Type
SAIL	Serious and Irreversible Impacts
TBDC	Threatened Biodiversity Database Collection
VI	Vegetation Integrity
VIS-C	BioNet Vegetation Classification System

Recommendations

- 1.1. Revise the assessment area for the project in accordance with the requirements of section 3.1.2 of the BAM and recalculate the native vegetation cover percentage in the BDAR and BAM-C.
- 1.2. Review the candidate species credit species list in the BAM-C if the vegetation cover class increases and determine whether any additional threatened species require assessment.
- 2.1. Provide all VI plot data, in both raw capture and spreadsheet format to CPHR.
- 2.2. Review the vegetation mapping for the BDAR, spatial data and BAM-C cases and ensure the information is consistent. Where required, revise the credit obligation for the project in the BAM-C and BDAR.
- 3.1. Provide VI plot data, in both scanned paper sheets and Excel sheets to CPHR which includes every plot informing the BDAR and BAM-C.
- 3.2. Conduct a full audit of the vegetation mapping for the BDAR, spatial data and BAM-C cases and ensure the information is consistent across all datasets. Where required, revise the credit obligation for the project in the BAM-C and BDAR.
- 4.1. Revise the plot duplication approach to ensure that plots are only duplicated across the same vegetation zone and PCT
- 4.2. Undertake an audit of duplicated plots in the BAM-C and ensure that the floristic data entered is consistent across original and duplicated plots.
- 4.3. Provide justification for plot duplication in the revised BDAR.
- 5.1. Conduct targeted surveys for the purple copper butterfly in all areas containing *Bursaria spinosa*. Alternatively, assume presence or obtain an expert report, in accordance with section 5.2 of the BAM.

- 6.1. Refine the species polygons for threatened forest owls in accordance with recent changes to survey advice in the TBDC.
- 7.1. Include explicit commitments to mitigation measures for threatened birds and the squirrel glider in the revised BDAR.

CPHR's detailed comments

Mount Piper to Wallerawang Transmission Line – Environmental Impact Statement

1. Revise the native vegetation cover percentage in the BDAR and BAM-C

Section 3.2 of the BAM requires the BDAR to assess native vegetation cover on the subject land in relation to native vegetation cover across the broader area. The BDAR must identify the extent of woody and non-woody native vegetation cover within the assessment area.

The Mount Piper Transmission Line project has been assessed as a linear-shaped development in the BAM-C, however a 1500m buffer has been applied in the spatial data and used to calculate native vegetation cover percentage in section 3.3 of the BDAR. As the proposed development is linear, a 500m buffer should be applied to the assessment area.

Native vegetation cover is an important habitat suitability filter for candidate threatened species within the BAM-C and errors in this part of the assessment may result in additional candidate species requiring assessment.

The BDAR and spatial data should be revised to include a 500m buffer along each side of the centre line of the proposed development footprint and the native vegetation within the 500m buffer should be re-calculated. If the native vegetation cover class increases, review the BAM-C to ensure that no additional species credit species require survey.

Recommendations

- 1.1. Revise the assessment area for the project in accordance with the requirements of section 3.1.2 of the BAM and recalculate the native vegetation cover percentage in the BDAR and BAM-C.
- 1.2. Review the candidate species credit species list in the BAM-C if the vegetation cover class increases and determine whether any additional threatened species require assessment.

2. There are inconsistencies between the vegetation mapping and the BDAR and BAM-C cases

An audit on a random sample of vegetation integrity (VI) plots has identified some inconsistencies between the floristic data provided and the BAM-C and vegetation mapping in the BDAR.

For example:

- There are minor transcription errors in the composition tab for BH9 and BH19 and the stem classes in the function tab are inconsistent for JR6, BH9 and BH10.
- VI plot JR16 is in *PCT 3369 'shrubland'* in the spatial data but has been included in *PCT 3369 'good'* in the BDAR and the BAM-C.
- VI plot JR20 is in *PCT 3749 'good'* in the spatial data and BDAR but has been entered into *PCT 3747 'good'* vegetation zone.
- VI plot BH13B has been plotted in the spatial data in a different vegetation zone to BH13, which it appears to be duplicated from.

CPHR was not provided with raw floristic data sheets and note that the complete suite of BAM plot data should be provided for verification. This includes both scanned copies of paper data sheets,

and the Excel collector format data sheets, and extends to every plot used to inform the BDAR and BAM-C.

The data provided in the vegetation mapping and BDAR must be consistent with the data entered into the BAM-C, as any errors in the BAM-C will impact the final credit liability for the project.

Recommendations

- 2.1. Provide all VI plot data, in both raw capture and spreadsheet format to CPHR.
- 2.2. Review the vegetation mapping for the BDAR, spatial data and BAM-C cases and ensure the information is consistent. Where required, revise the credit obligation for the project in the BAM-C and BDAR.

3. BAM plots cannot be duplicated across different PCTs and vegetation zones

Section 4.1 and Table 4.10 of the BDAR indicate that plot duplication has occurred across vegetation zones and PCTs, however no justification has been provided for plot duplication. We note that VI Plot JR4 is in *PCT 3369 'good'* but has been duplicated in *PCT 3749 'shrubland'* (JR4B). Similarly, BH13B is in a different vegetation zone to BH13.

Multiple VI plots exist for each vegetation zone, so it is unclear why other plots within the same vegetation zone have not been duplicated.

CPHR does not support the duplication of plots across differing PCTs or vegetation zones and it is not considered appropriate for the linear nature of this project. Whilst the duplication of plots may be accepted in some circumstances, the following principles will need to be met:

- If a vegetation zone has been adequately sampled but a minor number of duplicated plots (for example one or two) are required to meet minimum plot numbers, the sampled plot with the highest VI score within the same vegetation zone and PCT may be proposed to be duplicated. If this is proposed, adequate evidence will need to be provided to justify that:
 - the vegetation zone has been adequately sampled and is representative of the variability of condition that is present
 - the duplicated plot represents the highest VI score in the vegetation zone
 - the duplicated plot has been taken from the same PCT which is comprised of the same diagnostic flora species.

In addition, the data entered into the BAM-C is not consistent for JR4 and BH13. The table below shows composition, structure and function data for VI plot BH13, and its duplicate, VI plot BH13B. The floristic data from the original plot has not been duplicated in any area of the BAM-C.

Plot	Composition					
BH13	6	5	8	13	1	2
BH13B	1	6	11	14	0	0
	Structure					
BH13	34.5	36.6	49.6	3.8	0.2	0.4
BH13B	1	41.7	58.2	14.1	0	0
	Function					
BH13	Stem classes ticked	3	3	68	61	0.5
BH13B	Absent	0	0	41	36	0.4

The BDAR should be updated to include justification for all plots that have been duplicated across each affected vegetation zone, and the BAM-C should be revised to address inconsistencies in plot duplication.

Recommendations

- 3.1. Revise the plot duplication approach to ensure that plots are only duplicated across the same vegetation zone and PCT.
- 3.2. Undertake an audit of duplicated plots in the BAM-C and ensure that the floristic data entered is consistent across original and duplicated plots.
- 3.3. Provide justification for plot duplication in the revised BDAR.

4. Further survey is required for the purple copper butterfly

Section 2.6.4 of the BDAR states that surveys for the purple copper butterfly included the identification of suitable habitat and targeted survey in the appropriate survey window for the species, as identified in the Threatened Biodiversity Database Collection (TBDC).

Section 2.6.4 of the BDAR also states that habitat surveys were conducted in all areas where *Bursaria spinosa subsp. spinosa* had been identified. We have reviewed the spatial data against the floristic data collected from VI plots and note that *B. spinosa* was documented in multiple plots across the development footprint which have not been surveyed.

For example, *B. spinosa* was identified in VI plot BH13 in February 2024 but the area has not been surveyed for the purple copper butterfly, despite the presence of the habitat constraint in an associated PCT. Recent populations of the purple copper butterfly have been recorded approximately 1.1 kms north, and 2.9kms south of this VI plot. We also note that the September surveys occurred when the temperature was less than 15 degrees which is not in accordance with the survey requirements, as per the TBDC.

CPHR recommends that the proponent conduct additional targeted surveys for the purple copper butterfly, in accordance with section 5.2 of the BAM. Alternatively, assume presence or obtain an expert report.

Recommendation

- 4.1. Conduct targeted surveys for the purple copper butterfly in all areas containing *Bursaria spinosa*. Alternatively, assume presence or obtain an expert report, in accordance with section 5.2 of the BAM.

5. Refine the species polygons for the barking owl (*Ninox connivens*) and the powerful owl (*Ninox strenua*)

CPHR has reviewed the spatial data and species polygons for the barking owl and the powerful owl and consider that the species polygons for these species can be further refined. The TBDC states:

“the species polygon must be drawn to include all vegetation zones; 1. within 800 m from the location of a detected owl, and 2. containing a living or dead tree with a hollow >20cm diameter that occurs >4m above the ground. The location of the detected owl should be determined by estimating the distance and direction of the call”.

All vegetation zones within 800m of the location of a detected owl which contain hollow-bearing trees should be included in the species polygon. The species polygon does not need to include areas of these vegetation zones that are not continuous with the 800m buffer area (for example, areas of the same vegetation zone that are separated by other PCTs, vegetation zones or non-native vegetation).

We have reviewed the species polygons for the barking and powerful owl and understand that they include all areas of the vegetation zones located within the 800m buffer, even if the areas are discontinuous. We recommend that the species polygon for the barking owl and powerful owl be reviewed and refined in response to the recent changes to survey advice in the TBDC.

Recommendation

- 5.1. Refine the species polygons for threatened forest owls in accordance with recent changes to survey advice in the TBDC.

6. Detail explicit commitments to implementing mitigation measures for threatened species

Actions to avoid or minimise biodiversity impacts need to be included in the BDAR prior to approval and mitigation measures also need to be sufficiently detailed to guide post-approval management plans.

Section 8.5 of the BDAR identifies impacts to:

- squirrel glider habitat connectivity associated with the widening of the transmission line easement
- threatened bird species including the gang-gang cockatoo (*Callocephalon fimbriatum*), white-bellied sea-eagle (*Haliaeetus leucogaster*), black falcon (*Falco subniger*), barking and owl and powerful which are at increased risk of collision with transmission lines.

The mitigation measures in Tables 8.5 and 8.13 of the BDAR use non-binding language and defer commitments to the post-approval stage.

Examples include vague commitments such as:

- ‘Potential for further avoiding and mitigating impacts on connectivity are also being investigated’
- ‘Other mitigation measures such as glider poles may also be suitable in some areas if they do not interfere with the swag and sway of the transmission lines’
- ‘Use of fauna deterrent devices, most likely consisting of the “flapper” variety, will be considered’.

Mitigation measures must contain explicit commitments from the proponent. This should be specifically addressed for mitigation measures proposed for prescribed impacts to habitat connectivity and indirect impacts to bird strike, as squirrel gliders and threatened woodland birds have been documented across the proposed development area.

Recommendations

- 6.1. Include explicit commitments to mitigation measures for threatened birds and the squirrel glider in the revised BDAR.