

11<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2018

**ANNA HARRIS**

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LEVEL 1, 19 FOSTER STREET, SURRY HILLS  
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**Re: SUPPORT FOR WAIVER OF BDAR REQUIREMENT FOR ALEXANDRIA PARK COMMUNITY SCHOOL**

Dear Anna

In accordance with clause 7.9 of the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 (BC Act)*, an application for development consent for a State Significant Development (such as that for the Subject Property, Alexandria Park Community School) is to be accompanied by a Biodiversity Development Assessment Report (BDAR) unless the Planning Agency Head and the Environment Agency Head determine that the proposed development is not likely to have any significant impact on biodiversity values. This letter has been prepared in support of a request for a waiver of the requirement to prepare a BDAR for the Proposal at Subject Property.

The biodiversity values identified in clause 1.5 of the *BC Act* and clause 1.4 of the *Biodiversity Conservation Regulation 2017* are reviewed below for the Subject Property (*i.e.* the School). This information has primarily been sourced from a comprehensive Ecological Report prepared by UBM, entitled: *Technical Studies: Flora & Fauna Survey for the Proposed Redevelopment of Alexandria Park Community School, Alexandria* (Revision 3, 13<sup>th</sup> March 2018).

In addition, peer comments supporting the adequacy of the UBM (2018) Ecological Report as an alternative to the Framework for Biodiversity Assessment (FBA) are provided below in the *Peer Review Section*.

**Vegetation Integrity**

Vegetation integrity is defined as the degree to which the composition, structure and function of vegetation at a particular site and the surrounding landscape has been altered from a near natural state.

Local scale vegetation mapping undertaken by Benson and Howell (1994) indicates the occurrence of two (2) vegetation types within the School; *Coastal Dune Forest* (9t) and *Coastal Dune Heath* (21b). The two (2) vegetation types are characterised by the following sub-units:

- *Coastal Dune Forest*
  - *Open Forest* – *Eucalyptus botryoides* - *Eucalyptus pilularis* - *Angophora costata*
- *Coastal Dune Heath*
  - *Open Heath* – *Banksia aemula*
  - *Open Scrub* – *Monotoca elliptica*

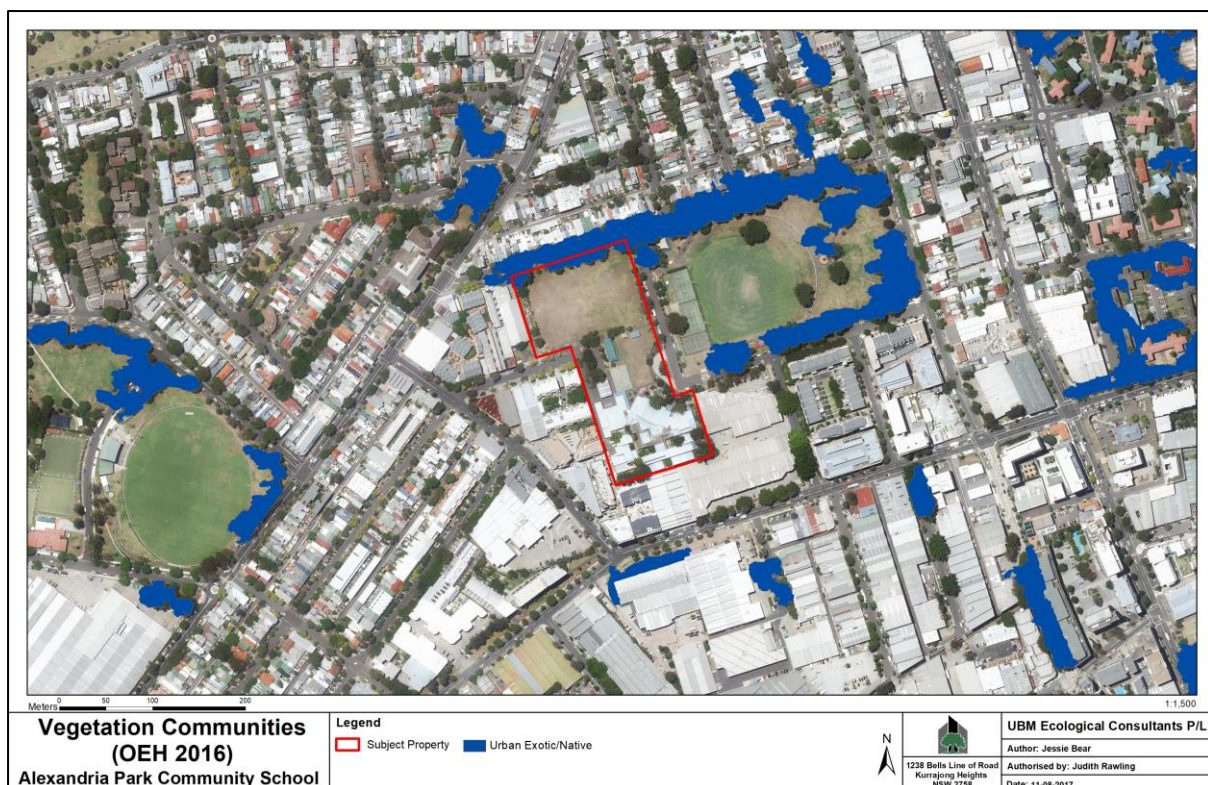
More recent regional-scale vegetation mapping by Tozer *et al.* (2010) for the former Department of Environment Climate Change & Water ('DECCW') describes the School and its surrounds as 'Cleared', while the Office of Environment & Heritage (OEH 2016) identifies 'Urban Exotic/Native' as the only vegetation type mapped in or near the School.

It is apparent from the field investigation undertaken by UBM (2018) that *Open Forest* and/or *Open Heath/Scrub* vegetation types described by Benson and Howell (1994) that are likely to have originally existed over the School and Locality have been subject to extensive clearing and development. Due to clearing of the original vegetation, mapping and classification by OEH (2016) was found to be sufficiently accurate to illustrate the existing vegetation at the School (*Figure 1*).

The existing native vegetation in the School consists predominantly of planted trees on the site perimeter and in landscaped garden beds. The mature Fig trees (*Ficus* sp.) on Buckland Street are not considered as remnant on the site, and are likely associated with the heritage landscaping of the suburb of Alexandria and Alexandria Park. While much of the planted flora in the School are 'generally native' species, the structure and species composition of the existing flora are not representative of the original vegetation community likely to have existed in the Locality before any anthropogenic developments.

Historical imagery from 1943 (*Figure 2*) shows that the Subject Property contained no vegetation and was fully occupied by many large buildings prior to the establishment of the School.

**Figure 1: Vegetation Communities for the Locality (OEH 2016)**



## Figure 2: Historical Imagery from 1943

Source: Spatial Services NSW (2018) - <https://maps.six.nsw.gov.au/#>



### Habitat Suitability

Habitat suitability is defined as the degree to which the habitat needs of threatened species are present at a particular site.

A search of the BioNet database for threatened species listed under the *BC Act* recorded in the last 10 years within a 10-km x 10 km area centred on the Subject Property (parameters North: -33.85 West: 151.14 East: 151.24 South: -33.95, search conducted 27<sup>th</sup> July 2017), found records for three (3) flora species and 12 fauna species (*Table 2* and *Table 3*).

In addition, the recent surveys (UBM 2018) recorded two (2) microbat species that may be Vulnerable microbats (detected with varying reliability of identification):

- A 'Probable' call of the non-threatened Gould's Wattled Bat (*Chalinolobus gouldii*) may also be that of the Vulnerable Eastern Freetail-bat (*Mormopterus norfolkensis*).
- An unknown microbat between 32 – 34 KHz, probably Gould's Wattled Bat (*Chalinolobus gouldii*), but may also be the Vulnerable Greater Broad-nosed Bat (*Scoteanax rueppellii*) or non-threatened Eastern Broad-nosed Bat (*Scotorepens orion*), which call at this frequency.

An Assessment of the potential for those recently recorded threatened species to occur within or use the School, is provided in *Table 2* and *Table 3*, using the assessment criteria detailed in *Table 1*. These assessments were generally based on the habitat requirements described by OEH (various dates), DOE (2017), NSW Scientific Committee and Commonwealth Threatened Species Scientific Committee (various dates) with other references used being identified in the Bibliography.

None of the flora or fauna recently recorded within 5 km of the School are considered likely to occur within or to use the resources of the Subject Property. A general description of the fauna habitats observed within the School follows:



Two (2) broad habitat types available for use by native fauna were recorded in the School:

1. Maintained Parkland
2. Urban Infrastructure

The following descriptions outline the habitat features and fauna conservation value of each of these habitat types:

#### **Maintained Parkland**

#### **Fauna Conservation Value: Low**

Maintained Parkland consists of mown grass and planted gardens (including trees, shrubs and groundcovers) within the School. Gardens provide potential perching, nesting, sheltering and foraging habitat for birds, bats, arboreal mammals and reptiles. Insects shelter beneath exfoliating bark and are attracted to the flowers and fruits of these trees; in turn, the insects are consumed by insectivorous birds and microbats. No (0) hollow-bearing trees suitable for nesting birds were observed within the School grounds, though exfoliating bark may provide crevices for small herpetofauna and microbats.

The mown grass area provides little cover or structure, but does offer foraging opportunities for insectivorous and scavenging birds (there is some human litter present), as well as microbats. Several native birds, possums, and the threatened Grey-headed Flying-fox (*Pteropus poliocephalus*), are known to consume the fruit and nectar of fig trees, flowering *Eucalypts* species, and horticultural plantings, which are present within the School. In turn, these animals are potential prey for Powerful Owls.

The Maintained Parkland is surrounded by busy roads and large buildings, creating significant edge effects and human disturbance including noise, light and trampling associated with school uses. Noisy Miners (*Manorina melanocephala*) were common within the School and are known to aggressively exclude other native bird species, especially in such modified habitats: This process is listed as a Key Threatening Process under *BC Act*.

Overall the Maintained Parkland is considered to be of low fauna conservation value, but may be utilised opportunistically for foraging and/or resting by highly mobile threatened fauna moving through the Region (refer to *Habitat Connectivity Section*).

#### **Urban Infrastructure**

#### **Fauna Conservation Value: Low**

Urban Infrastructure includes all buildings and sheds within the School. These structures are abundant in the Region and provide artificial shelter and basking habitat for small reptiles. Additionally, there is potential roosting habitat for microbats in the manmade structures within the School. Due to the artificial nature of Urban Infrastructure, this habitat type is considered to be of low fauna conservation value.

**Table 1: Assessment Criteria for Listed Fauna Species' Potential to Use the School**

CRITERIA FOR UTILISATION	
UNLIKELY	<p>Species considered unlikely to occur/use the School fit one or more of the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ species not recorded in the field survey;</li> <li>▪ species not recorded previously in the School or Region (within 5 km of the School);</li> <li>▪ species with a known distribution or range outside of the School; and/or</li> <li>▪ Species that rely on habitats and habitat features that do not occur in the School.</li> </ul>
POSSIBLE	<p>Species considered possibly to occur/use the School fit one or more of the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Species with occasional records (within the last ten [10] years) of occurring within the Region (within 5 km of the School);</li> <li>▪ Species with preferred habitat or habitat features occur on the School, however they occur in poor or modified condition or extremely limited; and/or</li> <li>▪ Species that may use or occur in habitats within the School opportunistically <i>i.e.</i> seasonally, however unlikely to be present on the property permanently and hence have no immediate impact on nesting/roosting or feeding habitat.</li> </ul>
LIKELY	<p>Species considered likely to occur/use the School fit one or more of the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Species that have frequent and recent (within the last ten [10] years) incidence of previous records on the School and/or Region (within 5 km of the School);</li> <li>▪ Species that preferentially use habitat and/or habitat features that occur within the School and which are abundant and/or in good condition;</li> <li>▪ Species with resident populations known to occur in the School; and/or</li> <li>▪ Species are known to frequently use habitat or habitat features within the School or Region (within 5 km of the School) and/or are highly likely to visit the School during seasonal dispersal or migration.</li> </ul>
CONFIRMED	<p>A species identified within the School during the fauna field survey conducted in August 2017 and March 2018, or by another recent fauna field survey conducted by an independent consultant and/or qualified Ecologist/Environmental Representative.</p>

**Table 2: Flora Species of Conservation Significance Occurring within the Region**

Legislative Classification: E1/E = Endangered Species; and V = Vulnerable Species.

\* Habitat requirements were generally extracted from OEH (various dates), with other references used being identified in the bibliography.

~ Within a 10 km<sup>2</sup> area centered on the School (parameters north: -33.85, west: 151.14, east: 151.24, south: -33.95).

SCIENTIFIC NAME & COMMON NAME	LEGAL STATUS		^NO. OF RECORDS	HABITAT REQUIREMENTS*	LIKELY PRESENCE IN THE SCHOOL
	BC ACT	EPBC ACT			
<i>Doryanthes palmeri</i> Giant Spear Lily	V		1	The Giant Spear Lily is a large, succulent, rosette shaped herb. It grows on exposed rocky outcrops in infertile soils, and in a narrow band of vegetation along the cliff-tops, ledges and faces in montane heath next to subtropical rainforest, warm temperate rainforest or wet eucalypt forest (OEH 2012).	<b>Unlikely:</b> Not appropriate habitat.
<i>Acacia terminalis subsp. terminalis</i> Sunshine Wattle	E1	E	1	An erect shrub with sparse foliage growing up to 2m tall. This rare species occurs in scrub and open Eucalypt woodland or forest the near-coastal areas of the northern shores of Sydney harbour to Botany Bay in NSW. It usually flowers in March - July (PlantNet n.d.).	<b>Possible:</b> No individuals recorded during this survey.
<i>Syzygium paniculatum</i> Magenta Lilly Pilly	E	V	14	Only found in NSW in a narrow, linear coastal strip from Upper Lansdowne to Conjola State Forest, and occurs on gravels, sands, silts, and clays north of Sydney (OEH 2014). Popular as a landscaping tree in urban parks and gardens.	<b>Possible:</b> No individuals recorded during this survey.

**Table 3: Threatened Fauna Assessment**

**Legislative Classification:** CE = Critically Endangered; E1/E = Endangered Species; V = Vulnerable; B = Bonn Convention; C = CAMBA Migratory; J = JAMBA Migratory; K = KAMBA Migratory.

Species listed under the Sensitive Species Data Policy may have their locations denatured: 3 = rounded to 0.01°; 2 = rounded to 0.1°.

^ Within the last 10 years in a 10 x 10 km area centered on the School (parameters North: -33.85 West: 151.14 East: 151.24 South: -33.95). Search conducted 27<sup>th</sup> July 2017.

**Note:** Assessments were generally based on the habitat requirements described by OEH (various dates), DOE (2017), NSW Scientific Committee and Commonwealth Threatened Species Scientific Committee (various dates) with other references used being identified in the Bibliography.

COMMON & SCIENTIFIC NAME	STATUS		RECORDS IN THE REGION^			POTENTIAL TO USE SCHOOL
	TSC ACT	EPBC ACT	WITHIN 5 KM	WITHIN 1 KM	MOST RECENT	
FROGS (1)						
Green and Golden Bell Frog <i>Litoria aurea</i>	E1	V	106	-	Jan 2017	Unlikely: There is no suitable aquatic habitat within the School. Recent records for this species are centered around Kogarah Golf Course, ~4.9 km south-west of the School.
REPTILES (1)						
Leatherback Turtle <i>Dermochelys coriacea</i>	E1	E	1	-	Apr 2016	Unlikely: There is no suitable marine habitat within the School.
BIRDS (5)						
Freckled Duck <i>Stricktonetta naevosa</i>	V	-	1	-	Jun 2013	Unlikely: There is no suitable aquatic habitat within the School.
Bush Stone-curlew <i>Burhinus grallarius</i>	E1	-	3	-	Jan 2011	Unlikely: There is no suitable forest or woodland habitat within the School.
Curlew Sandpiper <i>Calidris ferruginea</i>	E1	CE,B,C,J,K	1	-	Aug 2013	Unlikely: There is no suitable littoral or estuarine habitat within the School.
Glossy Black-Cockatoo <i>Calyptorhynchus lathami</i>	V,2	-	1	-	Aug 2010	Unlikely: There is no suitable forest or woodland habitat within the School.

COMMON & SCIENTIFIC NAME	STATUS		RECORDS IN THE REGION^			POTENTIAL TO USE SCHOOL
	TSC ACT	EPBC ACT	WITHIN 5 KM	WITHIN 1 KM	MOST RECENT	
Powerful Owl <i>Ninox strenua</i>	V,3	-	39	2	Nov 2015	<b>Possible:</b> Requires large territories of forest and woodland that are lacking from the Region. However, this species has been recently recorded in the Locality – they are highly mobile and may opportunistically hunt and/or rest in urban habitats, such as that within the School. The available habitat is subject to a high level of anthropogenic disturbance and otherwise widespread in the Locality.
<b>MAMMALS (7)</b>						
Long-nosed Bandicoot <i>Perameles nasuta</i> (population in inner western Sydney)	E2	-	15	-	Jul 2015	<b>Possible:</b> NPWS detected one individual by camera trap in Alexandria Park Community Garden in 2011, and an injured juvenile was found in the neighboring Alexandria Park in 2012 (Urban Ecology Strategic Action Plan). No characteristic diggings were observed during the recent survey and there have been no further reports of this species in the Locality (pers. comm. school and community garden staff). It is likely that those individuals previously recorded in the Locality represent unsuccessful juvenile dispersals to an area of poor quality habitat. It is noted that the adjacent Alexandria Park is a permanent off-leash area for domestic dogs, which may predate Bandicoots in the Locality.
Grey-headed Flying-fox <i>Pteropus poliocephalus</i>	V	V	127	2	Sep 2016	<b>Possible:</b> No Flying-fox camps were identified within the School, but this species has recently been recorded in the Locality. The closest known camp is located ~3.5 km east of the School at Centennial Park; last surveyed in February 2017 with a population of 16,000–49,999 individuals (CSIRO & DOE 2017). This highly mobile species may be observed flying over the School and may opportunistically forage therein when canopy trees are in flower. However, the School is not considered critical foraging habitat for this species, and similar habitat is otherwise widespread in the Locality.
Eastern Bentwing-bat <i>Miniopterus schreibersii oceanensis</i>	V	-	16	-	Feb 2017	<b>Unlikely:</b> There are no maternity caves, forests or wetlands within the School. Although this species may roost in man-made structures, the School is isolated from suitable habitat by urban infrastructure and a high level of anthropogenic disturbance.



COMMON & SCIENTIFIC NAME			STATUS		RECORDS IN THE REGION <sup>^</sup>			POTENTIAL TO USE SCHOOL
			TSC ACT	EPBC ACT	WITHIN 5 KM	WITHIN 1 KM	MOST RECENT	
Southern	Myotis	<i>Myotis macropus</i>	V	-	3	-	Nov 2015	<b>Unlikely:</b> Although this species may roost in man-made structures, the School lacks waterbodies suitable for foraging and is isolated from suitable habitat by urban infrastructure and a high level of anthropogenic disturbance.
Australian		Fur-seal <i>Arctocephalus doriferus</i>	V	-	1	-	Sep 2009	<b>Unlikely:</b> There is no suitable coastal or marine habitat within the School.
Eastern		Freetail-bat <i>Mormopterus norfolkensis</i>	V	-	-	-	-	<b>Possible:</b> The recent survey (UBM 2018) detected a 'Probable' call of the non-threatened Gould's Wattled Bat ( <i>Chalinolobus gouldii</i> ), which may also be that of the Vulnerable Eastern Freetail-bat ( <i>Mormopterus norfolkensis</i> ). Potential roosts within the School are limited to exfoliating bark and man-made structures. This species may also forage over the trees on the Subject Property.
Greater	Broad-nosed	Bat <i>Scoteanax rueppellii</i>	V	-	-	-	-	<b>Possible:</b> The recent survey (UBM 2018) detected an unknown microbat between 32 – 34 KHz, probably Gould's Wattled Bat ( <i>Chalinolobus gouldii</i> ), but may also be the Vulnerable Greater Broad-nosed Bat ( <i>Scoteanax rueppellii</i> ) or non-threatened Eastern Broad-nosed Bat ( <i>Scotorepens orion</i> ), which call at this frequency. Potential roosts within the School are limited to exfoliating bark and man-made structures. This species may also forage over the trees on the Subject Property.

### Threatened Species Abundance

Threatened species abundance is the occurrence and abundance of threatened species or threatened ecological communities, or their habitat, at a particular site.

The landscape of the Inner Sydney Region has been extensively cleared of its original vegetation, so much so that no recognisable remnant native vegetation community remains within the School or nearby in the Locality (see *Vegetation Integrity Section*). None of the flora or fauna recently recorded within 5 km of the School are considered likely to occur or use the resources of the Subject Property; habitats within the School are considered poor quality and/or non-critical habitat for these species (see *Habitat Suitability Section*).

### Vegetative Abundance

Vegetative abundance is the occurrence and abundance of vegetation at a particular site.

A total of 70 flora species were recorded in the School. The existing native vegetation in the School consists predominantly of planted trees on the perimeter and landscaped garden beds. The mature Fig trees (*Ficus* sp.) on Buckland Street are considered remnant on the site, and are likely associated with the heritage landscaping of the suburb of Alexandria and Alexandria Park.

The planted native vegetation (mainly young trees) are located along the School boundary fences and contain a variety of native vines, shrubs, small/large trees. The most common trees found were *Eucalyptus botryoides*, *Eucalyptus saligna* and *Eucalyptus sideroxylon*. Common weed species include a range of exotic grasses, vines, herbaceous and woody weeds in some parts of the School, with varying levels of infestation. Refer also to *Vegetation Integrity Section*.

### Habitat Connectivity

Habitat connectivity is defined as the degree to which a particular site connects different areas of habitat of threatened species to facilitate movement of those species across their range.

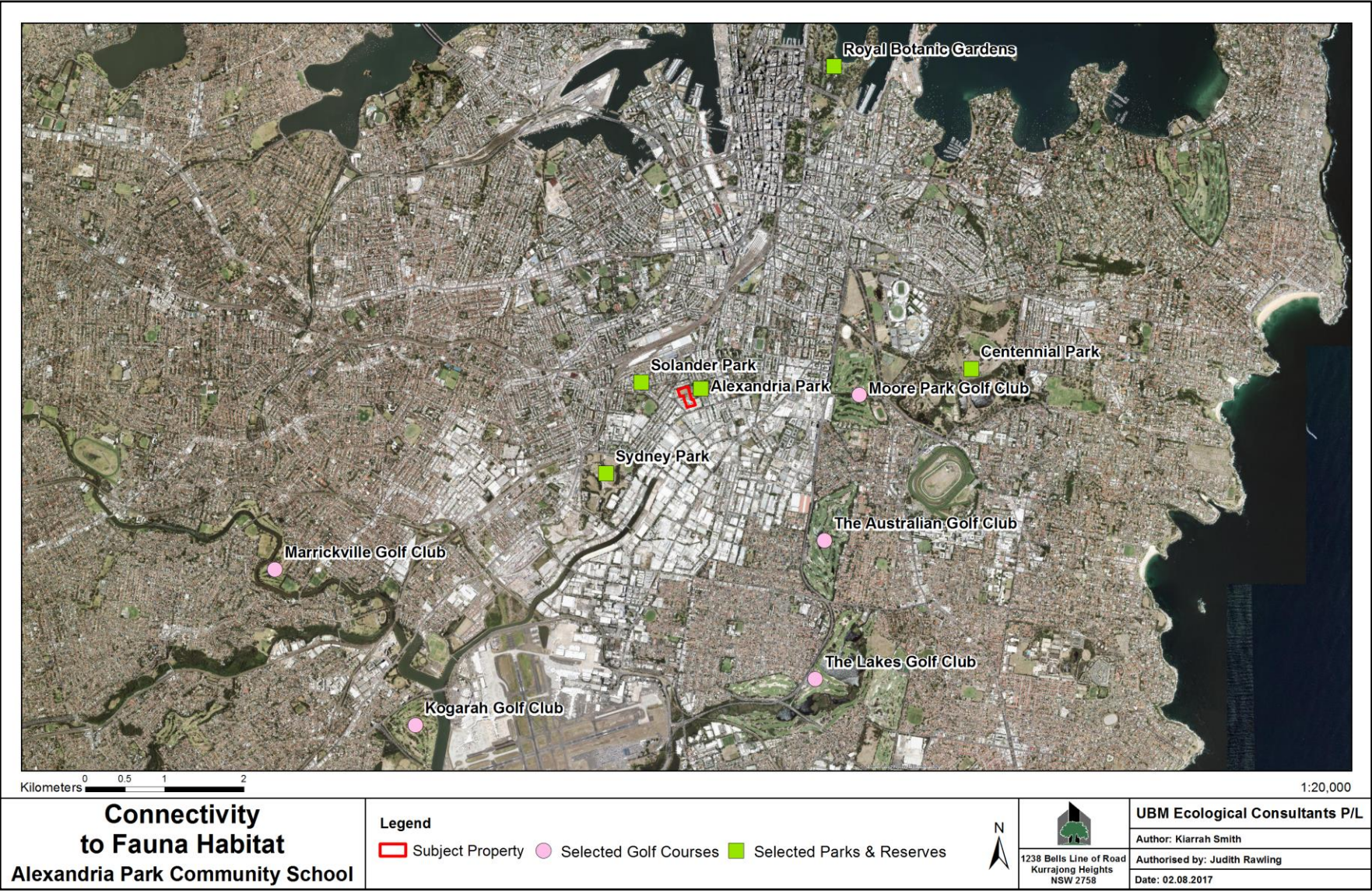
The School is situated within a highly fragmented urban landscape (*Figure 3*), and is therefore subject to a high level of anthropogenic disturbance, with very poor habitat connectivity owing to the abundance of busy roads, buildings and fences, as well as a lack of mid-storey vegetation to provide refuge from aggressive and predatory species (e.g. Noisy Miners and Ravens [*Corvus coronoides*]).

Nonetheless, there is some connectivity for highly mobile fauna via the planted trees on suburban streets and in parks and gardens. Such scattered canopy trees are likely to act as 'stepping stones', facilitating the movement of primarily large, highly mobile and urban-tolerant species. The School is mapped as a 'Supporting Site' within the corridor for 'Potential Habitat Linkages' identified by City of Sydney (Urban Ecology Action Plan).

The adjacent Alexandria Park is one of several Council parks and reserves in the Region, which vary in size from the expansive Centennial Park, to the small patch that is Solander Park. These parks and reserves generally comprise maintained grass areas with stands of trees in patches, and along road edges. The Royal Botanic Gardens (located ~4 km north of the School), and Golf courses in the Region, offer a similar habitat structure and contribute to broad-scale habitat connectivity for highly mobile fauna, which may include threatened microbats, the Vulnerable Grey-headed Flying-fox and Powerful Owls.



Figure3: Connectivity of the School





### Threatened Species Movement

Threatened species movement is the degree to which a particular site contributes to the movement of threatened species to maintain their lifecycle.

Scattered canopy trees within the School are likely to act as 'stepping stones', facilitating the movement of primarily large, highly mobile and urban-tolerant species, which may include Powerful Owls, Grey-headed Flying-foxes and threatened microbats (*Habitat Connectivity Section*).

The Long-nosed Bandicoot was detected by NPWS in Alexandria Park Community Garden in 2011, and an injured juvenile was found in the neighboring Alexandria Park in 2012 (Urban Ecology Strategic Action Plan). No characteristic diggings were observed during the recent survey and there have been no further reports of this species in the Locality (pers. comm. school and community garden staff). It is likely that those individuals previously recorded in the Locality represent unsuccessful juvenile dispersals to an area of poor quality habitat. It is noted that the adjacent Alexandria Park is a permanent off-leash area for domestic dogs, which may predate Bandicoots in the Locality. Given the density of roads and buildings in the Locality, the School is not considered a suitable movement corridor for Long-nosed Bandicoots.

### Flight Path Integrity

Flight path integrity is defined as the degree to which the flight paths of protected animals over a particular site are free from interference.

Buildings, lights, traffic, fences, powerlines, anthropogenic disturbance and a lack of vegetation connectivity are potential obstacles for protected animals flying over the School. However, the School contains no more obstacles to flying species than the surrounding urban landscape.

### Water Sustainability

Water sustainability refers to the degree to which water quality, water bodies and hydrological processes sustain threatened species and threatened ecological communities at a particular site.

There are no (0) waterbodies within the School. The School is located ~350 metres north of the canal known as Sheas Creek, which flows south west into Alexandria Canal, eventually joining Cooks River and Botany Bay. Roads, buildings and infrastructure separate the Sheas Creek from the School.

### Peer Review

The following comments supporting the adequacy of the UBM (2018) Ecological Report as an alternative to the FBA have been received through peer review:

- There are no Plant Community Types (PCTs) present (as defined by NSW BioNet). Therefore, no ecosystem credits will be impacted, and therefore no ecosystem credit offsets required.
- No species credit species have been assessed as being directly impacted. Therefore, no species credit offsets required. The targeted survey conducted would not have been needed following the FBA. Other species credit species info:
  - Long-nosed bandicoot – no habitat present (adequately assessed) and no linking habitat to Inner West population that is kilometres away. Nearest record in NSW

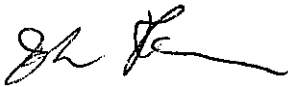
BioNet is nowhere near the site. The records of this species in Alexandria Park Community Garden and the neighboring Alexandria Park aren't recorded in BioNet.

- Threatened microbats that are only potential, are ecosystem credit species – see above. Furthermore, no hollow-bearing trees present, therefore no roosting habitat.
- Grey-headed Flying-fox is an ecosystem credit species for foraging habitat – see above. Breeding camps are species credit components, but no camps on site – therefore no impacts and no offsets.
- In relation to the above points, following the SEARs and completing an FBA, would have resulted in a less comprehensive assessment of threatened biodiversity. This is largely because there are no PCTs/ecosystem credits being impacted.

### **Conclusion**

The ecological investigations already undertaken for Alexandria Park Community School have adequately assessed the site and concluded that it contains no significant biodiversity values, including no PCTs and no impacts on ecosystem credit species or species credit species. As such, it is considered that the preparation of a Biodiversity Development Assessment Report should not be required to accompany the State Significant Development Proposal for the School.

**Yours faithfully,**



Judith Rawling BA,DipEd,DipEnvStud,MEnvStud  
Managing Director UBM Ecological Consultants



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