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Biodiversity Development Assessment Report (BDAR)

**Lot 10 // DP258607, 25 George Street, The Rocks,
NSW, 2000**

Refurbishment of the Mercantile Hotel

Prepared for: Prepared for Welsh Major Architects on behalf of Mercantile Hotel

28 February 2018

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Glossary and abbreviations

Acronym	Description
BAM	Biodiversity Assessment Methodology
BC Act	NSW <i>Biodiversity Conservation Act 2017</i>
BDAR	Biodiversity Development Assessment Report
DA	Development Application
DPE	NSW Department of Planning and Environment
Subject site	Lot 10 // DP258607, 25 George Street, The Rocks, NSW, 2000
EEC	Endangered Ecological Community
EPBC Act	Commonwealth <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i>
ha	hectare(s)
IBRA	Interim Bioregionalisation of Australia
km	kilometre
LGA	Local Government Area
masl	Metres above sea level
NSW	New South Wales
OEH	NSW Office of Environment and Heritage
PCT	Plant community type, as defined by OEH (2018)

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

This Biodiversity Development Assessment Report (BDAR) has been undertaken to accompany a Development Application (DA) relating to the proposed refurbishment of the Mercantile Hotel, including the addition of a rooftop bar. The subject site is located at Lot 2 // DP 258607, 25 George Street, The Rocks, NSW. This BDAR has been prepared by Lucas McKinnon, an Accredited Assessor (BAAS17012) under the NSW *Biodiversity Conservation Regulation 2017*, and is consistent with the Biodiversity Assessment Methodology (BAM) (OEH 2017).

The BDAR has been prepared in response to a re-issue of Secretary's Environmental Assessment Requirements (SEARs) for State Significant Development (SSD) 8665 (DPE 2017). Following a field visit and review of appropriate data sources, no native Plant Community Types (PCTs) were identified in the subject site, with the site being occupied by the hotel. A fig tree (*Ficus* sp.) is located in the northern part of the lot, does not meet the definition of a PCT, and will be protected during the proposed works.

In addition to the lack of assessable vegetation, the site also lacks suitable habitat for threatened species. This assessment has concluded that no threatened species are likely to be impacted by the proposed refurbishment.

Consultation with NSW Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) was undertaken to ascertain the need for a BDAR given the site particulars (Nick Corkish, Regional Biodiversity Officer, Compliance and Regulation, and Marnie Stewart, Senior Project Officer, Planning, Greater Sydney Branch, Regional Operations Division), between 8 and 21 December 2017. The proponent was advised by OEH (Marnie Stewart) that a request for a waiver under Section 7.0 of the NSW *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2017* must be made to the Dept. of Planning and Environment (DPE). For expediency the waiver was not requested and this BDAR has consequently been prepared to fulfil the requirements of SARs (SSD 8665).

Sources of information for this report included:

- NSW Planning Viewer (NSW Dept. of Planning and Environment 2018)
- Native vegetation of the Sydney Metropolitan Catchment Management Authority (OEH 2016)
- SIX Maps (LPI 2018)
- Biodiversity Offsets Assessment Management System (Case #: 00009956/BAAS17012/18/00009957)

Plot based vegetation survey was not required for the project due to the absence of assessable native vegetation within the subject site.

1.2 Location and site identification

This subject site for this BDAR covers a total area of 420m² and includes Lot 2 // DP 258607 (25 George Street, The Rocks) (**Figure 1.1** and **Figure 1.2**). The subject site is situated in the Sydney City Local Government Area (LGA), and comprises a three storey hotel (Urbis 2017). The site is bounded by George Street to the east and Gloucester Walk to the west, and is of State Heritage significance (Urbis 2017). Campbell's Cove lies approximately 115 m to the north-east.

The subject site lies within The Rocks, an identified State Significant Site as described in Schedule 2 of the State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) State and Regional Development 2011 (SEPP SRD) (Urbis 2017).

1.3 Proposed development

As described in Urbis 2017, the application consists of general upgrades to fire safety and circulation, including new fire stairs and lift, upgrade to ground, first and second floors (such as new amenities and relocation of some facilities) and the addition of a rooftop bar (**Figure 1.3**). The works are limited to the current building envelope and will not extend outside the current footprint or subject site. Vegetation located within and directly to the north of the subject site (i.e. fig tree) will be protected during the refurbishment.



Figure 1.1: Subject site location.



Figure 1.2: Site map.



Figure 1.3: Proposed development footprint.

2. Landscape context

2.1 Identify landscape features

In accordance with the BAM, a number of features are assessed within and surrounding the subject site. Provided below are details related to IBRA region and subregion and NSW landscape regions (Mitchell Landscapes). Other features, such as rivers, streams, estuaries and wetlands, habitat connectivity, karst areas or areas of outstanding biodiversity value are considered where appropriate.

2.1.1 IBRA bioregions and IBRA subregions

The subject site is located entirely within the Pittwater subregion (Version 7) and within the NSW Sydney Basin IBRA region (version 7).

2.1.2 NSW landscape regions (Mitchell Landscapes)

The subject site occurs in only one NSW Mitchell Landscape, being the *Port Jackson Basin* landscape (Mitchell Landscapes V3). One other landscape is located within the 1,500m assessment buffer, being Ashfield Plains. This is shown on the Locality Map (**Figure 2.1**).

The NSW landscape subject to this assessment is the *Port Jackson Basin* landscape.

2.1.3 Other features

Rivers, streams and estuaries

No mapped streams or rivers occur within the subject site or 1,500m buffer.

No estuaries, or the associated 50 m buffer, occur within the subject site. One estuary (Port Jackson Estuary) and its associated 50 m buffer occurs within the 1,500m assessment buffer (**Figure 2.1**). The proposed refurbishment will not impact on the Port Jackson Estuary or its associated 50m buffer.

Local and important wetlands

No local or important wetlands, or the associated buffers lie within the subject site or the 1,500 m assessment buffer.

Connectivity of different areas of habitat

No areas providing connectivity lie within the subject site or the 1,500 m assessment buffer.

Areas of geological significance and soil hazard features

No areas of geological significance or soil hazard features lie within the subject site or the 1,500 m assessment buffer.

Areas of outstanding biodiversity value

No areas of outstanding biodiversity value or soil hazard features lie within the subject site or the 1,500 m assessment buffer.



Figure 2.1: Location map.

2.2 Determining site context

2.2.1 Assessing native vegetation cover

A layer of native vegetation cover is required for a 1,500 m buffer around the study area to determine the context of the site. The extent of native vegetation on the subject site and immediate surrounds was mapped using the Sydney Metropolitan vegetation layer (OEH 2016).

The total area of the 1,500 m buffer around the study area is 721.9 ha. The area of mapped native vegetation is 1.75 ha, with a further 41.12 ha mapped as Urban Exotic/Native or Weeds and Exotics. As only native vegetation is counted towards this measure, the total coverage of native vegetation within the buffer is 0.24 %. This is within the lowest native vegetation cover class of >0-10 %.

2.2.2 Assessing patch size

Patch size as defined by the BAM as *'an area of native vegetation that:*

- a) occurs on the development site or biodiversity stewardship site, and*
- b) includes native vegetation that has a gap of less than 100m from the next area of moderate to good condition native vegetation (or ≤30m for non-woody ecosystems).*

Patch size may extend onto adjoining land that is not part of the development site or biodiversity stewardship site.'

Patch size was calculated for the vegetation on the development site using the field validated map of vegetation types identified and the updated native vegetation extent data layer prepared for the 1,500 m buffer.

Patch size is required to be assessed as one of four classes per vegetation zone mapped, being <5 ha, 5-24 ha, 25-100 ha or >100 ha. As described above, very little vegetation is present within the 1,500 m assessment buffer, with all vegetation surrounding the subject site mapped as Urban Exotic/Native. The size of the patch has therefore been assessed be <5 ha.

3. Native vegetation and threatened species

3.1 Field survey

A field visit was conducted on 3 February 2018 by Lucas McKinnon for a period of 0.25 hours. During the field inspection the vegetation and threatened species habitat was assessed both within and directly adjacent to the subject site. An assessment was conducted to determine the presence of assessable PCTs on site, and observations made on the likely habitat available for threatened species (including any significant hollows) and man-made structures that could be suitable for species such as roosting bats.

3.2 Plant community types (PCTs) and threatened ecological communities

Desktop assessment identified no native vegetation communities within the study area (OEH 2016) (**Figure 3.1 and Table 3.1**). The vegetation identified adjacent to the subject site is mapped as Urban Exotic/Native.

Table 3.1: Vegetation community nomenclature

Vegetation communities (OEH 2016)	Threatened Ecological Communities	TSC Act	EPBC Act
Urban Exotic/Native	-	-	-

Field survey confirmed the regional vegetation mapping by OEH (2016) and identified no assessable PCTs within the subject site or likely to be impacted by the proposed refurbishment. The vegetation in the north of the subject site, which will be protected during the proposed refurbishment, has been identified as a fig tree (*Ficus sp.*) and is not considered to be a PCT requiring assessment (**Figure 3.2**).

3.3 Vegetation zones

Due to the absence of a native PCT on the subject site no vegetation zones have been defined or assessed. It is noted that the BAM credit calculator does not allow entry of vegetation not considered to be a PCT. Nevertheless, as the vegetation within the subject site is not considered to be a PCT, and will be protected during the proposed refurbishment, no impacts to vegetation are considered likely.

3.4 Threatened species

The field assessment confirmed that no habitat for threatened species requiring survey under the BAM is either present, or impacted, within the subject site. Therefore, no further assessment of impacts to threatened species has been undertaken. Again, as stated above, the BAM credit calculator does not allow entry of vegetation not considered to be a PCT, and, as such, no predicted species lists (either ecosystem credit species or species credit species) were available for this assessment.



Figure 3.1: Vegetation types (OEH 2016).

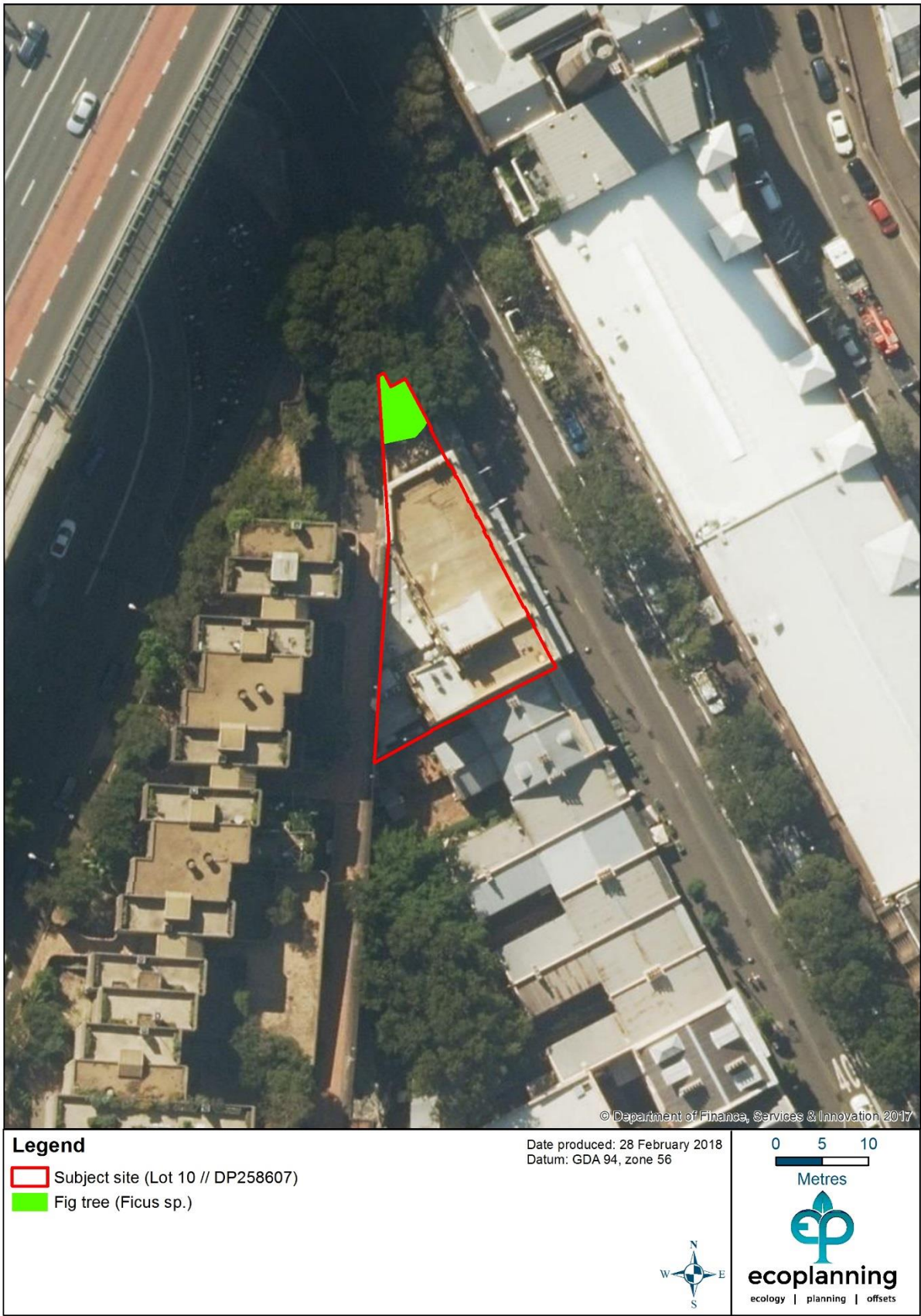


Figure 3.2: Field validated vegetation (Ecoplanning 2018).

4. Avoiding and offsetting impacts on biodiversity values

4.1 Avoiding and minimising impacts

The proposed refurbishment, including the addition of a rooftop bar, lies completely within the existing hotels envelope and will not cause impacts to vegetation within, or directly adjacent to, the subject site. Further, the proponent has committed to protecting all vegetation within and directly adjacent to the subject site. Therefore, all potential biodiversity impacts have been avoided for this proposal.

4.2 Assessing and offsetting impacts

4.2.1 Serious and Irreversible impacts

The vegetation both within and adjacent to the subject site is not considered to be an assessable PCT, nor does the vegetation contain threatened species habitat. Therefore no impacts to potential entities that are serious and irreversible are expected.

4.2.2 Impacts which require an offset

No impacts are expected from the proposed refurbishment to an assessable PCT or threatened species habitat. Therefore no credit calculations are required and no offset is proposed.

4.3 Credit calculations and classes

4.3.1 Ecosystem credits

No ecosystem credits were required for this assessment.

4.3.2 Species credits

No species credits were required for this assessment.

References

Mitchell, P. (2002). NSW ecosystems study: Background and Methodology, prepared by Groundtruth Consulting, Gladesville, NSW.

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