

Peter Borrelli
Project Director
Inland Rail
ARTC Level 16, 180 Ann Street
Brisbane QLD 4000

13/08/2021

Dear Mr Borrelli

**CSSI 7474 Narrabri to North Star, Phase 1 (N2NS)
Unexpected Find – Five-clawed Worm-Skink**

I refer to your letter dated 4 August 2021 notifying the Department of a potential unexpected find of the Five-clawed Worm-Skink. I also refer to recent discussions regarding this find with ARTC and the Biodiversity, Conservation and Science Directorate and Infrastructure Management teams of the Department on 3 August and 11 August and subsequent email correspondence on 11 August responding to the Department's request for additional information.

Following review of that email correspondence, the Department is satisfied that all requests for additional information have been addressed.

The Department is also satisfied that the information provided by ARTC meets the requirements of the *Unexpected Threatened Species/Endangered Ecological Community Find Procedure* in the *Construction Biodiversity Management Sub-Plan Narrabri to North Star (N2NS) Revision G* (BMP).

ARTC's commitment to complete targeted pre-clearing surveys at the identified chainages in its letter dated 4 August, and the proposed survey effort, is supported by the Department. The Department also supports ARTC's proposal to include relevant habitat elements, like woody debris, where possible in the rail corridor upon completion of the construction works. The implementation of temporary fencing to discourage skinks re-entering the construction site would also be beneficial.

It is acknowledged that ARTC is continuing to work with GeoLink and Umwelt to finalise the test of significance which is required by the unexpected finds procedure. The Department is willing to assist ARTC in ensuring the finalised test of significance is robust and thorough.

The Department acknowledges the positive discussions that have occurred with ARTC, regarding the probable discovery of the Five-clawed Worm skink. It is suggested that key components from these discussions, and from the correspondence provided, is incorporated into the unexpected finds procedure when the BMP is next updated. This should include the preparation of a report to be provided to relevant regulatory agencies which includes:

1. Date and time of discovery
2. Details of the discovery site (GPS points, description of vegetation, soil, microhabitat features present)

3. Details of how potential relocation sites will be identified
4. Details of the individual/s discovered, including photographs
5. Photographs of the site (general location, vegetation, habitat features where the individual/s was discovered)
6. Maps identifying the location of the discovery at an appropriate scale
7. Details of the person/s who made the discovery
8. Mitigation measures to be implemented

It is the Department's expectation that this discovery, and any future discoveries of threatened species will be entered into BioNet in a timely manner.

It is also noted that the Five-clawed Worm skink was discovered on 5 July 2021, but the relevant regulatory agencies were not notified until 3 August. The Department recommends that the unexpected finds procedure is updated to identify a timeframe in which regulatory agencies must be informed of any finds, and a timeframe in which a report will be submitted to agencies for consideration.

If you wish to discuss the matter further, please contact Matthew Todd-Jones on 8289 6673.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Jake Shackleton', written in a cursive style.

Jake Shackleton
Director – Infrastructure Management

As nominee of the Planning Secretary