

13 January 2021

Karina Blackwell  
Assessment Officer  
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John Gorton Building  
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Parkes 2600 ACT

cc Jessica Koeck, Tyrie Starrs

Dear Karina

### **Response to comments from DAWE: EPBC 2018/8343 La Trobe Stage 3**

**Our ref: Matter 30363, 30808**

As part of the Public Comment period, La Trobe University has made a minor revision to the north-eastern boundary of the offset site. The new boundary encompasses the same total area (2.81 hectares), but now falls slightly further to the west away from the impact area on the north-eastern boundary with minor additions on the eastern boundary. Meanwhile, the northern boundary has been extended slightly further northward on the western side. The section removed from the offset site contains 37.16m<sup>2</sup> of native patch vegetation, two scattered trees and no matters of national environmental significance (MNES), while the additional area captures 169.05m<sup>2</sup> of native patch vegetation and three scattered trees, therefore, no negative impacts are anticipated from this revision. This revision is considered to provide a minor improvement to the offset site as it captures one net additional scattered tree and 131.89m<sup>2</sup> additional native patch vegetation, which corresponds to high quality Matted Flax-lily habitat. These changes are evident in Figures 2, 4 and 5 of the preliminary documentation.

One written comment was received from the public during the public comment period for the preliminary documentation for La Trobe Sports and Teaching Precinct Stage 3 (EPBC 2018/8343). The comments were received from the community organisation, Warringal Conservation Society. Community input into this process is encouraged and the time and effort required to provide comments are appreciated.

The submission raises several concerns regarding the proposed development which are addressed below.

The submission highlights the matter of national environmental significance present in the impact area, Matted Flax-lily *Dianella amoena*, and expressed concerns that translocation of impacted individuals presents an unacceptable risk to the population as a whole. The submission draws on a comment by the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP): "The cost and ongoing management involved in translocation should not be underestimated and likelihood of translocation success should not be overstated given the current low success rate of other MFL translocations in Melbourne" (Tabled document 93, NE Link EES hearing, 2019).

The submission also highlighted comments from one of the authors of the preliminary documentation, Steve Mueck: "To my knowledge, there is no documented evidence or published examples that translocation of MFL has produced a self-sustaining population. To date, therefore, while translocation has been able to move MFL

plants and get them to survive in a new location, there is no evidence that this provides an overall conservation benefit to the species that would offset impacts to the species elsewhere" (pg 13, Tabled document 29e NE Link EES hearing, 2019).

The impact area contains 23 Matted Flax-lilies that will be impacted by the proposed development. The preliminary documentation and associated Offset Management Plan and Salvage and Translocation Plan highlight the due process for translocating all impacted Matted Flax-lilies to a suitable offset site, which contains one remnant Matted Flax-lily. Several investigations of the study area, offset area and surrounds have informed the subsequent results and interpretations. The current salvage and translocation plan aims to remove the 23 Matted Flax-lilies from mostly degraded habitat within the impact area, and relocate them into what is considered currently to be suitable habitat within the offset area. The impact area is highly modified and much of the area covered in fill, which has allowed invasive weeds to establish and dominate in these areas. Without intervention, it is considered likely that suitable habitat that is currently present within the impact area would diminish substantially over time and prospects for the Matted Flax-lily population would be expected to decline in tandem.

In response to the use of comments made by Steve Mueck, while there are currently no recorded cases of successful recruitment of translocated Matted Flax-lilies, this is not to say that it is not possible to establish a recruiting population of translocated MFL given the appropriate management and monitoring. The lack of successful cases is likely due to insufficient monitoring effort with previous translocation events, rather than an overall failing of the translocation process.

The MFL Salvage and Translocation Plan stipulates intensive monitoring requirements of weekly inspections for at least the first month, then monthly for a total of one year and then every two months for two years post planting. This requirement provides an opportunity for adaptive management informed by the monitoring program, increasing the chance of reproductive success of translocated individuals. We note that all habitat within the offset site is considered suitable Matted Flax-lily habitat, with the majority of the site supporting native vegetation patches of Plains Grassy Woodland. The entire offset area will be subject to intensive management to improve the quality of habitat and provide the best conditions possible for the translocated population of Matted Flax-lilies to expand. Further, genetic material from each Matted Flax-lily will be maintained at a nursery as a safety net in the event that some translocated individuals do not successfully establish.

The submission concludes with the following statement: "The claim on pg 9 that "Beyond refinements to design and total impact area, there are no possible alternative locations for the proposed action" is questionable. The University's Bundoora campus has an abundance of ground level car parking that could be reconfigured to accommodate the Sports Precinct development."

Regarding the submission's suggestion that alternative locations for the sporting precinct could include ground level car parking, this is not a viable alternative for the university. In a typical year, the ground-level parking is heavily utilised during the first four to six weeks of each semester. La Trobe University issued a notice to students in February 2018 via their intranet that parking spaces are extremely limited and in high demand during these periods between 9:30am and 3:30pm, and that the use of public transport is encouraged. However, we note that transit time via tram or train from the CBD takes over one hour, with the nearest train station (Macleod station) approximately 25 minutes' walk or a 16-minute bus ride from the main hub on campus. For many students, particularly those with physical impairments this may not be a practical alternative to driving. Removing availability of car parks will increase strain on parking for teachers and students, therefore this is not considered a viable alternative to the proposed location for stage 3, which was selected for its accessibility and proximity to other stages (1 and 2) of the sporting precinct.

Other than amendments to the boundary of the offset site, we have not updated the preliminary documentation and supporting documents, as salvage and translocation is a standard approach for Matted Flax-lily, and provided that the MFL Salvage and Translocation Plan and Offset Management Plans are followed, we consider it likely that the translocated Matted Flax-lilies has significant potential to establish as a self-sustaining population. At the very least the individuals can be managed to establishment within their new habitat which will be subject to ongoing active ecological management. This is a significant improvement from their current situation of declining habitat condition without any management obligations.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Imogen Merlo', written in a cursive style.

Imogen Merlo  
Zoologist