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28 July 2022

Mr Aaron Grainger
AMG (WA) Pty Ltd
20 Casserley Road
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Dear Aaron

RE: Fauna Habitat Review – Lot 3 on Diagram 35920, Waroona – Additional Clearing Area - Clearing Permit CPS 8500/3

This letter report summarises a fauna habitat review of part of Lot 3 on Diagram 35920, Waroona associated with clearing permit CPS 8500/3, which covers a central section of the property also referred to as the “Additional Clearing Area”.

It is understood that AMG (WA) Pty Ltd (AMG) have previously applied for and were granted clearing permits either side of the additional clearing area (CPS 8500/3) in the past which have been supported by a range of environmental studies including but not limited to fauna, vegetation and flora assessments. Most of these investigations also included the area now covered by CPS 8500/3 and therefore the results of these studies are relevant to the current application. The relevant fauna related issues are discussed below.

Black Cockatoo Habitat

A fauna survey was undertaken by experienced zoologists from Terrestrial Ecosystems (TE) in May 2015 over a section of Lot 3 including but not limited to the area now covered by CPS 8500/3 (Terrestrial Ecosystems 2015). This survey recorded in total 114 potential black cockatoo breeding habitat trees (trees of species known to support breeding within the range of the species which either have a suitable nest hollow or are of a suitable diameter (DBH >50cm) at breast height to develop a nest hollow in the relative short term (i.e. ~150 years)). Using a revised development boundary this total was cut back to 73 trees, 14 of which were identified as having possible large hollows according to the ground-based observations made by TE.

In January 2016, the Lot 3 was burnt in a severe bushfire. A subsequent review of the previously identified habitat trees (by myself – Zoologist 19 years experience) found that of the original 73 trees, 25 were totally burnt, almost totally burnt, fallen over or with a DBH >50cm and these were as a consequence removed from the original data dataset leaving 48 habitat trees.

Of these 48 trees only one was found to have a possible large hollow (this tree is outside of the CPS 8500/3 boundary). The other possible large hollows previously identified by TE were either confirmed as being too small and/or shallow or were absent altogether due to partial or total incineration of the tree during the fire in January 2016, with in some cases trees being completely gone or in once instance, fallen over.



Based on the current dataset it has been identified that 20 habitat trees (i.e. DBH >50cm) fall within the boundary of CPS 8500/3 (see attached figure). None of these trees were identified as containing hollows suitable for black cockatoos by Terrestrial Ecosystems (2015) or myself (Harewood 2018).

In a letter to DWER the Shire of Waroona (the Shire) state “There were also a number of tree hollows observed that may provide suitable nesting opportunities for Black Cockatoos....” (Shire of Waroona 2022).

Based on the results of the previous habitat tree surveys this conclusion is incorrect. While there are some trees present with hollows it has been concluded, based on observations made by at least two independent qualified zoologists (Terrestrial Ecosystems & myself) that none of the hollows present are of a size or orientation suitable for black cockatoos to use for nesting purposes. It should also be noted that the hollow bearing tree pictured in the Shires letter is occupied by feral bees which would make it less suitable for fauna of any type to use as a refuge/nest site.

It has previously been identified that Lot 3 contains suitable foraging habitat for black cockatoos given the presence of a range of plant species including but not limited to marri, jarrah and banksia (Terrestrial Ecosystems 2015 & Harewood 2018) though the impacts of fire and dieback have reduced these sites overall foraging value in recent years.

Available mapping data shows that there is about 7,400 ha of remnant native vegetation within 12 km of the Lot 3. Of this, about 47% (3,476 ha) is contained within land subject to Department of Biodiversity and Conservation and Attractions management (i.e. national parks, reserves or state forests). The remnant native vegetation within the survey area (~4.58 ha) makes up about 0.06% of the area of native vegetation within a 12 km range.

It is not possible to determine exactly how much of the regional vegetation represents black cockatoo habitat as only broad scale vegetation complex mapping is available, but a high percentage is likely to contain breeding, foraging and/or roosting habitat. This would be supplemented by the present of pine plantations which are also a favoured foraging target for Carnaby’s and Baudin’s black cockatoos.

Western Ringtail Possums

In a letter to DWER the Shire of Waroona (the Shire) state “There were also a number of tree hollows observed that may provide suitable nesting opportunities for Black Cockatoos and Western Ringtail Possum” (Shire of Waroona 2022).

While some hollows present maybe suitable for western ringtail possums it was concluded by Terrestrial Ecosystems (2015) that there was a “very low possibility of (western ringtail possums) being present in the project area due to lack of preferred habitat”. My observations made onsite also support a conclusion that this species is very unlikely to occur. This is also supported by the fact that there are no actual records in the DBCA database of western ringtail possum in this section of the coastal plain.



Fauna in General

It is obvious that the area making up CPS 8500/1 is likely to be utilised by a range of fauna but most would be widespread species including but not limited to common bird species, western grey kangaroos and feral species such as rabbits, foxes and cats and other fauna species that can persist in largely disturbed and fragmented habitats. Based on the area's history of disturbance (i.e. fire, grazing, partial clearing and logging) it is the Authors opinion that any ground dwelling or arboreal fauna species of conservation significance (e.g. quenda and brush-tailed phascogales) are unlikely to be present and that the area covered by CPS 8500/3 is very unlikely to represent significant habitat for indigenous fauna in general.

I also note that the Shire state the “..land is utilised by animals as a corridor” and it “..contributes to an important ecological corridor..” (Shire of Waroona 2022). In reality the area forms a peninsula of bushland that provided no direct connectivity to any other larger bush areas and therefore does not represent an “ecological corridor” in the true sense of the word.

If you have any questions or queries relating the information provided here please contact the undersigned on 0402 141 197 / gharewood@iinet.net.au



Greg Harewood
Zoologist

References

Harewood. G (2018). Black cockatoo habitat review Lot 3 Buller Road Waroona August 2018. (DWER Ref: A1790749).

Shire of Waroona (2022). Shire of Waroona response to clearing permit referral (CPS 8500/3) on Lot 3 Buller Road, Waroona. Letter to DWER (Shire reference: TP2326) dated 5 July 2022.

Terrestrial Ecosystems (2015). Level1 Fauna Risk Assessment for 'Jackson Block' of Lot 3 Buller Road, Waroona. Prepared for MOW Environmental Services. May 2015 (DWER Ref: A922976).





Legend

 Subject Site (CPS 8500/3)

 Habitat Tree - No hollows possibly suitable for black cokatoos seen



Drawn: G Harewood

Date: 28-Jul-22

Scale: 1:2,250

Projection/Coordinate System: UTM/MGA Zone 50

**CPS 8500/3
Lot 3 Buller Road
Waroona**

**Habitat Trees
(DBH >50cm)**

Figure: 1