

ALBERTON WIND FARM
TARGETED FLORA SURVEY

Synergy Wind Pty Ltd



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1. INTRODUCTION

Synergy Wind Pty Ltd engaged Brett Lane & Associates Pty. Ltd. (BL&A) to undertake a targeted flora survey around the township of Alberton West in South Gippsland, Victoria, the proposed site for Alberton Wind Farm. The survey was undertaken at number of private properties as well as public road and rail reserves within the development footprint which were identified as native vegetation by BL&A during a previous site assessment.

Previous assessments (BL&A 2016) identified potential for seven EPBC Act listed species to occur in the study area. These species are listed below along with recommended months for surveying:

- Clover Glycine (September to December)
- Eastern Spider-orchid (September to November)
- Maroon Leek-orchid (September to December)
- Metallic Sun-orchid (September to December)
- River Swamp Wallaby-grass (November to March)
- Strzelecki Gum (any time of year)
- Thick-lip Spider-orchid (September to November)

The aims of the current survey were to:

- Identify any presence (and locations) within the study area of threatened flora species;
- Determine any impacts of the proposed residential subdivision on threatened flora species;
- Outline implications of findings under relevant federal, state and local legislation and policies; and
- Provide recommendations for the mitigation and management of potential impacts on any threatened flora species recorded on site.

This report is divided into the following sections:

Section 2 describes the sources of information and methods used for the targeted surveys.

Section 3 presents the targeted survey results, and discusses the implications of the findings under relevant legislation and policies.

This investigation was undertaken by a team from Brett Lane & Associates Pty Ltd, comprising Davide Coppolino (Senior Ecologist), Greg Cranston (Botanist) and Inga Kulik (Senior Ecologist & Project Manager).

2. METHODS

This section describes the methods employed for the targeted surveys including sources of information reviewed to maximise the effectiveness of the survey.

2.1. Existing Information

The following previous report of the study area was reviewed prior to the current site inspection:

- BL&A, Flora and Fauna Assessment for Alberton Wind Farm (BL&A 2016)

The BL&A 2016 report outlined areas within the study area that could potentially support the listed flora species, and provided reasoning for this (including a review of past species records in the broader area).

2.2. Survey Methodology

Targeted surveys for Clover Glycine, Eastern Spider-orchid, Maroon Leek-orchid, Metallic Sun-orchid, River Swamp Wallaby-grass, Strzelecki Gum and Thick-lip Spider-orchid were conducted on the 2nd, 3rd and 4th of November 2016. The survey was undertaken during the period when all seven species are flowering to ensure the greatest chance of visual detection.

During the survey, all areas of native vegetation within the development footprint of the study area considered as suitable habitat for threatened species (see Figures in BL&A 2016) were visually searched along transects spaced approximately five metres apart. This spacing was considered appropriate for detecting all seven species.

All observed listed rare or threatened plants, would have been marked with a hand-held GPS to an accuracy of approximately \pm five metres.

2.3. Limitations

Some areas of the site supported very tall, dense grassy vegetation, which made access to and transecting some of the mapped areas difficult. There were also extensive areas of recent Blackberry clearing and stockpiling which restricted access to some of the sections of the study area. However, all areas considered suitable habitat for the threatened species have been surveyed.

The timing of the survey and the condition of the vegetation was considered appropriate to determine the presence or absence of these species.

3. RESULTS, IMPACTS AND REGULATORY IMPLICATIONS

3.1. Results

None of the threatened species were recorded in the study area during the investigation.

3.2. Impacts

The proposed wind farm would not result in any impacts on any individuals of any of the species.

3.3. Regulatory implications

The regulatory implications discussed below are based solely on the abovementioned impacts on rare or threatened flora. Implications regarding the broader issues of the proposal are provided in previous reports and must also be considered.

The *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) contains a list of threatened species and ecological communities that are considered to be of national conservation significance. Any impacts on these species considered significant requires the approval of the Australian Minister for the Environment. If there is a possibility of a significant impact on nationally threatened species or communities or listed migratory species, a Referral under the EPBC Act should be considered. The Minister will decide after 20 business days whether the project will be a 'controlled action' under the EPBC Act, in which case it cannot be undertaken without the approval of the Minister. This approval depends on a further assessment and approval process (lasting between three and nine months, depending on the level of assessment).

According to the significant impact guidelines (DEWHA 2009; DE 2013), the current proposal will not have a significant impact on Clover Glycine, Eastern Spider-orchid, Maroon Leek-orchid, Metallic Sun-orchid, River Swamp Wallaby-grass, Strzelecki Gum or Thick-lip Spider-orchid as no individuals were recorded.

4. REFERENCES

- Brett Lane and Associates Pty Ltd 2016, *Alberton Wind Farm – Flora and Fauna Assessment Report, Report No. 14107.1 (3.2)*, Brett Lane and Associates Pty Ltd, Hawthorn, Victoria.
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- Department of Environment and Primary Industries 2013b, *Permitted clearing of native vegetation: Biodiversity assessment guidelines* (dated September 2013), Department of Environment and Primary Industries, East Melbourne, Victoria.
- Victorian Biodiversity Atlas 2013, Department of Environment and Primary Industries, East Melbourne, Victoria, viewed 10th July 2014, <<http://www.depi.vic.gov.au>>.