Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail (GORCT) – Fairhaven to Grey River

Application Number: **02663** Commencement Date: **31/10/2024** Status: **Locked**

1. About the project

1.1 Project details

1.1.1 Project title *

Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail (GORCT) – Fairhaven to Grey River

1.1.2 Project industry type *

Tourism and Recreation

1.1.3 Project industry sub-type

—

1.1.4 Estimated start date *

30/06/2025

1.1.4 Estimated end date *

30/06/2026

1.2 Proposed Action details

1.2.1 Provide an overview of the proposed action, including all proposed activities. *

The Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) (the proponent) is proposing to construct a coastal walking trail and supporting infrastructure located on Victoria's south-western coastline (proposed action).

The project encompasses a linear walking trail approximately 75.5 kilometres in length, located between the towns of Fairhaven and Grey River (project area). Whilst the track itself is designed to be approximately 1 metre in width, the project area encompasses a 2.5 metre width to allow for construction impacts.

The proposed network of walking trails includes a mixture of existing trails (existing walking trails, management vehicle tracks, footpaths and beach) that will be connected by sections of new trail proposed for construction. The project area is comprised of 41.9 kilometres of existing trails and the proposed construction of 34.4 kilometres of new trail. The disturbance footprint will be confined to new trail construction only and the construction corridor will encompass an area 1.25 metres either side of the proposed trail centreline (disturbance footprint). Existing trails may be subject to upgrades, however works will be confined to the existing trail footprint which has been subject to previous disturbance. Therefore, existing trails have been classified as 'avoidance areas', as these works will not have any impacts to any Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES).

Key project components include:

- New walking trail - approximately 27.96km (37% of project length)
- New walking trail incorporating existing informal tracks (existing informal tracks are mostly in poor condition and are considered new trails for the purposes of planning & construction) – approximately 7.00km (9% of project length)
- New boardwalk – approximately 0.05km (0.1% of project length)
- Existing walking trail - approximately 29.56km (39% of project length)
- Existing management vehicle track - approximately 7.48km (10% of project length)
- Beach/rock shelf - approximately 0.76km (1% of project length)
- Existing road/footpath - approximately 3.16km (4% of project length)
- Proposed upgrades or construction of trail infrastructure:
    - Minor upgrades of existing trailheads at Fairhaven/Moggs Creek
    - Minor upgrades of existing carparks/trailheads at Allenvale, Jamieson Creek and Cumberland River
    - One new carpark (12-20 vehicles) at Big Hill
    - One new hiker camp at Big Hill
    - Three large suspension bridges (Reedy Creek - 71 meters, Cumberland-Winterbrook - 164 meters and Mount Defiance - 165 meters),
    - Five major lookouts (four new and one existing with no works required)
    - Sixteen minor lookouts (seven new, upgrades to six existing and three with no works required)
    - Four crossings of the Great Ocean Road (2 underpasses and two road crossings)

Approximately 10.96km (14.4% of project length) of existing walking trail, management vehicle track, existing beach/rock shelf and existing road/footpath will require no works other than installation of wayfinding signage.

Project area

The project area encompasses a linear area from the Great Ocean Road and Yarringa Road intersection in Fairhaven to Grey River on the Great Ocean Road, approximately 75.5 kilometres in length. The project area is located approximately 100 kilometres south-east of Melbourne and encompasses 9,206 hectares of public land. Majority of the project area traverses the Great Otway National Park. (See Att 1- Project Location Maps).

Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail: Master Plan 2022

The GORCT Masterplan has been referenced on numerous occasions and provides a comprehensive overview of the project. However, since it's publications several project feasibility refinements and trail re-alignments have been undertaken, including the excision of proposed trail between Grey River and Skenes Creek. Attachment 1 outlines the proposed trail alignment and associated projects infrastructure.

Proposed activities

The proposed action, being the creation of the Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail, will include a mix of permanent (coastal trail and associated infrastructure) and temporary activities (construction, ancillary development).

The proposed action will comprise the following activities:

- Site preparation – clearing of vegetation where required (new tracks only), construction compound establishment and installation of construction environment management measures (e.g. no-go fencing, sediment controls).
- Construction:
    - All new trails, unless specified otherwise, will consists of a 1.2m built trail surface and 0.6m buffer on both sides (1.2m total) to allow for benching, earthworks and/or drainage. This equates to a 2.4m wide

construction footprint and vegetation removal area. Works will predominantly be undertaken by a rubber-tracked mini excavator at a 1m bench width (Att 2 Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail: Master Plan – Part 4, pp 98 and Att 3–Style Guide and Construction Manual, p 35). Construction will include cut and fill methodology, mostly utilising existing in-situ soils rather than imported surfacing materials. Some trails will be constructed by hand.
    - Existing trails requiring upgrades will include surfacing, drainage and re-profiling or re-grading to fill in puddles, ruts or erosion channels ((See Att 3–Style Guide and Construction Manual, p 45).
    - Construction of supporting infrastructure, including suspension bridges, lookouts, car parks, trail signage and wayfinding (See Att 2 – Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail: Master Plan 2022, part 4, pp 102 – 111 and Att 3–Style Guide and Construction Manual). Structures will be constructed by small machinery and by hand.
- Decommissioning and demobilisation of compound and construction activities.
- Ongoing operational activities, including routine trail inspections and trail maintenance works (See Att 2– Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail: Master Plan 2022, part 5, pp 118 - 119).

1.2.2 Is the project action part of a staged development or related to other actions or proposals in the region?

No

1.2.6 What Commonwealth or state legislation, planning frameworks or policy documents are relevant to the proposed action, and how are they relevant? *

Commonwealth legislative implications

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act)

The EPBC Act applies to actions that have the potential to significantly impact on Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES) protected under the Act. A flora and fauna assessment (FFA) was prepared for the project area, in addition to targeted surveys for flora species Anglesea Grevillea *Grevillea infecunda,* Winkled Buttons *Leiocarpa gatesii,* Green-striped Greenhood *Pterostylis chlorogramma,* and Spiral Sun-orchid *Thelymitra matthewsii.* The results of the FFA and targeted surveys are provided in Att 5- Flora and Fauna Assessment 2024, (part 1 page IX).

Additionally, the Great Ocean Road and Scenic Environs is listed as a historic place on the National Heritage List. The value of the landscape for the preservation of heritage is considered high, however, impacts to this heritage place as part of the proposed action are not considered significant (See Att 4–Landscape and Visual Assessment 2022, Section 8).

Although significant impacts to MNES are considered unlikely, the project is being referred to gain legal certainty.

Victorian policy setting

Great Otway National Park and Otway Forest Park Management Plan, December 2009

The GOR CT project has considered the *Great Otway National Park and Otway Forest Park*

Management Plan, December 2009. Key elements include:

- Identification of current and future challenges for the sustainable management of the parks, in protection and enhancement of natural and cultural values, provision and promotion of tourism and recreation experiences, and resource utilisation.
- Provision and promotion of tourism and recreation activities in the parks, for a diverse, inspirational and sustainable range of nature-based tourism and recreational experiences.
- Support for a sustainable nature-based tourism and recreation industry that provides economic and social benefits to Otways communities.

The GOR CT proposal does not conflict with the Plan and in many ways supports 'nature-based tourism and recreation industry that provides economic and social benefits to Otways communities'.

Victoria Planning Provisions, Clause 52.30 - State projects

GOR CT has the potential to be considered under Clause 52.30 – State Projects, satisfying several decision criteria, including:

- carried out by or on behalf of, or jointly or in partnership with, the State of Victoria or a public authority; or
- funded, or partly funded by, the State of Victoria or a public authority;
- or carried out on Crown land.

However, under Clause 52.30 – State Projects, this pathway is only possible if a 'no' Environment Effects Statement decision is made under the *Environment Effects Act 1978*.

The GOR CT project team has discussed the potential of Clause 52.30 – State Projects with the Department of Transport and Planning (Planning Concierge team) and although early in scoping assessment/approvals pathways, this pathway is currently the GOR CT project teams preferred planning approval pathway.

Victorian legislative implications

Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988 (FFG Act)

The FFG Act is the key piece of Victorian legislation for the conservation of threatened species and communities and for the management of potentially threatening processes.

As the land tenure is vested in a public authority, the proposed action is subject to the requirements under the FFG Act. The project area supports eighty-seven FFG Act protected flora species and three listed flora species.

Impacts to FFG protected flora species will require preparation of a protected flora permit. As a public authority, the proponent will also consider their obligations under the Public Authority Duty.

Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994 (CaLP Act)

The CaLP Act identifies and classifies certain species as noxious weeds or pest animals and provides a system of controls on noxious species. Declared noxious weeds and pest animals have been identified within the project area and are listed in Appendix 1 and 2 of the Project FFA (See Att 5 – Flora and Fauna Assessment 2024, part 2, pp. 107 – 175).

The proponent will take reasonable steps to control and eradicate CaLP listed weeds and pest animals during the development. Additionally, an invasive species management plan will be prepared to assist with long-term management after the completion of the proposed action.

Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (AH Act)

The proposed action must comply with the requirements of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* (AH Act) and the *Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2018* (the Regulations).

As part of the Cultural Heritage Values Desktop Assessment conducted by Biosis, it was concluded that the proposed activities are considered high impact under the Regulations (See Att 6 – Cultural Heritage Values Desktop Assessment 2022 redacted, part 3, pp. 160). Additionally, as the works occur within an area of cultural heritage sensitivity, a mandatory Cultural Heritage Management Plan is required pursuant to the AH Act and Regulations.

The proponent is currently preparing Cultural Heritage Management Plan No. 19854 for the project.

Heritage Act 2017

17 historic heritage places and sites have been identified within or near the project area, including a combination of places on the National Trust Register, Victorian Heritage Register (VHR), the Victorian Heritage Inventory (VHI) and the National Heritage List (See Att 6 – Cultural Heritage Values Desktop Assessment 2022 redacted, part 3, pp. 160). Only the VHR and VHI sites are protected under the *Heritage Act 2017* and will require consultation with Heritage Victoria and will likely require permits or consents.

A permit from Heritage Victoria will be required and a Heritage Impact Statement to assist with the permit application will be prepared.

Water Act 1989

The primary purpose of the *Water Act 1989* is to provide a framework for the allocation and management of surface water and groundwater throughout Victoria. It provides a principal mechanism for maintenance of ecosystem functions including those of aquatic ecosystems. Under By-Laws created by the relevant Authority under the Act, the authorities regulate the works within and in the vicinity of waterways.

The proposed action will require construction works and maintenance activities that will affect beds and banks of waterways, riparian vegetation or quality or quantity of water within nineteen designated waterways (See Att 5 – Flora and Fauna Assessment 2024, part 1, pp. 91).

Works affecting these designated waterways will require a permit from the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority. This will be organised prior to works occurring.

Planning and Environment Act 1987

The proposed action falls within the Surf Coast Planning Scheme and Colac Otway Planning Scheme (Planning Schemes). Zones, overlays and particular provisions requiring a permit under the Surf Coast and Colac-Otway Planning Schemes

Surf Coast Planning Scheme

Zones

- Clause 36.04 – Transport Zone – Schedule 2 (TRZ2).

Overlays

- Clause 42.01 – Environmental Significance Overlay (ESO).
- Clause 42.03 – Significant Landscape Overlay (SLO).
- Clause 44.04 – Land Subject To Inundation Overlay (LSIO).
- Clause 44.06 – Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO).

Particular Provisions

- Clause 52.05 – Signs (if applicable).
- Clause 52.17 – Native Vegetation.
- Clause 52.29 – Land adjacent to the Principal Road Network.

Colac Otway Planning Scheme

Zones

- Clause 36.04 – TRZ2.

Overlays

- Clause 42.01 – ESO.
- Clause 42.03 – SLO.
- Clause 44.01 – Erosion Management Overlay
- Clause 44.04 – LSIO.
- Clause 44.06 – BMO.

Particular Provisions

- Clause 52.05 – Signs (if applicable).
- Clause 52.17 – Native Vegetation.
- Clause 52.29 – Land adjacent to the Principal Road Network.

Under Clause 52.17 of the Planning Schemes, a planning permit is required to remove, destroy or lop native vegetation, including dead native vegetation. The Crown land exemption under Clause 52.17-7 may apply to the project, in which case there would be no requirement to obtain native vegetation offsets, however counter

balancing measures would be required to improve the condition, extent or security of native vegetation or biodiversity values.

The impacts of the proposed action would result in the removal of approximately 8.9 hectares of native patch vegetation (see Att 5– Flora and Fauna Assessment 2024, part 1, p. 88). The proponent will be required to secure state biodiversity offsets of 0.432 general habitat units, 7.525 species habitat units and 6 large trees.

Noting impacts have been quantified under a 2.5m wide construction corridor scenario. Whilst the proposed actual maximum construction width is 2.4m (where 1.2m buffers are required) and in many instances only 1.2m (where no buffers are required). Consequently, the actual total area of native vegetation removal associated with the project is expected to be significantly less than currently quantified

If a permit is required as part of the proposed action, the proponent will be required to seek approval under Clause 52.17 (Native Vegetation) of the Planning Schemes for the proposed removal of native vegetation in accordance with the *Guidelines for the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation, including dead native vegetation* (DELWP 2017).

Environment Effects Act 1978 (EE Act)

The EE Act establishes a rigorous process to assess the environmental impacts of a project. Depending on the Minister for Planning's decision following referral, an Environment Effects Statement (EES) may be required to be prepared by the proponent.

On behalf of the proponent, Biosis conducted a self-assessment of the proposed action against the *Ministerial Guidelines for Assessment of Environmental Effects under the Environment Effects Act 1978, Eight edition 2023* (Ministerial Guidelines) (DTP 2023), which indicated that the proposed action triggers one of the criteria for a referral to the Victorian Minister for Planning for an EES. An EES referral was submitted to the Minister for Planning on 9 September 2024.

1.2.7 Describe any public consultation that has been, is being or will be undertaken regarding the project area, including with Indigenous stakeholders. Attach any completed consultation documentations, if relevant. *

Engagement activities have occurred since the development of the project's Feasibility Study in 2019 and have contributed to the iterative development of the project design. The proponent has undertaken consultation with the following organisations in relation to the project:

Approval Agency Consultation

- Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
- Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action
- Parks Victoria
- Surf Coast and Colac-Otway Shire Councils
- Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation
- Regional Roads Victoria

Other Agencies Consulted

- Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority
- Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions
- Regional Development Victoria
- Great Ocean Road Regional Tourism
- Life Saving Victoria
- Country Fire Authority

Significant public consultation has occurred throughout project development. During the draft stages of project design, the wider community was engaged and asked to provide feedback to refine the scope of the project, as follows:

- Engagement phase 1 – the community were invited to comment on concept route 1, which resulted in approximately 70 revisions of the alignment.
- Engagement phase 2 – community were invited to comment on concept route 2, which resulted in over 40 changes to the revised alignment.
- Engagement phase 3 – community were invited to comment on the number and location of suspension bridges, trail route alignment and the Grey River to Skenes Creek section.
- Engagement phase 4 – the final Draft Masterplan was presented to the community for comment.

In summary there were:

- 13 on-line drop-in sessions.
- 10 pop-up and drop-in sessions in local towns.
- 13 semi-structured interviews with community, environmental and business groups.
- deliberative workshops.
- 10,950 page views from 4,200 unique visitors.
- Over 3,000 responses reviewed and analysed.

Overall, there was significant community support for the project expressed through the community consultation processes.

Further information on the engagement process is available in Att 2 – Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail: Master Plan 2022, part 5, pp 132 – 141, Att 7 – Consultation Study part 1 and 2, and Att 8 - Consultation Report).

Additional consultation is planned to occur throughout the construction stage of the proposed action.

1.3.1 Identity: Referring party

Privacy Notice:

Personal information means information or an opinion about an identified individual, or an individual who is reasonably identifiable.

By completing and submitting this form, you consent to the collection of all personal information contained in this form. If you are providing the personal information of other individuals in this form, please ensure you have their consent before doing so.

The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (the department) collects your personal information (as defined by the Privacy Act 1988) through this platform for the purposes of enabling the department to consider your submission and contact you in relation to your submission. If you fail to provide some or all of the personal information requested on this platform (name and email address), the department will be unable to contact you to seek further information (if required) and subsequently may impact the consideration given to your submission.

Personal information may be disclosed to other Australian government agencies, persons or organisations where necessary for the above purposes, provided the disclosure is consistent with relevant laws, in particular the Privacy Act 1988 (Privacy Act). Your personal information will be used and stored in accordance with the Australian Privacy Principles.

See our Privacy Policy to learn more about accessing or correcting personal information or making a complaint.

Alternatively, email us at privacy@awe.gov.au.

☑ **Confirm that you have read and understand this Privacy Notice ***

1.3.1.1 Is Referring party an organisation or business? *

Yes

Referring party organisation details	
ABN/ACN	90719052204
Organisation name	DEECA
Organisation address	8 Nicholson St, Melbourne Victoria 3002

Referring party details	
Name	Emily Steele
Job title	
Phone	136 186
Email	emily.steele@deeca.vic.gov.au
Address	Level 4, 30-38 Little Malop Street, GEELONG, Victoria 3220

1.3.2 Identity: Person proposing to take the action

1.3.2.1 Are the Person proposing to take the action details the same as the Referring party details? *

No

1.3.2.2 Is Person proposing to take the action an organisation or business? *

Yes

Person proposing to take the action organisation details	
ABN/ACN	90719052204
Organisation name	DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION
Organisation address	3002 VIC

Person proposing to take the action details

Name	Evan Lewis
Job title	Senior Project Manager, Forest and Fire Operations, Barwon South West
Phone	136 186
Email	evan.b.lewis@deeca.vic.gov.au
Address	30-38 Little Malop St, Geelong VIC 3220

1.3.2.14 Are you proposing the action as part of a Joint Venture? *

No

1.3.2.15 Are you proposing the action as part of a Trust? *

No

1.3.2.17 Describe the Person proposing the action's history of responsible environmental management including details of any proceedings under a Commonwealth, State or Territory law for the protection of the environment or the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources against the Person proposing to take the action. *

The proponent, as a state statutory authority, has a satisfactory environmental record and has not identified any proceedings against it under a Commonwealth, State or Territory law for the protection of the environment or the conservation and sustainable use of natural resources.

1.3.2.18 If the person proposing to take the action is a corporation, provide details of the corporation's environmental policy and planning framework

Not applicable

1.3.3 Identity: Proposed designated proponent

1.3.3.1 Are the Proposed designated proponent details the same as the Person proposing to take the action? *

No

1.3.3.2 Is Proposed designated proponent an organisation or business? *

Yes

Proposed designated proponent organisation details

ABN/ACN	90719052204
Organisation name	DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION
Organisation address	3002 VIC

Proposed designated proponent details

Name	Evan Lewis
Job title	Senior Project Manager, Forest and Fire Operations, Barwon South West
Phone	136 186
Email	evan.b.lewis@deeca.vic.gov.au
Address	30-38 Little Malop St, Geelong VIC 3220

1.3.4 Identity: Summary of allocation

Confirmed Referring party's identity

The Referring party is the person preparing the information in this referral.

ABN/ACN	90719052204
Organisation name	DEECA
Organisation address	8 Nicholson St, Melbourne Victoria 3002
Representative's name	Emily Steele
Representative's job title	
Phone	136 186
Email	emily.steele@deeca.vic.gov.au
Address	Level 4, 30-38 Little Malop Street, GEELONG, Victoria 3220

Confirmed Person proposing to take the action's identity

The Person proposing to take the action is the individual, business, government agency or trustee that will be responsible for the proposed action.

ABN/ACN	90719052204
Organisation name	DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION
Organisation address	3002 VIC
Representative's name	Evan Lewis
Representative's job title	Senior Project Manager, Forest and Fire Operations, Barwon South West
Phone	136 186
Email	evan.b.lewis@deeca.vic.gov.au
Address	30-38 Little Malop St, Geelong VIC 3220

Confirmed Proposed designated proponent's identity

The Person proposing to take the action is the individual or organisation proposed to be responsible for meeting the requirements of the EPBC Act during the assessment process, if the Minister decides that this project is a controlled action.

ABN/ACN	90719052204
Organisation name	DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION
Organisation address	3002 VIC
Representative's name	Evan Lewis
Representative's job title	Senior Project Manager, Forest and Fire Operations, Barwon South West
Phone	136 186
Email	evan.b.lewis@deeca.vic.gov.au
Address	30-38 Little Malop St, Geelong VIC 3220

1.4 Payment details: Payment exemption and fee waiver

1.4.1 Do you qualify for an exemption from fees under EPBC Regulation 5.23 (1) (a)? *

No

1.4.3 Have you applied for or been granted a waiver for full or partial fees under Regulation 5.21A? *

No

1.4.5 Are you going to apply for a waiver of full or partial fees under EPBC Regulation 5.21A?

No

1.4.7 Has the department issued you with a credit note? *

No

1.4.9 Would you like to add a purchase order number to your invoice? *

Yes

1.4.10 Enter purchase order number *

PO95939

1.4 Payment details: Payment allocation

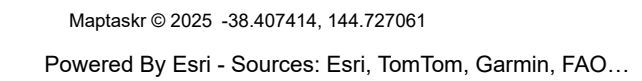
1.4.11 Who would you like to allocate as the entity responsible for payment? *

Person proposing to take the action

2. Location

2.1 Project footprint

Project area (18276.51 Ha)
Disturbance footprint (65.39 Ha)



2.2 Footprint details

2.2.1 What is the address of the proposed action? *

22 Yaringa Road, Fairhaven VIC 3231

2.2.2 Where is the primary jurisdiction of the proposed action? *

Victoria

2.2.3 Is there a secondary jurisdiction for this proposed action? *

No

2.2.5 What is the tenure of the action area relevant to the project area? *

The project area traverses several Crown land tenures, as follows:

- The Great Otway National Park managed by Parks Victoria (accounting for majority of the trail network).
- Multiple coastal reserves:
  - Lorne - Queenscliff Coastal Reserve
  - Cumberland River Coastal Camping Reserve
  - Kennett River Coastal Reserve
  - Kennett River Water Frontage
  - Lorne Coastal Reserve
  - Lily Pond Bushland Reserve
  - Queens Park (managed by DEECA)
  - Wye River Coastal Reserve
  - Wye River Water Frontage
- The reserves are managed by the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority, Parks Victoria, the Surf Coast Council and Colac Otway Shire Council.
- No changes to the tenure of Crown land are proposed as part of the proposed action.

- On 21 March 2024, the Eastern Maar were recognised as native title holders for the remaining portion of their Registered Aboriginal Party area, following a previous determination on 28 March 2023. The determination means Eastern Maar have the following rights and interests:
    - Access or enter and remain on the land and waters.
    - Camp on the land and waters landward of the high-water mark of the sea.
    - Use and enjoy the land and waters.
    - Take the resources of the land and waters.
    - Protect places and areas of importance on the land and waters.

3. Existing environment

3.1 Physical description

3.1.1 Describe the current condition of the project area's environment.

The project area is within the:

- Otway Plain Bioregion and the Otway Ranges Bioregion.
- Otway Coast River Basin.
- Corangamite Catchment Management Authority (CMA) management area.
- Surf Coast Shire and Colac Otway Shire.
- The Great Otway National Park managed by Parks Victoria (accounting for the majority of the trail network).
- Multiple coastal reserves, which are managed by the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority, Parks Victoria, the Surf Coast Council and Colac Otway Shire Council.

The project area is located on public land, and primarily traverses through conservation reserves such as the Great Otway National Park and various coastal conservation reserves, which support large quantities of remnant native vegetation. Introduced flora species are most commonly found near settlements and areas of frequent human use such as adjacent to car parks, viewing platforms, picnic areas and roads.

Evidence of unsanctioned dirt bike trails are scattered throughout the project area, as well as official management vehicle trails. The landscape has been subjected to differing fire regimes as a result of prescribed burning and natural bushfires. Sections of heathland within the Otway Plain are subjected to regular burning regimes, and the forested communities present in the Otway Ranges have been burnt less regularly.

3.1.2 Describe any existing or proposed uses for the project area.

Majority of the project area is zoned Public Conservation and Resource Zone (PCRZ) and forms part of the Great Otway National Park. Portions of the project area currently support existing trails, vehicle management tracks, footpaths or beach, comprising 41.9 kilometres of the alignment. Sections of informal trails also comprise part of the project area, however, are mostly in poor condition. Other portions of the project area are undeveloped and currently support forest, woodland and coastal scrub vegetation in various conditions.

The proposed future use of the project area will be for a walking trail and supporting infrastructure, including suspension bridges, lookouts, car parks, trail signage and wayfinding.

3.1.3 Describe any outstanding natural features and/or any other important or unique values that applies to the project area.

There are multiple natural features unique within and adjoining the project area. These are:

- The Great Otway National Park and various adjoining reserves
- The Great Ocean Road

3.1.4 Describe the gradient (or depth range if action is to be taken in a marine area) relevant to the project area.

The majority of the project area occurs on moderate to steep slopes that are largely excluded from public use.

3.2 Flora and fauna

3.2.1 Describe the flora and fauna within the affected area and attach any investigations of surveys if applicable.

Biodiversity surveys and impact assessments completed to date for the project area include:

- Biosis, March 2022: Desktop ecological values and constraints assessment (See Att 9 - Desktop Ecological Values and Constraints Assessment 2022, all parts). This assessment considered the trail alignment during the master planning phase of the project and is now superseded.
- Wild Otways Initiative, 2023: Small mammal surveys undertaken by the Wild Otways Initiative and ongoing project specific advice to DEECA regarding Swamp Antechinus and Broad-toothed Rat (See Att 10 -

Targeted surveys for two nationally threatened small mammals in the Otway National Park).

- Biosis, 2022 – 2024: Flora and Fauna Assessment (See Att 5 – Flora and Fauna Assessment 2024, all parts), including the following site assessments:
    - May 2022 – June 2022 & March 2023: detailed flora assessment.
    - April 2022 – May 2022: detailed fauna assessment, including nocturnal surveys, bird surveys and remote camera deployment.
    - August 2023 – March 2024: targeted flora surveys.

These assessments consider the final trail alignment and associated infrastructure and form the basis of this referral.

The results of the current assessments are summarised below.

Key ecological details within the project area are as follows:

- The project area is located within two bioregions, the Otway Plain and Otway Ranges bioregions, both having distinct environmental conditions, vegetation communities and species assemblages.
- Two EVCs occur in the Otway Plain bioregion composed of three condition states:
    - EVC 21 – Shrubby Dry Forest, Bioregional Conservation Status (BCS) of least concern.
    - EVC 48 – Heathy Woodland, BCS of least concern.
- Eight EVCs occur in the Otway Ranges bioregion composed of 15 condition states:
    - EVC 16 – Lowland Forest, BCS of depleted.
    - EVC 18 – Riparian Forest, BCS of least concern.
    - EVC 21 – Shrubby Dry Forest, BCS of least concern.
    - EVC 22 – Grassy Dry Forest, BCS of depleted.
    - EVC 45 – Shrubby Foothill Forest, BCS of least concern.
    - EVC 48 – Heathy Woodland, BCS of least concern.
    - EVC 161 – Coastal Headland Scrub, BCS of depleted.
    - EVC 201 – Shrubby Wet Forest, BCS of least concern.
- Forest, woodland and coastal scrub vegetation is present across the project area, supporting a suite of habitat elements including large trees, fallen timber, rocks, tussock-forming grasses, major river systems with minor tributaries, seasonally wet areas and structurally-complex understorey.
- The project area supports populations of threatened species, including:
    - Wrinkled Buttons *Leiocarpa gatesii*, Swamp Antechinus A*ntechinus minimus maritimus*, Broad-toothed Rat *Mastacomys fuscus mordicus*, Gang-gang Cockatoo *Callocephalon fimbriatum*, Long-nosed Potoroo *Potorous tridactylus tridactylus* and Yellow-bellied Glider *Petaurus australis*, listed under the EPBC Act and FFG Act.
    - Blue-winged Parrot *Neophema chrysostoma*, listed under the EPBC Act.
    - Brooker's Gum *Eucalyptus brookeriana* and Southern Blue-gum *Eucalyptus globulus* subsp. *Globulus*, listed under the FFG Act.
    - Grey Goshawk *Accipiter novaehollandiae*, Otway Black Snail *Victaphanta compacta*, Otway Burrowing *Crayfish Engaeus fultoni*, Rufous Bristlebird (Otway) *Dasyornis broadbenti caryochrous*, White-bellied Sea-Eagle *Haliaeetus leucogaster* and Powerful Owl *Ninox strenua*, listed under the FFG Act.
- The project area supports potential habitat for a further 49 threatened species, including:
    - Listed under EPBC Act: Anglesea Grevillea *Grevillea infecunda*, Green-striped Greenhood *Pterostylis chlorogramma*, Spiral Sun-orchid *Thelymitra matthewsii*, Australian Grayling *Prototroctes maraena*, White-throated Needletail *Hirundapus caudacutus*, Southern Bent-winged Bat *Miniopterus orianae bassanii*, Diamond Firetail *Stagonopleura guttata*, Latham's Snipe *Gallinago hardwickii*, Grey-headed Flying-fox *Pteropus poliocephalus*, Southern Brown Bandicoot *Isoodon obesulus*.
    - Listed under FFG Act: 32 flora species and 16 fauna species (see Section 4.2.1 of Att 5 – Flora and Fauna Assessment 2024, part 1).
- Waterways, aquatic habitats and major river systems.

Further detail is provided within the FFA (See Att 5– Flora and Fauna Assessment 2024, part 1, pp 91 for full list identified in activity area).

3.2.2 Describe the vegetation (including the status of native vegetation and soil) within the project area.

The project area occurs mostly within the Otway Ranges Bioregion with a smaller portion to the north-east falling within the Otway Plain Bioregion (See Attachment 5 – Flora and Fauna Assessment 2024, Section 3, pp 38). A majority of the project area's soils are comprised of shallow stony loams and sandy soils which are more prone to erosion.

The project area is predominately located on public land dedicated for conservation reserves, which support large quantities of remnant native vegetation. Closer to areas of human settlement or use, introduced species are more commonly found.

A range of EVCs were recorded across the project area, their distribution largely driven by aspect and topography. Within the Otway Plain, heathy EVCs dominate the landscape. The vegetation communities are generally open woodland with a low canopy height. The most dominant EVCs within the project area are EVC 48 – Heathy Woodland and EVC 21 – Shrubby Dry Forest. Canopy species include Red Ironbark *Eucalyptus tricarpa*, Messmate Stringybark *Eucalyptus obliqua* and Southern Blue-gum *Eucalyptus globulus*. The understorey species within the Otway Plain are largely comprised of heathy species such as Austral Grass-tree *Xanthorrhoea australis*, Erect Guinea-flower *Hibbertia riparia* and Horny Cone-bush *Isopogon ceratophyllus*. Grasses are usually dominant as well, including Silvertop Wallaby-grass *Rytidosperma pallidum*.

The Otway Ranges Bioregion features characteristically steep topography intersected with major river systems. The vegetation communities are comprised mainly of tall wet forests supporting a mixed canopy of Southern Blue-gum, Mountain Grey-gum *Eucalyptus cypellocarpa*, Scentbark *Eucalyptus aromaphloia* and Messmate Stringybark. The ridges and drier slopes usually support EVC 21 - Shrubby Dry Forest which grades into EVC 45 – Shrubby Foothill Forest on the sheltered and lower slopes. The distinguishing features between the two EVCs is the composition of understorey shrubs. Shrubby Dry Forest is dominated by Fabaceae including Large-leaf Bush-pea *Pultenaea daphnoides*, Prickly Bush-pea *Pultenaea forsythiana* and Narrow-leaf Wattle *Acacia mucronata* subsp. *longifolia*. Whereas EVC 45 - Shrubby Foothill Forest is characterised by a denser shrub layer comprised of a mesic species, usually Musk Daisy-bush *Olearia argophylla* Snowy Daisy-bush *Olearia lirata* and Blanket Leaf *Bedfordia arborescens*.

Other EVCS occurring throughout the Otway Ranges include EVC 201 - Shrubby Wet Forest occupying sheltered gullies and is dominated by ferns such as Water Ferns *Blechnum* spp. and Rough Tree-fern *Cyathea australis*. EVC 18 – Riparian Forest occupies the margins of the major river and creek systems. EVC 16 – Lowland Forest is also present in the damper, sheltered gullies at higher elevations on gentle slopes, and supports a varied shrub layer with heathy influences and a tall canopy of Messmate Stringybark. EVC 22 – Grassy Dry Forest is dominated by Common Tussock-grass *Poa labillardierei* and a canopy of scattered Southern Blue-Gum. This EVC was recorded in single location east of Lorne. EVC 48 – Heathy Woodland is largely confined to north-east of the Otway Range. EVC 161 – Coastal Headland Scrub is the dominant EVC along the coastline. It is a generally a treeless community with a very dense cover of shrubs and grasses on rocky headlands.

In summary, the flora and fauna assessment recorded the following vegetation within the 20 metre assessment corridor:

- Two EVCs within the Otway Plain Bioregion:
    - EVC 21 – Shrubby Dry Forest.
    - EVC 48 – Heathy Woodland.
- Eight EVCs within the Otway Ranges Bioregion:
    - EVC 16 – Lowland Forest.
    - EVC 18 – Riparian Forest.
    - EVC 21 – Shrubby Dry Forest.
    - EVC 22 – Grassy Dry Forest.
    - EVC 45 – Shrubby Foothill Forest.
    - EVC 48 – Heathy Woodland.
    - EVC 161 – Coastal Headland Scrub.
    - EVC 201 – Shrubby Wet Forest.
- 245 indigenous plant species

- 53 introduced plant species
- Four threatened plant species:
    - *Eucalyptus brookeriana* Brooker's Gum (FFG Act listed).
    - *Eucalyptus globulus* subsp. *globulus* Southern Blue-gum (FFG Act listed).
    - *Leiocarpa gatesii* Wrinkled Buttons (EPBC and FFG Act listed).
    - *Thomasia petalocalyx* Paper Flower (FFG Act listed).

3.3 Heritage

3.3.1 Describe any Commonwealth heritage places overseas or other places recognised as having heritage values that apply to the project area.

17 historic heritage places and sites have been identified within or near the project area, including a combination of places on the National Trust Register, Heritage Overlay, Victorian Heritage Inventory, Victorian Heritage Register and the National Heritage List (See Att 6 – Cultural Heritage Values Desktop Assessment 2022, part 3, pp. 153-155).

The 'Great Ocean Road and Scenic Environs' is listed as a historical heritage place on the National Heritage List (NHL) (place ID 105875). There is a Victorian Heritage Register (VHR) site, Great Ocean Road (H2261), that also provides statutory protection for this area under the Heritage Act 2017. In addition, there are two heritage overlays within the project area that also cover the NHL and VHR site, Great Ocean Road (HO312 Colac and Otway Shire) (HO163 Surf Coast Shire). These heritage places all share the same heritage values as those of the NHL site which are (according to Criteria):

1. Events, Processes: Commemoration of the service of all WWI servicemen through the construction of a memorial roadway that provide access to all to the spectacular coastal landscape.
    - Commemorative arch, plaques and bronze sculpture at Eastern View; memorial stone wall at Mount Defiance.
2. Rarity: Diverse and unique geomorphological features and rare polar dinosaur fossils.
3. Potential archaeological remains of Great Ocean Road construction workers camps; remains of tool marks on exposed rock faces from construction of the road. Also, rare and unique polar dinosaur fossils and Cretaceous geomorphology.
4. Class of place: scenic route and frequently changing dramatic landscapes
5. Aesthetic value: Outstanding scenic landscape values: spectacular coastal views, panoramic vistas and diverse scenery; key viewpoints and scenic lookouts; engineering of cuttings, drainage and retaining walls to be unobtrusive and to allow a natural aesthetic to dominate. Landscapes and seascapes include some of the most features in Australian print, film and digital media.
6. n/a
7. Social value: Bells Beach Surfing Recreation Reserve internationally renowned and strongly associated with the development of surfing. Historical shipwrecks along the coast from 19th and early 20th centuries, including the *Loch Ard* and *WB Godfrey,* and associated graves.
8. Connections with significant people of national importance: W.T.B McCormack; Howard Hitchcock; Edna Walling; returned servicemen.

The project area also intersects with two Victorian Heritage Inventory historical archaeological sites:

- H7620-0020 Armistead's Sawmill
- H7620-0021 Former Kennett River Workers Camp Site

The Armistead's Sawmill site (H7620-0020) is one of a number of sites that relate to the early exploitation of timber in the region. The sawmill site was set by Syd Armistead in 1941 and consisted of a timber sawmill and 8 houses for mill workers. Timber was initially logged from Hitchcock Gully and was winched up to the mill site using a 700m long horse-drawn narrow-gauge tramway until 1945. Gravel logging roads were constructed further north in Hitchcock Gully and from 1945 trucks were used to transport logs. Therea re no standing structures left of the mill

complex. This place has historical significance for its association with the development of Kennett River township after the Great Ocean Road was opened, providing access to areas that has been previously inaccessible. It is also historically associated with the Otways timber industry. The sawmill site and tramway also have scientific significance as being representative examples of the late-stage timber industry.

- Heritage Overlay HO242 (Colac and Otway Shire) shares the same heritage values as the Armistead Sawmill VHI archaeological site (H7620-0020).

The Former Kennett River Workers Camp Site (H7620-0021) shares direct heritage values with the Great Ocan Road NHL site, being the location of camp site for the WWI returned service-men workers who constructed the road between 1919 - 1932. There were 13 known camp sites along the Great Ocean Road; however, documentary evidence of the workers camps is scant since most of the records of the Great Ocean Road Trust were destroyed in the 1940s. The workers used picks, shovels, wheelbarrows, explosives and some light machinery to construct the road and the work was dangerous with several workers killed. The section between Eastern View and Kennett River was the most difficult to construct, involving workers rappelling down cliff faces, and hand cutting rock holds and platforms in the cliff faces. The workers camps came to resemble military camps, being located near freshwater and with the tents set out in orderly rows with a communal dining marquee, kitchen and recreational facilities. There are few records of the Kennett River camp, therefore any archaeological features or deposits present at this site would be valuable to assisting our understanding of the place, its former occupants and methods for constructing the road.

There are 10 historical heritage overlay places that intersect with the project area. Two of these share the same areas and heritage values as the Great Ocean Road NHL site:

- HO163 (Surf Coast Shire) Great Ocean Road
- HO312 (Colac Otway Shire) Great Ocean Road

One of the heritage overlays shares the same heritage values as the VHI archaeological site of Armistead's Sawmill (H7620-0020):

- Heritage Overlay HO242 (Colac and Otway Shire) Armistead's Sawmill, Kennett River

The remaining 7 heritage overlays that intersect with the project area are:

- HO58 (Surf Coast Shire) Cypress Avenue, Lorne
- HO67 (Surf Coast Shire) Swing Bridge, Lorne
- HO68 (Surf Coast Shire) Graves of Lindsay Children (Splitter's Graves), Lorne
- HO78 (Surf Coast Shire) Cumberland River Ford
- HO210 (Colac Otway Shire) Dugout, Grey River Road, Kennett River
- HO226 (Colac Otway Shire), Godfrey Creek graves, Great Ocean Road, Separation Creek
- HO243 (Colac Otway Shire), War Memorial Cairn, Wye River

The specific heritage values of the above heritage overlays relate to early settlement and occupants of the Lorne and Kennett River townships, to early timber logging and milling, to the war memorial aspect of the Great Ocean Road and its connection to returned servicemen.

In addition, there are several sites not currently included on statutory heritages registers, lists or inventories that intersect with the project area:

- Sharps Sawmill, Allenvale
- Sharp's Tramway, Allenvale Road, Allenvale

3.3.2 Describe any Indigenous heritage values that apply to the project area.

The GOR CT project area falls within Eastern Maar Country and is within an area of cultural heritage sensitivity. Construction of a walking trail is considered a high impact activity under Regulation 7 of the Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2018. Consequently, there is a requirement to prepare a mandatory cultural heritage management plan under Section 46 of the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006.

Previous archaeological investigations within the project area have indicated that landforms including lower and mid slopes, ridgelines, saddles and spurs in proximity to the river valleys and coastal areas are highly likely to contain Aboriginal cultural heritage.

Subsurface testing carried out in CHMP 16168 revealed an artefact bearing layer between 100 - 200 millimetres. Artefact Scatters included silcrete, quartz and flint. Quartz and silcrete occur naturally within the region.

A majority of Aboriginal places identified in the study area have been subject to disturbances associated with wind and water erosion, pedestrians and vehicles. Some areas, such as the Hitchcock Gully area, demonstrate high levels of disturbance caused by the timber industry.

A total of seventy-two (72) Aboriginal places comprising eighty-three (83) components are registered within the geographic region and a total of fifty-six (56) registered Aboriginal places consisting of sixty-four (64) individual place components have been registered within 50 metres of the study area (See Att 6 – Cultural Heritage Values Desktop Assessment 2022, part 2 section 2.2 pp 42).

A Cultural Heritage consultancy has been appointed with complex site assessments commencing in August 2024. Engagement with Eastern Marr Aboriginal Corporation is ongoing and the formal submission of a Cultural Heritage Management Plan is currently scheduled for February 2025.

In addition, the trail alignment follows travel routes of the Traditional Owners and is therefore highly likely to provide direct tangible and intangible evidence of Eastern Maar Peoples ancestors and connection to Country.

(See Att 6 – Cultural Heritage Values Desktop Assessment 2022, part 3, section 2.5, pp. 119).

3.4 Hydrology

3.4.1 Describe the hydrology characteristics that apply to the project area and attach any hydrological investigations or surveys if applicable. *

The project area falls within the Corangamite Catchment Management Authority (Thompsons and Otway Coast sub-catchment area) and transects several waterways, as well as numerous ephemeral and lower-order streams.

The project area and its surrounds contains a diversity of freshwater aquatic and riparian habitats consisting of numerous creeks, rivers, drainage lines, seasonal gullies, damp depressions and coastal wetlands.

Whilst the project area transects numerous waterways and lower order streams, the majority are located within sections of existing trail, consequently there will be limited instream works required to support construction.

The main waterways and proposed works include:

For existing trail (negligible works):

- Cumberland River
- Erskine River
- Moggs Creek
- Wye River
- Kennett River

For new trail (minor works):

- Saint George River
- Cumberland River
- Grey River

The trail will involve minor construction (e.g. installation of a culvert) and/or maintenance activities affecting the beds and banks of the following designated waterways:

- Anderson Creek

- Brown Creek
- Coalmine Creek
- Grassy Creek
- Hitchcock Gully
- Jamieson Creek
- Moggs Creek
- Monash Gully
- Reedy Creek
- Separation Creek
- Sheoak Creek
- Spout Creek
- Stony Creek

To ensure that all works avoid impacts to waterbodies, a Stormwater Management Plan has been prepared to inform the design and works required for the proposed action (See Att 11 – Stormwater Management Considerations 2022).

Additionally, coastal environments within or near the project area include sandy beaches, escarpment cliffs and intertidal areas (See Att 5 – Flora and Fauna Assessment 2024, part 1, pp 42 - 43). A Coastal Hazard Vulnerability Assessment was prepared in 2022 when a section of trail was proposed between Smyth Creek to Scenes Creek (See Att 12 – Coastal Hazard Vulnerability Assessment). However, through subsequent feasibility work this section is no longer proposed as part of the Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail project.

4. Impacts and mitigation

4.1 Impact details

Potential Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES) relevant to your proposed action area.

EPBC Act section	Controlling provision	Impacted	Reviewed
S12	World Heritage	No	Yes
S15B	National Heritage	Yes	Yes
S16	Ramsar Wetland	No	Yes
S18	Threatened Species and Ecological Communities	Yes	Yes
S20	Migratory Species	No	Yes
S21	Nuclear	No	Yes
S23	Commonwealth Marine Area	No	Yes
S24B	Great Barrier Reef	No	Yes
S24D	Water resource in relation to large coal mining development or coal seam gas	No	Yes

EPBC Act section	Controlling provision	Impacted	Reviewed
S26	Commonwealth Land	No	Yes
S27B	Commonwealth Heritage Places Overseas	No	Yes
S28	Commonwealth or Commonwealth Agency	No	Yes

4.1.1 World Heritage

You have identified your proposed action will likely directly and/or indirectly impact the following protected matters.

A direct impact is a direct consequence of an action taken – for example, clearing of habitat for a threatened species or permanent shading on an ecological community as the result of installing solar panels.

An indirect impact is an 'indirect consequence' such as a downstream impact or a facilitated third-party action.

—

4.1.1.1 Is the proposed action likely to have any direct and/or indirect impact on any of these protected matters? *

No

4.1.1.3 Briefly describe why your action is unlikely to have a direct and/or indirect impact. *

The project area is not within or nearby any World Heritage Areas.

4.1.2 National Heritage

You have identified your proposed action will likely directly and/or indirectly impact the following protected matters.

A direct impact is a direct consequence of an action taken – for example, clearing of habitat for a threatened species or permanent shading on an ecological community as the result of installing solar panels.

An indirect impact is an 'indirect consequence' such as a downstream impact or a facilitated third-party action.

Direct impact	Indirect impact	National heritage
Yes	Yes	Great Ocean Road and Scenic Environs

4.1.2.1 Is the proposed action likely to have any direct and/or indirect impact on any of these protected matters? *

Yes

4.1.2.2 Briefly describe why your action has a direct and/or indirect impact on these protected matters. *

The Great Ocean Road and Scenic Environs is listed as a historic place on the National Heritage List.

The entire landscape of the project area is deemed to be of moderate sensitivity to the changes that will result from the proposed action. New trails and associated infrastructure will result in visual impacts at multiple new and existing locations along the project area.

The proposed action may result in direct and indirect impacts to this National Heritage place due to the following:

- Vegetation clearing along the trail alignments and at infrastructure points.
- People utilising the trail.
- The construction phase will result in short-term visual impacts to sensitive visual receptors (residential receptors, tourism receptors, road users, sea goers).
- The construction and operation of the proposed action may increase the overall cumulative impact of tourism infrastructure within the region.

Impacts to the historical heritage values and cultural values of the place will be minimal and cumulatively will be of low significance.

1. Events, Processes: Commemoration of the service of all WWI servicemen through the construction of a memorial roadway that provide access to all to the spectacular coastal landscape
    - There will be no impact to the memorial features such as plaques or arches, or to the roadway itself.
    - The creation of a unified walking track will enhance the Great Ocean Road by providing access and views to the road and a new way to experience the road; and could enhance the commemorative aspect of the road through new interpretive signage at key lookouts or other relevant locations.
2. Rarity: Diverse and unique geomorphological features and rare polar dinosaur fossils.
    - There will be no impact to rare fossils or geomorphological units
    - The project could provide enhancement of this value through new interpretive signage at relevant locations.
3. Great Ocean Road construction workers camps; remains of tool marks on exposed rock faces from construction of the road. Also rare and unique polar dinosaur fossils and Cretaceous geomorphology.
    - There will be minimal to no impact to the former construction workers camps.
    - There will be no impact to rare geomorphological units or fossils.
    - The project could provide enhancement of this value through new interpretive signage at relevant locations.
4. Class of place: scenic route and frequently changing dramatic landscapes
    - There will be no impact to the dramatic, frequently changing landscapes.
    - Project could enhance this value by providing new a way to experience the Great Ocean Road.
5. Aesthetic value: Outstanding scenic landscape values: spectacular coastal views, panoramic vistas and diverse scenery
    - All direct and cumulative impacts are anticipated to have low significance (Att 4 – Landscape and Visual Assessment 2022, pp 22 – 29).
6. n/a
7. Social value: Bells Beach Surfing Recreation Reserve and historical shipwrecks
    - There will be no impact on these values (i.e. the locations lie outside of the project area)
8. Connections with significant people of national importance: W.T.B McCormack; Howard Hitchcock; Edna Walling; returned servicemen.
    - There will be no impacts upon elements that are associated with this value.

(See Att 6 – Cultural Heritage Values Desktop Assessment 2022, part 2, section 2.3).

4.1.2.4 Do you consider this likely direct and/or indirect impact to be a Significant Impact? *

No

4.1.2.6 Describe why you do not consider this to be a Significant Impact. *

The significance of anticipated impacts on landscape character was determined as follows:

- Otway Forests and Coasts Precinct 4.4 (Low Coastal Heath – Fairhaven to Big Hill): low adverse significance with moderate visual absorption capacity (VAC) considered a mitigating factor.
- Otway Forests and Coasts Precinct 4.1 (Otway Ranges Forest and Coast – Big Hill to Cape Patton): low adverse significance with high VAC considered a mitigating factor.
- Otway Foothills, Valleys and Uplands Precinct 2.4 (Appollo Bay Coastal Valleys and Hills – Cape Patton to Skenes Creek): low adverse significance with moderate VAC considered a mitigating factor.
- Cumulative impacts are generally anticipated to be of low adverse significance.
- Whilst they occur, construction related impacts will be of high significance to sensitive visual receptors for the duration of the construction phase. However, appropriate construction planning & management measures can be implemented to mitigate impacts. Long term significance of construction impacts is expected to be low, as construction activities are short term and appropriate mitigation measures are to be implemented. Once construction is complete, it is assumed that the visual impact of the new trail and infrastructure will recede as construction areas rehabilitate and vegetation re-establishes in disturbed areas.

The proposed action is considered acceptable from a visual and landscape character perspective. All direct and cumulative impacts are anticipated to have low significance (See Att 4 – Landscape and Visual Assessment 2022, pp 22 – 29).

4.1.2.7 Do you think your proposed action is a controlled action? *

No

4.1.2.9 Please elaborate why you do not think your proposed action is a controlled action. *

The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment prepared by Tract concluded that the proposed action is considered acceptable from a visual and landscape character perspective. All direct and cumulative impacts are anticipated to have low significance (See Att 4 – Landscape and Visual Assessment 2022, pp 22 – 29).

4.1.2.10 Please describe any avoidance or mitigation measures proposed for this action and attach any supporting documentation for these avoidance and mitigation measures. *

The following design principles and measures have been adopted across the project design phase and will be implemented during the construction and operation phases of the proposed action: (see Att 3- Style Guide and Construction Manual section 2)

- Detailed project planning has resulted in the reduction in the length of proposed trails, and the removal of some trails from the proposed alignment.
- Aligning 41.9 kilometres of the trail network on existing trails (i.e. formal walking trails and management vehicle tracks), which will avoid incurring visual impacts from vegetation removal.
- Aligning 6.7 kilometres of the trail network on informal trails.
- Ensuring trail styles and construction methods only require the removal of understorey vegetation so the forest canopy and sub-canopy will remain intact.
- Major soil excavation has been minimised, by designing trails to follow land contours and take advantage of flat spurs and ridges.
- Supporting infrastructure sited and designed to respond to the characteristics of the site and locality, including being set back from visually exposed areas and the use of non-reflective and matt finish surfaces.
- Minimal need for lighting.
- A site-specific Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) will be implemented to minimise visual impacts. Mitigation measures will include the following:
    - Reduce and control construction dust using approved dust suppression techniques.
    - Construction areas will be rehabilitated and revegetated, where possible.
    - Minimise vegetation removal by planning the placement of laydown areas / temporary construction compounds, etc.

Ensure that litter and construction waste is appropriately stored and disposed at licensed waste facilities. (see Att 3- Style Guide and Construction Manual, pp 18-19).

4.1.2.11 Please describe any proposed offsets and attach any supporting documentation relevant to these measures. *

Not applicable

4.1.3 Ramsar Wetland

You have identified your proposed action will likely directly and/or indirectly impact the following protected matters.

A direct impact is a direct consequence of an action taken – for example, clearing of habitat for a threatened species or permanent shading on an ecological community as the result of installing solar panels.

An indirect impact is an 'indirect consequence' such as a downstream impact or a facilitated third-party action.

—

4.1.3.1 Is the proposed action likely to have any direct and/or indirect impact on any of these protected matters? *

No

4.1.3.3 Briefly describe why your action is unlikely to have a direct and/or indirect impact. *

The project area is located approximately 23km kilometres south of the nearest Ramsar Site and there are no wetlands or creeks within the project area that connect directly to the Ramsar wetland.

4.1.4 Threatened Species and Ecological Communities

You have identified your proposed action will likely directly and/or indirectly impact the following protected matters.

A direct impact is a direct consequence of an action taken – for example, clearing of habitat for a threatened species or permanent shading on an ecological community as the result of installing solar panels.

An indirect impact is an 'indirect consequence' such as a downstream impact or a facilitated third-party action.

Threatened species

Direct impact	Indirect impact	Species	Common name
No	No	Amphibromus fluitans	River Swamp Wallaby-grass, Floating Swamp Wallaby-grass
Yes	Yes	Antechinus minimus maritimus	Swamp Antechinus (mainland)
No	No	Anthochaera phrygia	Regent Honeyeater
No	No	Ardenna grisea	Sooty Shearwater
No	No	Balaenoptera borealis	Sei Whale
No	No	Balaenoptera musculus	Blue Whale
No	No	Balaenoptera physalus	Fin Whale
No	No	Botaurus poiciloptilus	Australasian Bittern
No	No	Caladenia concolor	Crimson Spider-orchid, Maroon Spider-orchid
No	No	Calidris acuminata	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper
No	No	Calidris canutus	Red Knot, Knot

Direct impact	Indirect impact	Species	Common name
No	No	Calidris ferruginea	Curlew Sandpiper
Yes	Yes	Callocephalon fimbriatum	Gang-gang Cockatoo
No	No	Carcharodon carcharias	White Shark, Great White Shark
No	No	Caretta caretta	Loggerhead Turtle
No	No	Chelonia mydas	Green Turtle
No	No	Climacteris picumnus victoriae	Brown Treecreeper (south-eastern)
No	No	Dasyurus maculatus maculatus (SE mainland population)	Spot-tailed Quoll, Spotted-tail Quoll, Tiger Quoll (southeastern mainland population)
No	No	Delma impar	Striped Legless Lizard, Striped Snake-lizard
No	No	Dermochelys coriacea	Leatherback Turtle, Leathery Turtle, Luth
No	No	Diomedea antipodensis	Antipodean Albatross
No	No	Diomedea epomophora	Southern Royal Albatross
No	No	Diomedea exulans	Wandering Albatross
No	No	Diomedea sanfordi	Northern Royal Albatross
No	No	Eubalaena australis	Southern Right Whale
No	No	Falco hypoleucos	Grey Falcon
No	No	Galeorhinus galeus	School Shark, Eastern School Shark, Snapper Shark, Tope, Soupfin Shark
No	Yes	Gallinago hardwickii	Latham's Snipe, Japanese Snipe
No	No	Glycine latrobeana	Clover Glycine, Purple Clover
No	No	Grantiella picta	Painted Honeyeater
No	No	Grevillea infecunda	Anglesea Grevillea
No	No	Halobaena caerulea	Blue Petrel
No	No	Hirundapus caudacutus	White-throated Needletail
Yes	Yes	Isoodon obesulus obesulus	Southern Brown Bandicoot (eastern), Southern Brown Bandicoot (south-eastern)
No	No	Lathamus discolor	Swift Parrot
No	Yes	Leiocarpa gatesii	Wrinkled Buttons
No	No	Limosa lapponica baueri	Nunivak Bar-tailed Godwit, Western Alaskan Bar-tailed Godwit

Direct impact	Indirect impact	Species	Common name
No	No	Lissolepis coventryi	Swamp Skink, Eastern Mourning Skink
No	No	Litoria raniformis	Southern Bell Frog,, Growling Grass Frog, Green and Golden Frog, Warty Swamp Frog, Golden Bell Frog
No	No	Macronectes giganteus	Southern Giant-Petrel, Southern Giant Petrel
No	No	Macronectes halli	Northern Giant Petrel
Yes	Yes	Mastacomys fuscus mordicus	Broad-toothed Rat (mainland), Tooarrana
No	No	Melanodryas cucullata cucullata	South-eastern Hooded Robin, Hooded Robin (south-eastern)
No	No	Miniopterus orianae bassanii	Southern Bent-wing Bat
No	No	Nannoperca obscura	Yarra Pygmy Perch
No	No	Neophema chrysogaster	Orange-bellied Parrot
Yes	Yes	Neophema chrysostoma	Blue-winged Parrot
No	No	Numenius madagascariensis	Eastern Curlew, Far Eastern Curlew
No	No	Pachyptila turtur subantarctica	Fairy Prion (southern)
No	No	Pedionomus torquatus	Plains-wanderer
No	No	Petauroides volans	Greater Glider (southern and central)
No	Yes	Petaurus australis australis	Yellow-bellied Glider (south-eastern)
No	No	Phoebetria fusca	Sooty Albatross
Yes	Yes	Potorous tridactylus trisulcatus	Long-nosed Potoroo (southern mainland)
No	No	Prasophyllum spicatum	Dense Leek-orchid
No	Yes	Prototroctes maraena	Australian Grayling
No	No	Pseudomys fumeus	Smoky Mouse, Konoom
No	No	Pseudomys novaehollandiae	New Holland Mouse, Pookila
No	No	Pterodroma leucoptera leucoptera	Gould's Petrel, Australian Gould's Petrel
No	No	Pterodroma mollis	Soft-plumaged Petrel
No	No	Pteropus poliocephalus	Grey-headed Flying-fox
No	No	Pterostylis chlorogramma	Green-striped Greenhood
No	No	Pterostylis cucullata	Leafy Greenhood

Direct impact	Indirect impact	Species	Common name
No	No	Rostratula australis	Australian Painted Snipe
No	No	Senecio psilocarpus	Swamp Fireweed, Smooth-fruited Groundsel
No	No	Seriolella brama	Blue Warehou
Yes	Yes	Stagonopleura guttata	Diamond Firetail
No	No	Sternula nereis nereis	Australian Fairy Tern
No	No	Thalassarche bulleri	Buller's Albatross, Pacific Albatross
No	No	Thalassarche bulleri platei	Northern Buller's Albatross, Pacific Albatross
No	No	Thalassarche carteri	Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross
No	No	Thalassarche cauta	Shy Albatross
No	No	Thalassarche chrysostoma	Grey-headed Albatross
No	No	Thalassarche impavida	Campbell Albatross, Campbell Black-browed Albatross
No	No	Thalassarche melanophris	Black-browed Albatross
No	No	Thalassarche salvini	Salvin's Albatross
No	No	Thalassarche steadi	White-capped Albatross
No	No	Thelymitra matthewsii	Spiral Sun-orchid
No	No	Thelymitra orientalis	Hoary Sun-orchid
No	No	Thinornis cucullatus cucullatus	Eastern Hooded Plover, Eastern Hooded Plover
No	No	Tringa nebularia	Common Greenshank, Greenshank
No	No	Xerochrysum palustre	Swamp Everlasting, Swamp Paper Daisy

Ecological communities

Direct impact	Indirect impact	Ecological community
No	Yes	Assemblages of species associated with open-coast salt-wedge estuaries of western and central Victoria ecological community
No	No	Giant Kelp Marine Forests of South East Australia
No	No	Natural Damp Grassland of the Victorian Coastal Plains
No	No	Subtropical and Temperate Coastal Saltmarsh

Direct impact	Indirect impact	Ecological community
No	No	White Box-Yellow Box-Blakely's Red Gum Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland

4.1.4.1 Is the proposed action likely to have any direct and/or indirect impact on any of these protected matters? *

Yes

4.1.4.2 Briefly describe why your action has a direct and/or indirect impact on these protected matters. *

Flora

Targeted surveys for threatened EPBC Act listed flora were undertaken over separate weeks in August, September, and December 2023 for species that had suitable habitat within the study area, including:

- Wrinkled Buttons
- Anglesea Grevillea
- Green-striped Greenhood
- Spiral Sun-orchid

Wrinkled Buttons were recorded during the Flora and Fauna assessment in 2022, and further populations were recorded during the December 2023 targeted surveys. The plant responds well to fire and soil disturbance and was observed to have frequently colonised vehicle management tracks, including a mineral fire break that had been recently graded with heavy machinery. Approximately nine populations of Wrinkled Buttons were recorded within the project area.

No direct impacts to Wrinkled Buttons will occur as a result of the proposed action as all trails will be micro-sited to avoid direct removal. Indirect impacts may occur to the species if the protocols of the projects Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) are not adhered to.

No other EPBC Act listed flora (Anglesea Grevillea, Green-striped Greenhood and Spiral Sun-orchid) were recorded within the project area during the field assessments therefore their likelihood of occurrence has been amended to low and no impacts are expected to occur. (See Att 5 Flora and Fauna assessment 2024, part 2, pp180 – 185).

Fauna

The following EPBC Act listed fauna species have been recorded or there is suitable habitat for them within the project area:

- Latham's Snipe – The species was not recorded during any assessments for this project. Suitable habitat is present at several limited locations along the length of the trail alignment including creek edges, estuarine and freshwater aquatic or wetland habitat such as Erskine River, Kennett River and Skenes Creek. The species has been frequently recorded around Painkalac Creek Estuary and individuals may occasionally occur within the project area near this location during their non-breeding season. The proposed trail alignment intersects areas that may occasionally be utilised for foraging, roosting or dispersal. However, no adverse impacts to these habitats are likely to occur, and the trail alignment largely utilises existing walking trails at these locations. Indirect impacts may occur to waterways during trail construction if the protocols of the projects CEMP are not adhered to.
- Blue-winged Parrot – The species was recorded during the fauna surveys nearby the assessment corridor at Moggs Creek and Fairhaven. Numerous VBA records also occur across the project area. This species occurs throughout a range of habitat types including woodland, forest, shrublands, grasslands and modified areas such as road reserves. Given this, suitable habitat is present throughout the project area and the

species is likely to regularly occur. Some areas of potential habitat are proposed to be directly impacted or removed, the majority of which is low to moderate quality foraging habitat.

- Diamond Firetail - The species was not recorded during any assessments for this project. Potential habitat is present primarily towards the north-eastern end of the trail alignment near Fairhaven. However, the project area represents the southern extent of the species distribution with no database records south of Lorne. Some areas of potential habitat are proposed to be directly impacted or removed, the majority of which is unlikely to be frequently utilised by Diamond Firetail.
- Gang-gang Cockatoo – The species was recorded during the fauna assessment within the assessment corridor in the foothills behind Moggs Creek. Suitable habitat is present throughout the project area, with numerous observations recorded across the project area. The proposed action may result in the direct removal of potential foraging and breeding habitat for this species.
- Australian Grayling – The species was not recorded during any assessments for this project, however it has previously been recorded within estuaries of rivers and creeks intercepted by the project area, with last known records in Erskine River in 1999. No direct impacts to habitat for the species will occur as a result of the proposed action as instream works will be avoided. Indirect impacts may occur to the species if the protocols of the projects CEMP are not adhered to.
- Broad-toothed Rat – Biosis did not record the species during any assessments for this project. However, the Proponent sought advice from the Wild Otways Initiative, who undertook additional survey and investigation in 2023. These assessments recorded the species around Aireys Inlet, Reedy Creek and Lorne, with the closest detection of the species in relation to the trail alignment approximately 50 metres from an existing walking trail along Saint George River. A small extent of habitat modification is expected to occur from the trail construction and the project has the potential to increase predation risk and the spread of dieback if threats are not managed effectively through the projects management plans.
- Southern Brown Bandicoot – The species was not recorded during fauna assessments or during remote camera trap surveys. Several VBA records are located within and adjacent to the project area. Suitable habitat (dense understorey vegetation) will be directly impacted by the proposed action and the project has the potential to increase predation risk.
- Long-nosed Potoroo - The species was recorded during fauna assessments and during remote camera trap surveys. Several VBA records are located within and adjacent to the project area. Suitable habitat (dense understorey vegetation) will be directly impacted by the proposed action and the project has the potential to increase predation risk.
- Swamp Antechinus – Biosis did not record the species during any assessments for this project. However, the Proponent sought advice from the Wild Otways Initiative, who undertook survey and investigation between 2021-2023. These assessments recorded the species within approximately 125 metres of the trail alignment at Grey River and Coalmine Creek, as well as more broadly in the region around Aireys Inlet and Painkalac Creek, and Moggs Creek. A small extent of habitat modification is expected to occur from the trail construction and the project has the potential to increase predation risk and the spread of dieback if threats are not managed effectively through the projects management plans.
- Yellow-bellied Glider – The species was recorded during nocturnal surveys as part of the fauna assessment. Suitable habitat is present throughout the project area. No direct impacts will occur to canopy or hollow bearing trees however construction activities have the potential to result in temporary indirect impacts such as noise and disturbance.

(see Att 5 Flora and Fauna assessment 2024, part 2, pp186 Appendix 4 for more on above fauna).

Ecological communities

Five EPBC Act listed threatened ecological communities (TECs) were predicted to occur, or are known to occur within the project area. These include:

- Assemblages of species associated with open-coast salt-wedge estuaries of western and central Victoria ecological community.
- Giant Kelp Marine Forests of South East Australia.
- Natural Damp Grassland of the Victorian Coastal Plains.
- Subtropical and Temperate Coastal Saltmarsh.
- White Box-Yellow Box-Blakely's Red Gum Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland.

Of these, only Assemblages of species associated with open-coast salt-wedge estuaries of western and central Victoria ecological community, and Subtropical and Temperate Coastal Saltmarsh are likely to be intersected by the trail alignment.

Where the intersect occurs, existing bridges and roads are proposed to be included as part of the trail network. Further impacts to these TECs are therefore considered to be minor. Additionally, trail construction methodologies will occur under the projects CEMP that outlines mitigations methods to reduce impacts on riparian systems and prevent downstream impacts.

(see Att 5 Flora and Fauna assessment 2024, part 2, pp 139 Appendix 1.3)

4.1.4.4 Do you consider this likely direct and/or indirect impact to be a Significant Impact? *

No

4.1.4.6 Describe why you do not consider this to be a Significant Impact. *

Wrinkled Buttons

It is considered unlikely that the project will result in a significant impact on Wrinkled Buttons based on an assessment against the significant impact criteria for vulnerable species. Micro-siting will be used during construction to prevent plants being directly impacted by the alignment. Furthermore, targeted surveys were undertaken in in early Summer to determine populations size and extent along the GTR 3 assessment corridor. If the correct mitigation measures are adhered to the project is unlikely to cause a significant not result in a long-term decline in species.

Latham's Snipe

The project is considered unlikely to result in a significant impact on Latham's Snipe based on an assessment against the significant impact criteria for vulnerable species. This conclusion has been reached on the basis that impacts to potential habitat, including creek edges and estuaries is minimal and the trail alignment make use of existing walking trails throughout most areas of suitable habitat. Indirect impacts to nearby waterways and aquatic habitat will be reduced with proper implementation of a site-specific CEMP, including applying suitable erosion and pollutant control measures during construction.

Blue-winged Parrot

The project is considered unlikely to result in a significant impact on Blue-winged Parrot based on an assessment against the significant impact criteria for vulnerable species. This conclusion has been reached on the basis that large and hollow-bearing tree removal will be avoided by micrositing during trail construction, and the high availability of foraging resources in the surrounding landscape. The impact footprint comprises a small component of foraging resources for Blue-winged Parrot and will not result in a long-term species decline.

Diamond Firetail

The project is considered unlikely to result in a significant impact on Diamond Firetail based on an assessment against the significant impact criteria for vulnerable species. This conclusion has been reached on the basis that the assessment corridor provides a small portion of potential habitat for Diamond Firetail at the southern extent of the species range, which is likely to be infrequently occupied by the population as a part of its broader key distribution throughout south-east mainland Australia.

Gang-gang Cockatoo

Gang-gang Cockatoo will likely forage and nest within the project area. However, there will unlikely be a significant impact to the species due to avoiding the removal of hollow-bearing trees and the high availability of foraging resources in the surrounding landscape. The assessment corridor comprises a small component of resources for the Gang-gang Cockatoo and will not result in a long-term decline in species.

Australian Grayling

It is considered a low likelihood that the project would result in a significant impact on these species within or downstream of the assessment corridor, as long as instream works are avoided and a site-specific Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) implementing suitable erosion and pollutant control measures are applied during construction.

Broad-toothed Rat

It is unlikely that the project will result in a significant impact on Broad-toothed Rat based on the assessment against the significant impact criteria for endangered species. This conclusion has been reached based on the proposed alignment utilising existing walking trails where possible, reducing impacts to key habitat at Grey River through incorporating a boardwalk design, and strict implementation of the GORCT Phytophthora Dieback Management Plan (See Att 13 - Phytophthora Management Plan).

Southern Brown Bandicoot

The project is considered unlikely to result in a significant impact on Southern Brown Bandicoot due to the small footprint of proposed works, in comparison to the large extent of suitable habitat in the surrounding landscape. This species is known to occur in areas with existing tracks and roads, therefore it is unlikely that the proposed trail will affect the recovery or population status of this species. Effective mitigation measures, including a comprehensive pest animal program targeting foxes, cats and deer are recommended to be implemented throughout the duration of the project. These measures will assist in addressing potential changes to local movements of pest animals and their potential impacts on this species.

Long-nosed Potoroo

Long-nosed Potoroo were recorded nearby the assessment corridor and are expected to regularly occur within the assessment corridor. The species is sensitive to fragmentation within suitable habitat, however recent records of the species adjacent to existing tracks suggest this species is unlikely to be impacted by the creation of a new trail. The proposed removal of any vegetation within the assessment corridor is considered unlikely to result in a significant impact, as long as a site-specific Fauna Management Plan implementing suitable salvage techniques and mitigation measures are applied during construction. Mitigation measures include utilizing existing tracks, avoiding canopy removal and preventing fragmentation of habitat between tracks.

Swamp Antechinus

The project is considered unlikely to result in a significant impact on Swamp Antechinus. This conclusion has been reached based on the proposed alignment utilising existing walking trails where possible, reducing impacts to key habitat at Grey River through incorporating an elevated boardwalk design, conducting works outside of the species key breeding period, and investigation by DEECA and the Wild Otways Initiative concluding that the majority of the proposed trail alignment is considered low risk and impact to the species.

Yellow-bellied Glider

The project is considered unlikely to result in a significant impact on Yellow-bellied Glider based on an assessment against the significant impact criteria for vulnerable species. This conclusion has been reached on the basis that vegetation removal in forested areas will be restricted to understorey species and all hollow-bearing trees will be avoided. If any treatment of large or hollow-bearing trees, that are deemed hazardous, is required then this will be done in consultation with the land manager, project ecologist and arboriculture specialist.

(see Att 5 Flora and Fauna assessment 2024, part 2, pp186 Appendix 4 for more on above fauna).

4.1.4.7 Do you think your proposed action is a controlled action? *

No

4.1.4.9 Please elaborate why you do not think your proposed action is a controlled action. *

Significant Impact Assessments completed for the proposed action indicate that it is unlikely that the proposed action will result in a significant impact on any MNES. (Refer to Appendix 3 and 4 of Att 5– Flora and Fauna Assessment 2024, part 2).

Specifically, the design and construction of the proposed action will avoid direct impacts to MNES and the risk of indirect impacts can be adequately managed through site and project specific controls (e.g. project CEMP and other management plans). The site and project specific controls will be endorsed under existing State and local planning processes (e.g. planning permit) and will be implemented and monitored as part of the associated compliance requirements.

4.1.4.10 Please describe any avoidance or mitigation measures proposed for this action and attach any supporting documentation for these avoidance and mitigation measures. *

The following design principles and measures have been adopted across the project design phase and will underpin the construction and operation phases to adequately describe and quantify biodiversity impacts and to ensure these impacts are avoided and minimised:

- Detailed project planning including feasibility studies, desktop constraints assessment, terrain modelling and an initial trail mark-out and later assessments that aimed to micro-site around potential areas of high ecological value. This process resulted in the reduction in the length of proposed trails, and the removal of some trails from the proposed alignment due to potential impacts to threatened flora and fauna species, and to sensitive EVCs.
- Aligning 41.9 kilometres of the trail network on exiting trails (i.e. formal walking trails and management vehicle tracks).
- Aligning 6.7 kilometres of the trail network on informal trails (i.e. unsanctioned walking trails that have been illegally constructed. Note that this trail type has been included in the vegetation loss calculations).
- Ensuring trail styles and construction methods only require the removal of understorey vegetation so the forest canopy and sub-canopy will remain intact.
- Designing trails to follow land contours and take advantage of flat spurs and ridges, where possible, minimising the need for major soil excavation.
- Using the design principle of elevating all waterway crossings and EVCs sensitive to hydrological changes (i.e: EVC 201 – Shrubby Wet Forest) to minimise disturbance of aquatic habitats and to reduce ongoing point sources for sedimentation of local waterways.
- Committing to the principle of pre-construction micro-siting to achieve avoidance of key habitat features for threatened fauna, avoid threatened flora species populations, minimise disturbance of wildlife habitat, minimise indirect impacts on significant trees and minimise impacts on waterways, other watercourses, springs and soaks.
- Committing to the development of a weed management plan to monitor and control weeds along the trail network.
- Committing to a strategy to monitor and control the spread of *Phytophthora cinnamomi* along the trail network.
- Engaging a professional arborist at the design stage to review existing conditions for trees in the project area; and provide sensitive construction techniques that can be applied to ensure encroachment into tree protection zones and structural root zones does not lead to the long-term decline of forest trees.
- Siting of trails to **avoid** areas of high ecological value, including:
    - Avoid incorporating trails that pass near Southern-bent Wing-bat non-breeding caves and roost sites into the trail network.
    - Avoid siting new trails that intersect high quality remnants of EVC 6 – Sand Heathland and EVC 48 – Heathy Woodland. These EVCs contain a high proportion of threatened flora and fauna habitat in the project area. The trail has been realigned in to occur on existing trails.
    - Avoid siting trails that intersect with critical small mammal refuges and heavy *Phytophthora* dieback disease infestation near Coalmine Creek.
- Siting and construction of trails to minimise impacts to the extent possible on areas of high ecological value, including:

    - Minimising impacts on Hooded Plover by reducing the length of trails sited on beaches.
    - Micro-site the trail to avoid populations of the EPBC Act listed Wrinkled Buttons.
    - Elevating trails that intersect with critical small mammal habitat corridors.
    - Incorporation of a 25 metre boardwalk design to reduce and mitigate impacts on threatened small mammals at the mouth of the Grey River.
- Minimising trail development near estuaries and coastal wetlands.
- Further micro-siting will be undertaken to avoid ecological features and threatened flora populations (i.e. in EVC 48 – Heathy Woodland).

Further information is provided in the FFA (See Att 5 – Flora and Fauna Assessment 2024, part 1, Summary, pp xiv - xx).

4.1.4.11 Please describe any proposed offsets and attach any supporting documentation relevant to these measures. *

As there is not a significant impact, there are no Commonwealth offsets likely to be required. There will be state (Victorian) offset requirements associated with the removal of native vegetation (See Att 5 – Flora and Fauna Assessment 2024, Part 1, Section 5.3, pp 88 - 89).

4.1.5 Migratory Species

You have identified your proposed action will likely directly and/or indirectly impact the following protected matters.

A direct impact is a direct consequence of an action taken – for example, clearing of habitat for a threatened species or permanent shading on an ecological community as the result of installing solar panels.

An indirect impact is an 'indirect consequence' such as a downstream impact or a facilitated third-party action.

Direct impact	Indirect impact	Species	Common name
No	No	Actitis hypoleucos	Common Sandpiper
No	No	Apus pacificus	Fork-tailed Swift
No	No	Ardenna carneipes	Flesh-footed Shearwater, Fleshy-footed Shearwater
No	No	Ardenna grisea	Sooty Shearwater
No	No	Balaenoptera borealis	Sei Whale
No	No	Balaenoptera musculus	Blue Whale
No	No	Balaenoptera physalus	Fin Whale

Direct impact	Indirect impact	Species	Common name
No	No	Calidris acuminata	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper
No	No	Calidris canutus	Red Knot, Knot
No	No	Calidris ferruginea	Curlew Sandpiper
No	No	Calidris melanotos	Pectoral Sandpiper
No	No	Caperea marginata	Pygmy Right Whale
No	No	Carcharias taurus	Grey Nurse Shark
No	No	Carcharodon carcharias	White Shark, Great White Shark
No	No	Caretta caretta	Loggerhead Turtle
No	No	Chelonia mydas	Green Turtle
No	No	Dermochelys coriacea	Leatherback Turtle, Leathery Turtle, Luth
No	No	Diomedea antipodensis	Antipodean Albatross
No	No	Diomedea epomophora	Southern Royal Albatross
No	No	Diomedea exulans	Wandering Albatross
No	No	Diomedea sanfordi	Northern Royal Albatross
No	No	Eubalaena australis	Southern Right Whale
No	No	Gallinago hardwickii	Latham's Snipe, Japanese Snipe
No	No	Hirundapus caudacutus	White-throated Needletail
No	No	Lagenorhynchus obscurus	Dusky Dolphin
No	No	Lamna nasus	Porbeagle, Mackerel Shark
No	No	Limosa lapponica	Bar-tailed Godwit
No	No	Macronectes giganteus	Southern Giant-Petrel, Southern Giant Petrel
No	No	Macronectes halli	Northern Giant Petrel
No	No	Megaptera novaeangliae	Humpback Whale
No	No	Motacilla flava	Yellow Wagtail
No	No	Numenius madagascariensis	Eastern Curlew, Far Eastern Curlew
No	No	Orcinus orca	Killer Whale, Orca
No	No	Pandion haliaetus	Osprey
No	No	Phoebetria fusca	Sooty Albatross

Direct impact	Indirect impact	Species	Common name
No	No	Sternula albifrons	Little Tern
No	No	Thalassarche bulleri	Buller's Albatross, Pacific Albatross
No	No	Thalassarche carteri	Indian Yellow-nosed Albatross
No	No	Thalassarche cauta	Shy Albatross
No	No	Thalassarche chrysostoma	Grey-headed Albatross
No	No	Thalassarche impavida	Campbell Albatross, Campbell Black-browed Albatross
No	No	Thalassarche melanophris	Black-browed Albatross
No	No	Thalassarche salvini	Salvin's Albatross
No	No	Thalassarche steadi	White-capped Albatross
No	No	Tringa nebularia	Common Greenshank, Greenshank

4.1.5.1 Is the proposed action likely to have any direct and/or indirect impact on any of these protected matters? *

No

4.1.5.3 Briefly describe why your action is unlikely to have a direct and/or indirect impact. *

Sixty-eight migratory species have been predicted to occur within the project area. Whilst some areas of the project are may be utilised by the identified species, the areas are not considered to provide important habit for a significant portion of these species (See Attachment 5 – Flora and Fauna Assessment 2024, Section 4, pp 73).

Only two species are identified as having a medium or greater likelihood of occurring within the project area, as follows:

- Latham’s Snipe
- White-throated Needletail

Impacts to potential Latham’s Snipe habitat, including creek edges and estuaries is minimal and the trail alignment makes use of existing walking trails throughout most areas of suitable habitat. Indirect impacts to Latham’s Snipe habitat may include erosion and sedimentation to known habitat such as Painkalac Creek Estaury. A site-specific CEMP will be implemented during the construction phase to avoid any indirect impacts on nearby waterways which may support suitable habitat for these species.

White-throated Needletail is likely to fly over the project area and may roost in tall trees on occasion. However, as the species is predominantly considered an aerial species within Australia, ground-based activities to facilitate the proposed action are considered unlikely to have any impact on the species.

Significant Impact Assessments have been prepared for Latham’s Snipe and White-throated Needletail and are provided in the FFA (See Att 5 – Flora and Fauna Assessment 2024, part 2 Appendix 4, pp 186 – 188, 217 - 218). Significant Impact Assessments completed for the proposed action indicate that it is unlikely that the proposed action will result in significant impacts on any MNES.

4.1.6 Nuclear

4.1.6.1 Is the proposed action likely to have any direct and/or indirect impact on this protected matter? *

No

4.1.6.3 Briefly describe why your action is unlikely to have a direct and/or indirect impact. *

No nuclear actions are associated with the proposed action.

4.1.7 Commonwealth Marine Area

You have identified your proposed action will likely directly and/or indirectly impact the following protected matters.

A direct impact is a direct consequence of an action taken – for example, clearing of habitat for a threatened species or permanent shading on an ecological community as the result of installing solar panels.

An indirect impact is an 'indirect consequence' such as a downstream impact or a facilitated third-party action.

—

4.1.7.1 Is the proposed action likely to have any direct and/or indirect impact on any of these protected matters? *

No

4.1.7.3 Briefly describe why your action is unlikely to have a direct and/or indirect impact. *

The project area is not within or nearby any Commonwealth marine area.

4.1.8 Great Barrier Reef

4.1.8.1 Is the proposed action likely to have any direct and/or indirect impact on this protected matter? *

No

4.1.8.3 Briefly describe why your action is unlikely to have a direct and/or indirect impact. *

The project area is not located within or near the Great Barrier Reef.

4.1.9 Water resource in relation to large coal mining development or coal seam gas

4.1.9.1 Is the proposed action likely to have any direct and/or indirect impact on this protected matter? *

No

4.1.9.3 Briefly describe why your action is unlikely to have a direct and/or indirect impact. *

The proposed action does not involve coal mining or coal seam gas.

4.1.10 Commonwealth Land

You have identified your proposed action will likely directly and/or indirectly impact the following protected matters.

A direct impact is a direct consequence of an action taken – for example, clearing of habitat for a threatened species or permanent shading on an ecological community as the result of installing solar panels.

An indirect impact is an 'indirect consequence' such as a downstream impact or a facilitated third-party action.

—

4.1.10.1 Is the proposed action likely to have any direct and/or indirect impact on any of these protected matters? *

No

4.1.10.3 Briefly describe why your action is unlikely to have a direct and/or indirect impact. *

The project area does not occur on Commonwealth land and is only proposed to occur within Crown Land under ownership of DEECA, Parks Victoria and the various Councils that are involved in this project.

4.1.11 Commonwealth Heritage Places Overseas

You have identified your proposed action will likely directly and/or indirectly impact the following protected matters.

A direct impact is a direct consequence of an action taken – for example, clearing of habitat for a threatened species or permanent shading on an ecological community as the result of installing solar panels.

An indirect impact is an 'indirect consequence' such as a downstream impact or a facilitated third-party action.

—

4.1.11.1 Is the proposed action likely to have any direct and/or indirect impact on any of these protected matters? *

No

4.1.11.3 Briefly describe why your action is unlikely to have a direct and/or indirect impact. *

The proposed action is unlikely to have a direct/indirect impact upon Commonwealth Heritage Places Overseas as it is not located overseas.

4.1.12 Commonwealth or Commonwealth Agency

4.1.12.1 Is the proposed action to be taken by the Commonwealth or a Commonwealth Agency? *

No

4.2 Impact summary

Conclusion on the likelihood of significant impacts

You have indicated that the proposed action will likely have a significant impact on the following Matters of National Environmental Significance:

None

Conclusion on the likelihood of unlikely significant impacts

You have indicated that the proposed action will unlikely have a significant impact on the following Matters of National Environmental Significance:

- World Heritage (S12)
- National Heritage (S15B)
- Ramsar Wetland (S16)
- Threatened Species and Ecological Communities (S18)
- Migratory Species (S20)
- Nuclear (S21)
- Commonwealth Marine Area (S23)
- Great Barrier Reef (S24B)
- Water resource in relation to large coal mining development or coal seam gas (S24D)
- Commonwealth Land (S26)
- Commonwealth Heritage Places Overseas (S27B)
- Commonwealth or Commonwealth Agency (S28)

4.3 Alternatives

4.3.1 Do you have any possible alternatives for your proposed action to be considered as part of your referral? *

No

4.3.8 Describe why alternatives for your proposed action were not possible. *

Throughout the design phase, multiple concept alignments and ground-truthed route iterations have been considered and assessed. The proponent has undertaken a series of initial constraints assessments, design refinements and options analysis to avoid and minimise biodiversity impacts, and impacts to landscape and visual quality of the Great Ocean Road and Scenic Environs.

During the early project design phase and feasibility study (2019), Concept Alignments 1, 2 and 3 were subject to various design updates which incorporated community feedback and inputs from various technical assessments.

The detailed ecological investigation commenced in May 2022 once the centreline of Ground-truthed Route 1 (GTR 1) had been marked out with flagging tape by the trail designers. Towards the end of this assessment, two revisions were made to the trail alignment as a result of advice from the Geotechnical Risk Assessment and public feedback. Subsequently, the alignment was updated in response to those assessments and consultation as Ground-truthed Route 2. (See Att 2- Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail: Master Plan, part 2, section 4). Further amendments were made to the alignment in 2023/24 removing optional trails upon finalisation of bridges and in response to further feedback on the management and locations of known plant disease (*Phytophthora cinnamomi*) infestations (See Att 13 – Phytophthora Management Plan), these changes were incorporated into ground-truthed route 3 (GTR 3), which represents the current project area.

The proposed action (GTR3) represents the most practical design, construction and operational outcome, alongside avoiding and minimising impacts to native vegetation, ecological communities and habitat for threatened species.

5. Lodgement

5.1 Attachments

1.2.1 Overview of the proposed action

	Type	Name	Date	Sensitivity	Confidence
#1.	Document	Att 1-Project Location Maps.pdf Project location maps		No	High
#2.	Document	Att 2-Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail Master Plan-part 1.pdf Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail Master Plan 2022 - part 1/5		No	High
#3.	Document	Att 2-Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail Master Plan-part2.pdf Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail Master Plan 2022 - part 2/5		No	High
#4.	Document	Att 2-Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail Master Plan-part3.pdf Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail Master Plan 2022 Part 3/5		No	High
#5.	Document	Att 2-Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail Master Plan-part4.pdf Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail Master Plan 2022 - Part 4/5		No	High
#6.	Document	Att 2-Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail Master Plan-part5.pdf Great Ocean Road Coastal Trail Master Plan 2022 - Part 5/5		No	High
#7.	Document	Att 3-Style Guide and Construction Manual.pdf Style Guide and Construction Manual		No	High

1.2.6 Commonwealth or state legislation, planning frameworks or policy documents that are relevant to the proposed action

	Type	Name	Date	Sensitivity	Confidence
#1.	Document	Att 4-Landscape and Visual Assessment 2022.pdf Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment 2022		No	High
#2.	Document	Att 5-Flora and Fauna Assessment 2024-part1.pdf Flora and Fauna Assessment 2024 - part 1/8		Yes	High
#3.	Document	Att 5-Flora and Fauna Assessment 2024-part2.pdf Flora and Fauna Assessment 2024-part 2/8		Yes	High
#4.	Document	Att 5-Flora and Fauna Assessment 2024-part3.pdf Flora and Fauna Assessment 2024-part 3/8		Yes	High
#5.	Document	Att 5-Flora and Fauna Assessment 2024-part4.pdf Flora and Fauna Assessment 2024-part 4/8		Yes	High
#6.	Document	Att 5-Flora and Fauna Assessment 2024-part5.pdf Flora and Fauna Assessment 2024-part 5/8		Yes	High
#7.	Document	Att 5-Flora and Fauna Assessment 2024-part6.pdf Flora and Fauna Assessment 2024-part 6/8		Yes	High
#8.	Document	Att 5-Flora and Fauna Assessment 2024-part7.pdf Flora and Fauna Assessment 2024-part 7/8		Yes	High
#9.	Document	Att 5-Flora and Fauna Assessment 2024-part8.pdf Flora and Fauna Assessment 2024-part 8/8		Yes	High
#10.	Document	Att 6-Cultural Heritage Values Desktop Assessment 2022 redacted-part1.pdf Cultural Heritage Values Desktop Assessment 2022 redacted - part 1/3		Yes	High
#11.	Document	Att 6-Cultural Heritage Values Desktop Assessment 2022 redacted-part2.pdf Cultural Heritage Values Desktop Assessment 2022 redacted - part 2/3		Yes	High
#12.	Document	Att 6-Cultural Heritage Values Desktop Assessment 2022 redacted-part3.pdf Cultural Heritage Values Desktop Assessment 2022 redacted - part 3/3		Yes	High

1.2.7 Public consultation regarding the project area

	Type	Name	Date	Sensitivity	Confidence
#1.	Document	Att 7-Consultation Study-part1.pdf Consultation Study-part1/2		No	Medium
#2.	Document	Att 7-Consultation Study-part2.pdf Consultation Study-part2/2		No	Medium
#3.	Document	Att 8-Consultation Report.pdf Consultation Report		No	Medium

3.2.1 Flora and fauna within the affected area

	Type	Name	Date	Sensitivity	Confidence

#1.	Document	Att 10-Targeted surveys for two nationally threatened small mammals in the Otway National Park.pdf Att 10-Targeted surveys for two nationally threatened small mammals in the Otway National Park	Yes	High
#2.	Document	Att 9-Ecological Values and Constraints Assessment-Part 1.pdf Ecological Values and Constraints Assessment-Part 1/3	Yes	High
#3.	Document	Att 9-Ecological Values and Constraints Assessment-Part 2.pdf Ecological Values and Constraints Assessment-Part 2/3	Yes	High
#4.	Document	Att 9-Ecological Values and Constraints Assessment-Part 3.pdf Ecological Values and Constraints Assessment-Part 3/3	Yes	High

3.4.1 Hydrology characteristics that apply to the project area

	Type	Name	Date	Sensitivity	Confidence
#1.	Document	Att 11-Stormwater Management Considerations 2022.pdf Stormwater management considerations 2022		No	High
#2.	Document	Att 12-Coastal Hazard Vulnerability Assessment.pdf Coastal Hazard Vulnerability Assessment		No	High

4.3.8 Why alternatives for your proposed action were not possible

	Type	Name	Date	Sensitivity	Confidence
#1.	Document	Att 13-Phytophthora Management Plan.pdf Phytophthora Management Plan	19/08/2023	No	High

5.2 Declarations

Completed Referring party's declaration

The Referring party is the person preparing the information in this referral.

ABN/ACN	90719052204
Organisation name	DEECA
Organisation address	8 Nicholson St, Melbourne Victoria 3002
Representative's name	Emily Steele
Representative's job title	
Phone	136 186
Email	emily.steele@deeca.vic.gov.au
Address	Level 4, 30-38 Little Malop Street, GEELONG, Victoria 3220

☑ Check this box to indicate you have read the referral form. *

☑ I would like to receive notifications and track the referral progress through the EPBC portal. *

☑ By checking this box, I, **Emily Steele of DEECA**, declare that to the best of my knowledge the information I have given on, or attached to this EPBC Act Referral is complete, current and correct. I understand that giving false or misleading information is a serious offence. *

☑ I would like to receive notifications and track the referral progress through the EPBC portal. *

✓ Completed Person proposing to take the action's declaration

The Person proposing to take the action is the individual, business, government agency or trustee that will be responsible for the proposed action.

ABN/ACN	90719052204
Organisation name	DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION
Organisation address	3002 VIC
Representative's name	Evan Lewis
Representative's job title	Senior Project Manager, Forest and Fire Operations, Barwon South West
Phone	136 186
Email	evan.b.lewis@deeca.vic.gov.au
Address	30-38 Little Malop St, Geelong VIC 3220

☑ Check this box to indicate you have read the referral form. *

☑ I would like to receive notifications and track the referral progress through the EPBC portal. *

☑ I, **Evan Lewis of DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION**, declare that to the best of my knowledge the information I have given on, or attached to the EPBC Act Referral is complete, current and correct. I understand that giving false or misleading information is a serious offence. I declare that I am not taking the action on behalf or for the benefit of any other person or entity. *

☑ I would like to receive notifications and track the referral progress through the EPBC portal. *

✓ Completed Proposed designated proponent's declaration

The Proposed designated proponent is the individual or organisation proposed to be responsible for meeting the requirements of the EPBC Act during the assessment process, if the Minister decides that this project is a controlled action.

ABN/ACN	90719052204
Organisation name	DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION
Organisation address	3002 VIC
Representative's name	Evan Lewis
Representative's job title	Senior Project Manager, Forest and Fire Operations, Barwon South West
Phone	136 186
Email	evan.b.lewis@deeca.vic.gov.au
Address	30-38 Little Malop St, Geelong VIC 3220

☑ Check this box to indicate you have read the referral form. *

☑ I would like to receive notifications and track the referral progress through the EPBC portal. *

☑ I, **Evan Lewis of DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION**, the Proposed designated proponent, consent to the designation of myself as the Proposed designated proponent for the purposes of the action described in this EPBC Act Referral. *

☑ I would like to receive notifications and track the referral progress through the EPBC portal. *