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ATLAS Stage 3 – Pre-clearance Survey Report – Green Valley Aggregation Dam, Brine tank and infrastructure

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Senex

ATLAS Stage 3 – Pre-clearance Survey Report – Green Valley Aggregation Dam, Brine tank and infrastructure February 2025



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Glossary of Terms

Acronym	Description
ATP	Authority to Prospect
GTRE	Ground-truthed regional ecosystem
DBH	Diameter at breast height
EA	Environmental Authority
ECPPFD	Environmental Constraints Protocol for Planning and Field Development
EPBC Act	Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth)
EP Regulation	Environmental Protection Regulation 2008
ESA	Environmentally Sensitive Areas
ha	Hectares
m	Metres
MNES	Matters of National Environmental Significance
MSES	Matters of State Environmental Significance
PL	Petroleum Lease
RE	Regional Ecosystem
sp.	Species (singular)
spp.	Species (plural)
sqm	Square metres
SQP	Suitably qualified person
TEC	Threatened Ecological Community

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1 Introduction

The pre-clearance survey methodology applied within this package of works is deemed appropriate to confirm the on-the-ground biodiversity values present.

1.1 Project background

The Atlas Stage 3 Gas Project (EPBC Act referral 2022/09410) involves developing, operating, decommissioning and rehabilitating up to 151 coal seam gas wells; gas and water gathering systems for the producing wells; access tracks; brine and produced water storages; borrow pits; and ancillary supporting facilities on Petroleum Lease (PL) 1037 in the central part of the Surat Basin, Queensland (Senex, 2024).

This report provides the results of pre-clearance survey on planned Infrastructure (dam, brine tanks, water pipelines and access tracks) (known hereafter as 'The Footprint') and a 30 m buffer within Green Valley property: 2SP184589.

1.2 Scope

Ausecology Pty Ltd (Ausecology) was engaged by Senex Energy Pty Ltd (Senex) to undertake pre-clearance ecological surveys as part of the approval conditions for the Atlas Stage 3 Gas Project and in accordance with the Atlas Stage 3 Environmental Constraints Protocol for Planning and Field Development (ECPPFD) document (Senex, 2024). The ECPPFD provides a framework for identifying, assessing and managing potential impacts to Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES) and Matter of State Environmental Significance (MSES) associated with development of the Atlas Stage 3 Gas Project. Data collected during the pre-clearance surveys will be used by Senex to ensure:

- infrastructure siting complies with relevant environmental approval conditions and does not exceed the maximum disturbance limits
- infrastructure siting adheres to the constraints mapping
- no functional change to Koala dispersal habitat, the approval holder must not remove more than a total of 4 ha of trees, measured in canopy cover within mapped koala dispersal habitat.

Results from the pre-clearance survey findings (this report) will be published on the website, including:

- the location and extent of trees to be cleared, including maps; and
- a discussion of how removal of trees will not change the ability of koalas to disperse across the landscape.

This survey also involved targeted threatened flora surveys, active threatened fauna surveys (where suitable habitat was identified) and fauna habitat identification (where encountered) as per the ECPPFD.

1.3 EPBC conditions

This report will validate compliance with the following EPBC approval conditions:

- 4. In accordance with the Constraints Protocol, the approval holder must: b) adhere to the constraints mapping.
- 5. To ensure no functional change to Koala dispersal habitat, the approval holder must not remove more than a total of 4 ha of trees, measured in canopy cover within mapped Koala dispersal habitat.

PRE-CLEARANCE SURVEYS

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6. Prior to commencing clearing, the approval holder must:

a) undertake at least one pre-clearance survey of the proposed area of clearing, and
b) publish on the website the pre-clearance survey findings, including:

i) the location and extent of trees to be cleared, including maps, and
ii) a discussion of how removal of trees will not change the ability of Koalas to disperse across the landscape.

2 Methodology

An Ausecology Senior ecologist (suitably qualified) and ecologist conducted field surveys on foot on the 20th of January 2025 to determine potential impacts of establishing a dam, a brine tank, laydowns, earthworks and water pipelines. The area surveyed and mapped in this report include parts of PL1037 on the Green Valley property as shown in Figure 2-1.

2.1 Regional Ecosystem assessment and Threatened Ecological Communities

2.1.1 Desktop assessments

Desktop assessment and baseline ecological assessments of the property have previously been undertaken (Boobook, 2023), including ground-truthed regional ecosystem (GTRE) mapping and threatened ecological community surveys. Ausecology has carried out ecological surveys on the property in 2024, and previous reports have been reviewed as part of this desktop assessment prior to the preclearance surveys and were deemed to have been conducted to an acceptable level of detail. Given the level of detail in prior reports, no further detailed desktop analysis has been conducted.

2.1.2 Regional Ecosystem assessment

During pre-clearance surveys, quaternary site assessments to verify regional ecosystems were undertaken where necessary (i.e., where vegetation and ecological communities have been determined to vary from the mapped GTRE at the time of the pre-clearance surveys). These assessments were conducted in accordance with the ECPPFD.

2.1.3 Threatened Ecological Communities

Where necessary Threatened Ecological Community (TEC) assessments were undertaken to confirm the presence and condition of TECs identified as known or potential in The Footprint if these were determined to vary from the mapped TEC areas identified in the constraints mapping.

2.2 Targeted threatened flora surveys

These surveys were conducted by a suitably qualified person (SQP). Targeted flora surveys of all known, likely or potential threatened flora species were conducted within The Footprint and 30 m buffer, where mapped constraint areas were present and/or suitable habitat was identified by the SQP, in accordance with the ECPPFD.

These surveys were conducted using the random meander methodology and if a species was encountered, a population survey was undertaken to determine the extent and density of the population. Threatened flora species and the locations of all individuals were recorded and specimens collected of any unknown individual requiring confirmation by the Queensland Herbarium.

Potentially occurring threatened species in the area as per the ECPPFD include Belson's panic (*Homopholis belsonii*), red soil woolly wrinklewort (*Rutidosis lanata*) and winged nightshade (*Solanum stenopterum*).

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2.3 Fauna habitat assessment

Senex has committed to not clearing any areas confirmed as habitat for threatened species (ECPPFD), with the exception of koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*) dispersal habitat and short-beaked echidna (*Tachyglossus aculeatus*) habitat. Fauna habitat baseline assessments have been conducted to an adequate level of detail to enable known, likely and potentially present species to be identified and comprehensive Project impact assessment and constraints mapping has been completed (ECPPFD).

The pre-clearance surveys will reassess the habitat present (as mapped in the constraints mapping (ECPPFD)) or otherwise identified by the SQP during the pre-clearance surveys) in order to refine mapped habitat areas. They will also identify and record micro-habitat features and breeding sites to facilitate avoidance and minimisation of impacts to potentially utilised micro-habitat features and breeding sites. Recorded micro-habitat features, where present include:

- Hollow-bearing trees;
- Dead standing trees;
- Hollow logs;
- Termite mounds;
- Woody debris;
- Surface rocks;
- Gilgais;
- Soil cracks / cracking clay;
- Rocky outcrops, crevices, overhangs and caves;
- Mistletoes;
- Nests:
- Animal burrows;
- Watercourses, wetlands and dams (including proximity); and
- Any other significant habitat features, or values present, such as dense leaf litter, heavily decorticating bark, dense grass/shrub shelter, seeding grass cover, fruiting plants, nectar and pollen producing plants and koala food trees.

2.4 Threatened fauna surveys

As areas confirmed as habitat for threatened species have been effectively avoided by The Footprint (with the exception of koala dispersal habitat and echidna habitat), the area required to be surveyed was minimal.

Active fauna surveys of all known, likely or potential threatened fauna species are to be undertaken where suitable potential habitat is mapped or found to be present within the proposed disturbance footprint (refer to the constraints mapping and the habitat features listed in Appendix A of the ECPPFD). Active fauna searches as per Table 1, Appendix A of the ECPPFD include scanning trees, the ground and habitat features; overturning rocks, logs and other woody debris; searching under peeling bark; raking leaf litter and soil at the base of trees; and flushing birds from dense shrubs and groundcover.

Invasive active searches were not undertaken in the 30 m buffer of the disturbance footprint within mapped constraint areas, given no impact is expected and active searches outside of The Footprint would be detrimental

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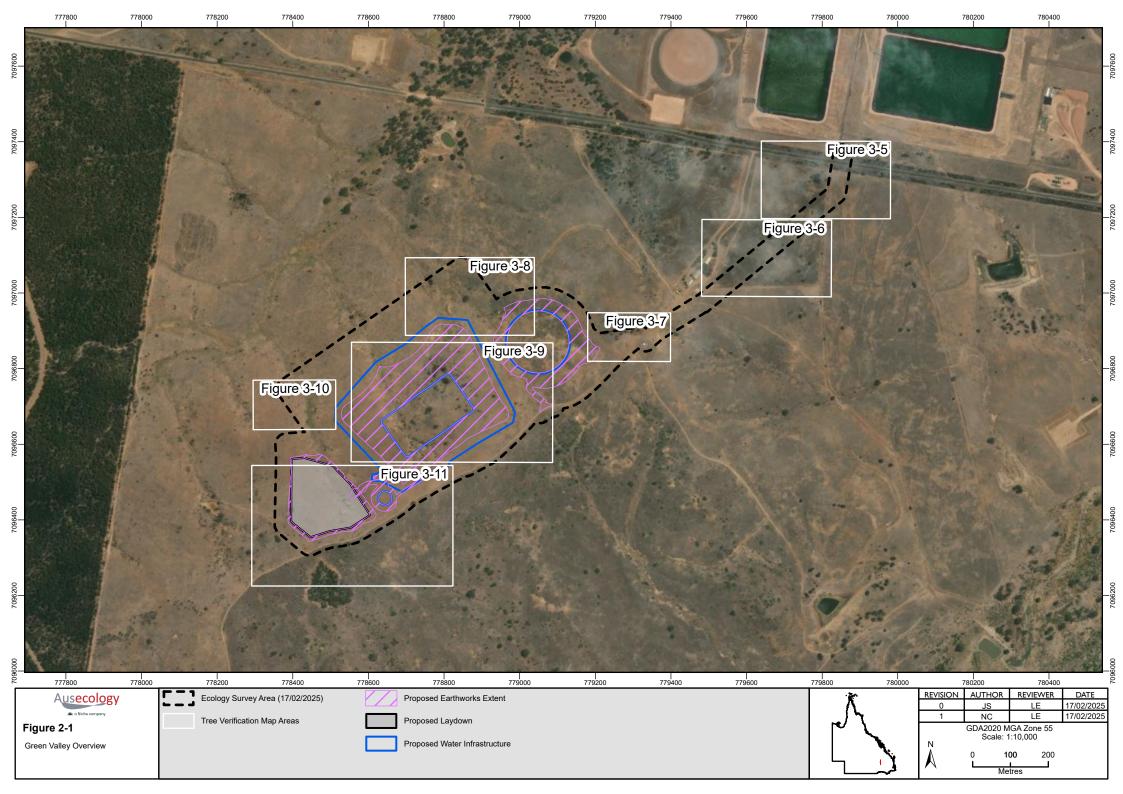
to the fauna species habitat. Instead of invasive searches in the 30 m buffer, surveys included incidental observations and scat and sign searches.

2.5 Koala dispersal habitat

An initial desktop survey was undertaken to analyse all previous ecology data collected in the field, analysis of the ECPPFD and associated constraints mapping, and to identify areas of mapped koala dispersal habitat that would require further ground verification.

Areas identified were highlighted on GIS mapping for further identification and field verification. Additional points were collected in the field where applicable. All tree ID numbers have been provided in individual maps of the area surveyed and further details provided in the results.

Canopy cover was measured by walking the dripline of trees located in koala dispersal areas using a sub-10 cm accuracy handheld Trimble GPS unit. The diameter at breast height (DBH) of each of the abovementioned trees was measured and height data was collected. Where denser regrowth was present and canopy cover of individual trees could not be distinguished, the canopy cover of the clump of trees was walked at the outer dripline and average height assessed. Thorny tree species which are not able to be climbed by koala (i.e. desert lime (*Citrus glauca*) were noted in the field but excluded from the final koala tree canopy cover calculations.





3 Results

The Green Valley property has been historically cleared for cattle grazing and is dominated by cleared pasture lands of introduced grasses on rolling hills with paddock trees such as narrow-leafed ironbark (*Eucalyptus crebra*), belah (*Casuarina cristata*) and wilga (*Geijera parviflora*) scattered throughout (Figure 3-1). Patches of dense shrubby regrowth are scattered across the area (Figure 3-2).





Figure 3-1 Mixed pasture grasses and standing paddock trees

Figure 3-2 Acacia regrowth present along drainage lines

Patches of young regrowth *Acacia harpophylla* (RE 11.9.5) were identified along the edges of Sundown Rd outside the Green Valley property. It is recommended impact to these patches be avoided or minimised where possible (Figure 3-3). These are also shown on the mapping in Figure 3-5.





Figure 3-3 Brigalow regrowth on Sundown Rd reserves

Within The Footprint, dense patches of *Acacia longispicata* regrowth were identified, predominantly along drainage lines. These patches were not considered to constitute koala dispersal habitat as the vast majority of the trees fell short of the 10 cm DBH and 4 m height cut off (Figure 3-4).







Figure 3-4 Regrowth Acacia longispicata patch

3.1 Regional Ecosystems and Threatened Ecological Communities

Where mapped constraints areas occurred within the disturbance footprint or 30 m buffer these were assessed in the field to ensure they aligned with the mapping. No mapped constraints in the survey area were found to require changes. The survey also confirmed that the proposed disturbance areas do not contain any listed TEC or any TEC within the 30 m buffer area.

3.2 Targeted threatened flora surveys

No Belson's panic (*Homopholis belsonii*), red soil woolly wrinklewort (*Rutidosis lanata*) and winged nightshade (*Solanum stenopterum*) were identified within The Footprint. It is unlikely for these species to be present in The Footprint, due to the grazing pressure and presence of non-native grasses, mainly buffel grass (*Cenchrus ciliaris*).

3.3 Opportunistic fauna surveys and habitat assessment

No threatened fauna species were observed in suitable potential habitat within 30 m of The Footprint, a total of 18 incidental fauna species were found, listed in (Appendix A). Habitat searches found 20 micro-habitat features other than koala dispersal trees including course woody debris, dead standing trees (stags), decorticating bark and bird nests (Appendix B). All nests identified in The Footprint did not have any nesting birds at the time of the survey. Invasive searches were not undertaken on habitat features in the proposed footprint, as fauna would be disturbed too soon before clearing, and habitat may be unnecessarily destroyed.

3.4 Weeds

Restricted invasive species under the *Biosecurity Act 2014* present within the footprint included scattered *Opuntia stricta* and *Opuntia tomentosa*. An additional 14 weed species were also noted, see Appendix C for a list of weeds identified in The Footprint.

3.5 Ground-truthed koala dispersal trees

Table 3-1 provides the results including canopy cover, height and DBH of the trees assessed in the field in koala dispersal areas. All trees were assessed and, where determined they could be avoided (through underground boring or realignment), have been marked up as "retain" and will be avoided during construction. Trees unable to be avoided have had their canopy cover assessed and calculated under disturbance limits. Mapping of each location (Desktop ID) are shown in Figure 3-5 to Figure 3-11.



Table 3-1 Dispersal habitat trees

Location (Desktop ID)	Area (sqm)	Species	DBH (cm)	Height (m)	Action	Photo
JANLE02		Casuarina cristata	40	15	B. daile	
JANLE03	177.69	Casuarina cristata	35	12	Retain	
JANLE04	29.57	Geijera parviflora	40	14	Remove	
JANLE05	148.72	Acacia longispicata	12	9	Remove	
JANLE06	25.47	Acacia longispicata	14	6.7	Retain	
JANLE07	8.96	Geijera parviflora	35	13	Retain	
JANLE08	150.10	Eucalyptus crebra	12	15	Retain	
JANLE09	150.19	Eucalyptus crebra	25	13	Netalli	



Location (Desktop ID)	Area (sqm)	Species	DBH (cm)	Height (m)	Action	Photo
JANLE10	58.9	Eucalyptus crebra	30	13	Remove	
JANLE11		Eucalyptus crebra	35	9		
JANLE12	18.56	Casuarina cristata	35	12	Remove	
JANLE13		Casuarina cristata	40	11		
JANLE14	158.01	Acacia harpophylla	18	8	Remove	
JANLE15	35.82	Casuarina cristata	15	8	Remove	
JANLE16	80.38	Casuarina cristata	15	8	Remove	
JANLE17	12.09	Casuarina cristata	10	6	Remove	
JANLE18	73.49	Casuarina cristata	10	5	Remove	



Location (Desktop ID)	Area (sqm)	Species	DBH (cm)	Height (m)	Action	Photo
JANLE19	19.85	Casuarina cristata	10	7	Retain	
JANLE20	43.01	Eucalyptus crebra	40	16	Retain	
JANLE21	18.87	Eucalyptus crebra	55	19	Retain	
JANLE22	160.07	Eucalyptus crebra	10	4	Retain	
JANLE23	5.07	Eucalyptus crebra	20	8	Retain	
JANLE24	20.95	Casuarina cristata	35	14	Retain	
JANLE25	105.27	Casuarina cristata	10	4	Retain	



Location (Desktop ID)	Area (sqm)	Species	DBH (cm)	Height (m)	Action	Photo
JANLE26	28.62	Casuarina cristata	55	24	Remove	
JANLE27	137.14	Casuarina cristata	50	24	Remove	
JANLE28		Casuarina cristata	55	24		
JANLE29	186.86	Eucalyptus crebra	45	20	Remove	
JANLE30	39.65	Eucalyptus crebra	50	24	Remove	
JANLE31	166.59	Eucalyptus crebra	45	23	Remove	
JANLE32	87.32	Eucalyptus crebra	60	26	Remove	
JANLE33	74.15	Eucalyptus crebra	45	22	Remove	



Location (Desktop ID)	Area (sqm)	Species	DBH (cm)	Height (m)	Action	Photo
JANLE34		Eucalyptus crebra	40	15		
JANLE35	53.90	Eucalyptus crebra	36	13	Remove	
JANLE36		Eucalyptus crebra	40	11		
JANLE37	251.15	Geijera parviflora	50	10	Remove	
JANLE38	173.25	Geijera parviflora	40	12	Remove	
JANLE39	127.64	Callitris glaucophylla	25	10	Remove	
JANLE40	36.31	Eucalyptus crebra	60	21	Remove	
JANLE41	63.38	Eucalyptus crebra	60	17	Remove	
JANLE42	89.54	Geijera parviflora	50	12	Remove	



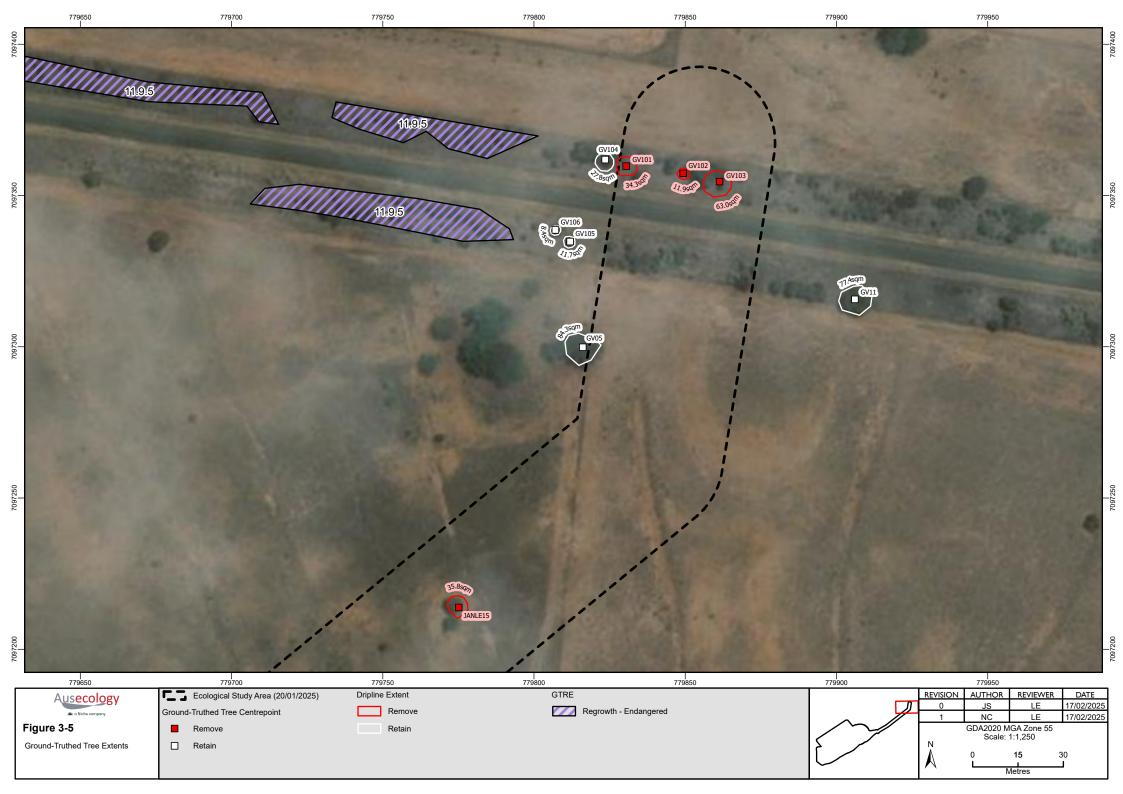
Location (Desktop ID)	Area (sqm)	Species	DBH (cm)	Height (m)	Action	Photo
JANLE43	111.94	Geijera parviflora	ra 40 10 Remove			
JANLE44	114.33	Casuarina cristata	40	12	Remove	
JANLE45	31.65	Geijera parviflora	25	14	Remove	
JANLE46	49.32	Eucalyptus crebra	30	10	Remove	
JANLE47	14.39	Casuarina cristata	35	12	Remove	
JANLE48	27.05	Casuarina cristata	50	14	Remove	
JANLE49	27.95	Casuarina cristata	35	10	Kemove	
JANLE50	78.00	Casuarina cristata	40	14	Remove	
JANLE51	44.41	Casuarina cristata	30	13	Remove	



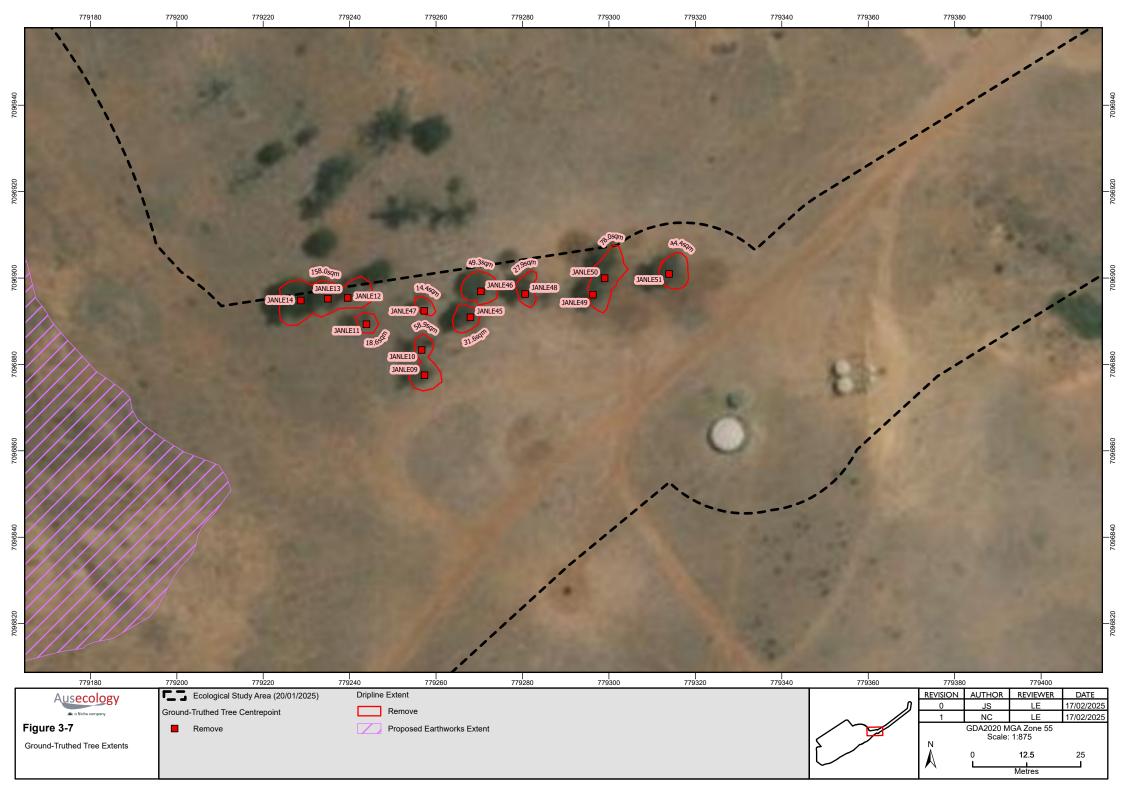
Location (Desktop ID)	Area (sqm)	Species	DBH (cm)	Height (m)	Action	Photo
JANLE52	171.24	Casuarina cristata	30	14	Remove	
JANLE53	51.11	Brachychiton rupestris	60	10	Remove	
JANLE54	97.62	Geijera parviflora	-	-	Retain	N/A
GV05	84.30	Lysiphyllum carronii (digitised)	-	-	Retain	N/A
GV11	77.35	Geijera parviflora	-	-	Retain	
GV101	34.26	Acacia harpophylla	10	4	Remove	
GV102	11.88	Acacia harpophylla	15	6	Remove	
GV103	63.04	Acacia harpophylla	15	5	Remove	

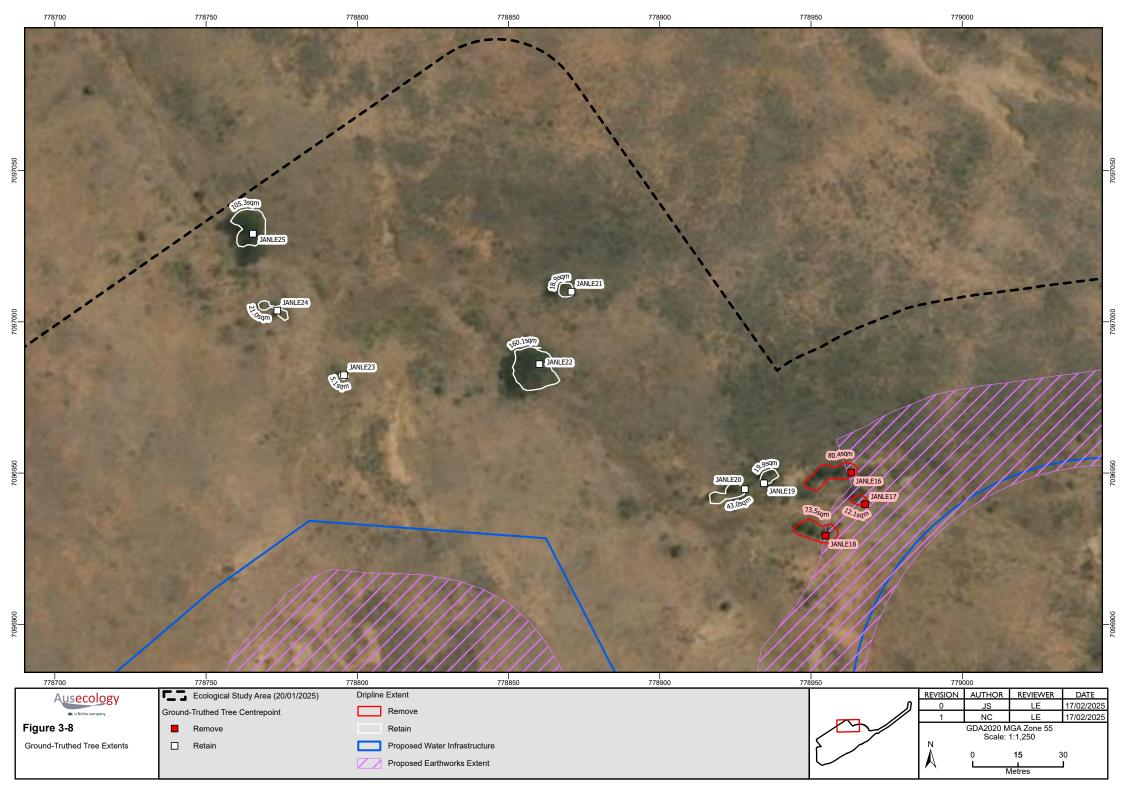


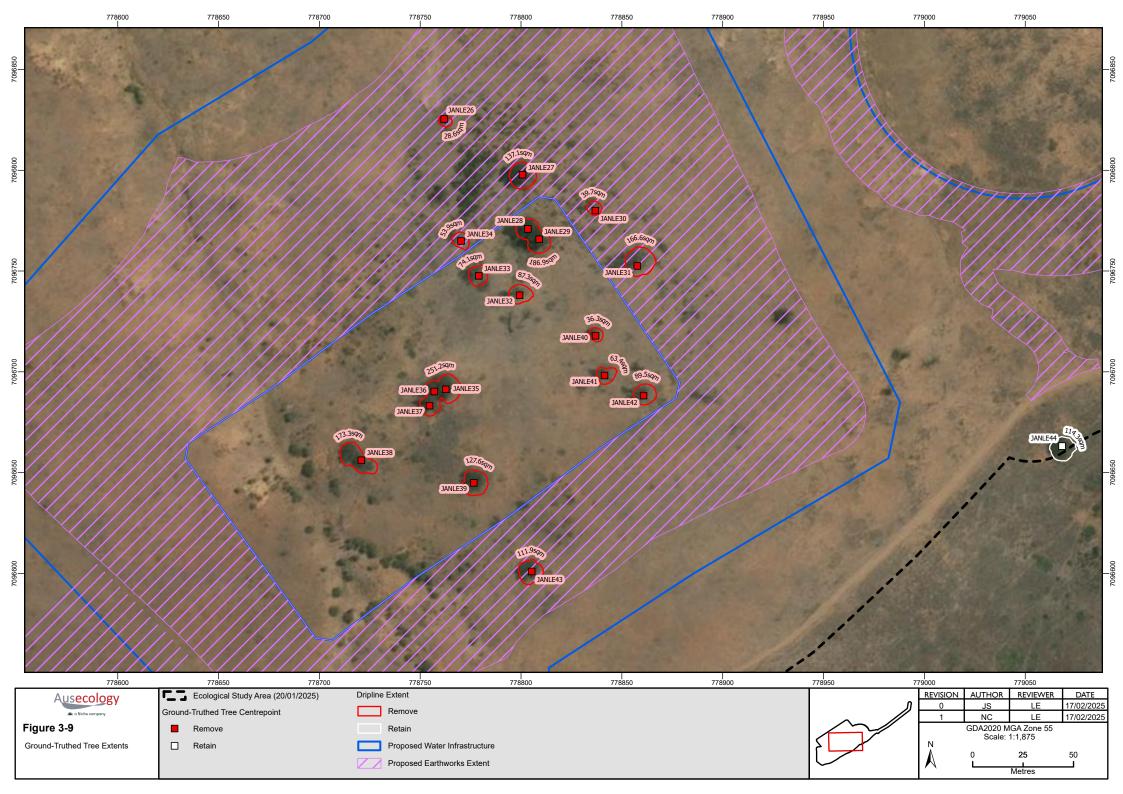
Location (Desktop ID)	Area (sqm)	Species		DBH (cm)	Height (m)	Action	Photo
GV104	27.75	Acacia harpophylla		10	4	Retain	
GV105	11.67	Acacia harpophylla		10	4	Retain	
GV106	8.39	Acacia harpophylla		15	6	Retain	
Remove area:		Total (sqm)	2,934.56	5			
		Total (ha)	0.29	0.29			
Retain area:		Total (sqm)	1,042.48	3			
netam area.		Total (ha)	0.10				

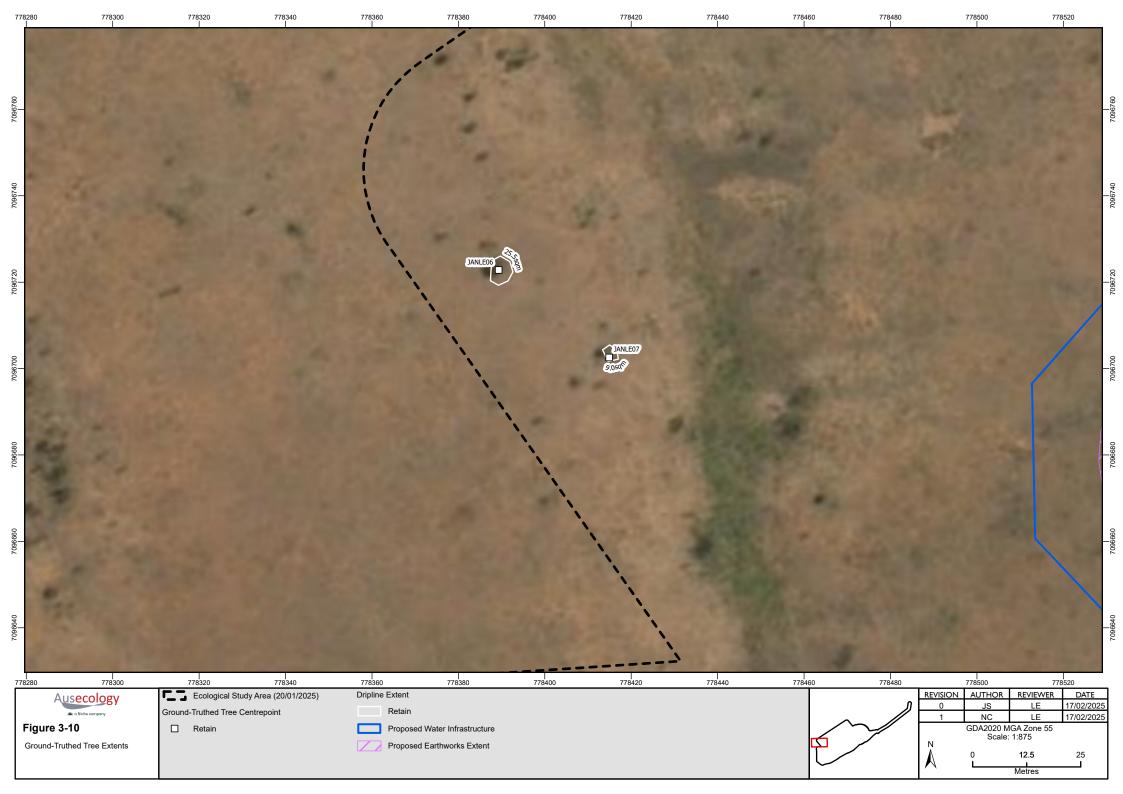


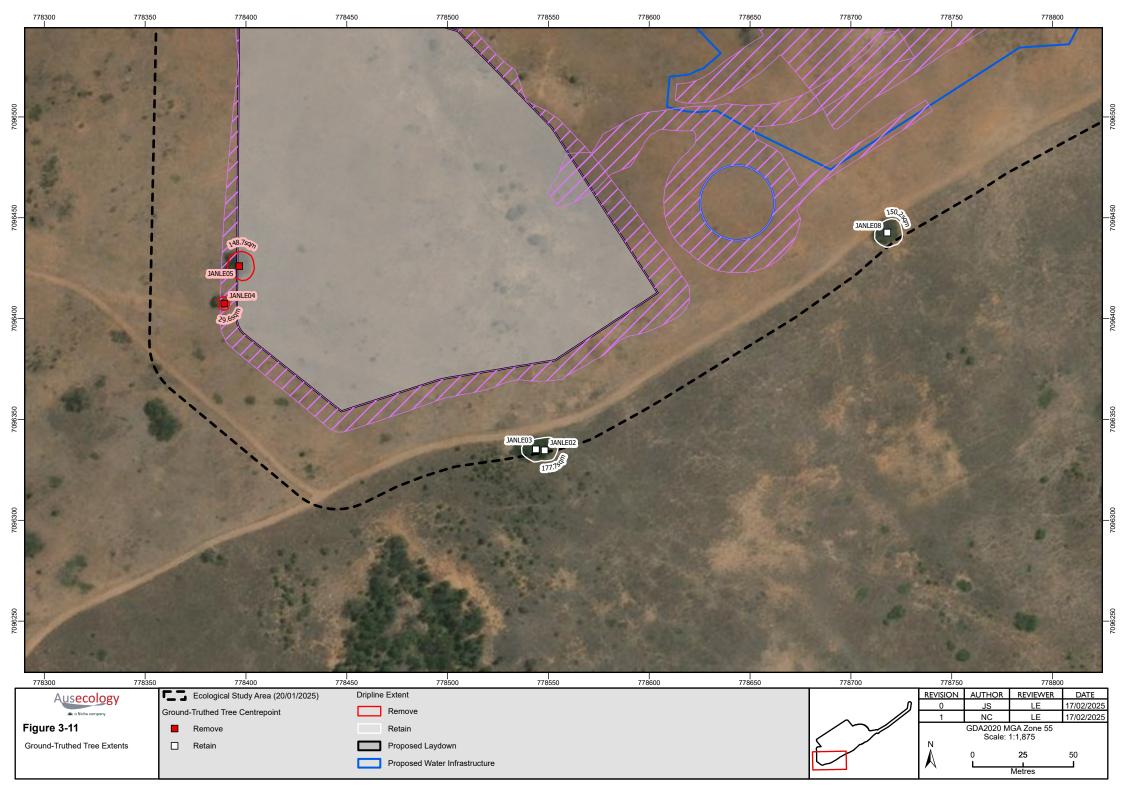












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4 Discussion

The surveys on the Green Valley property found that the projects' impacts to koala dispersal habitat would be minimal with a total of 0.29 ha to be potentially cleared. The majority of the impact footprint is located within predominantly cleared agricultural areas and has actively avoided major remaining fragments of habitat and potential dispersal trees following the constraint mapping. Due to the nature of the planned infrastructure, being a large dam and brine tanks numerous trees require removal however, the clearing is considered unlikely to have a significant effect on the ecological function of dispersal habitat on the property for koalas as there are retained trees surrounding The Footprint. Adjacent areas of dispersal habitat avoided are shown in Figure 4-1.

Acacia longispicata regrowth along the drainage lines are not considered to be of value to koala dispersal habitat and removal of these patches will not be significant to koala dispersal. However, impacts to the Acacia harpophylla regrowth patches along the Sundown Rd roadsides should be avoided.

Threatened flora searches found no threatened species within or in proximity to the impact footprint. No threatened flora were encountered during the survey and no TECs were present within the disturbance footprint and within 30 m buffer. No remnant or HVR regulated vegetation and potential threatened fauna habitat are present within the disturbance footprint.

The area is a known echidna and potential koala dispersal area, other least concern species were observed in the area and a total of 20 habitat features were recorded within The Footprint. It is recommended that a qualified fauna spotter catcher undertake a pre-clearance survey across the disturbance footprint to identify habitat features prior to clearing and be present during clearing works to check habitat features and relocate fauna, and where possible habitat features in order to minimise impacts to fauna.





Figure 4-1 Examples of adjacent vegetation avoided





Common Name	Scientific Name
Apostlebird	Struthidea cinerea
Australasian grebe	Tachybaptus novaehollandiae
Australian magpie	Gymnorhina tibicen
Black-shouldered kite	Elanus axillaris
Common myna	Acridotheres tristis
Double-barred finch	Taeniopygia bichenovii
Eastern grey kangaroo	Macropus giganteus
Golden-headed cisticola	Cisticola exilis
Little black cormorant	Phalacrocorax sulcirostris
Nankeen kestrel	Falco cenchroides
Noisy miner	Manorina melanocephala
Pied butcherbird	Cracticus nigrogularis
Rainbow lorikeet	Trichoglossus moluccanus
Red-backed fairy-wren	Malurus melanocephalus
Red-winged parrot	Aprosmictus erythropterus
Torresian crow	Corvus orru
Wedge-tailed eagle	Aquila audax
Willie wagtail	Rhipidura leucophrys

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Appendix B – Habitat features



Habitat feature	Latitude	Longitude	Photo
Stick nest	-26.2206	149.7949	
Small hollow	-26.2205	149.795	
Small hollows	-26.2205	149.7949	
Small/medium hollow	-26.2194	149.7911	
Medium stick nest	-26.2197	149.791	



Habitat feature	Latitude	Longitude	Photo
Small hollows and decorticating bark	-26.2217	149.7901	
Course woody debris	-26.2193	149.79	
Large log	-26.2223	149.7899	
Medium hollow	-26.2223	149.7908	
Stag with small hollows and decorticating bark	-26.2222	149.7924	



Habitat feature	Latitude	Longitude	Photo
Small stick nest	-26.2215	149.7906	
Small stick nest	-26.2217	149.7911	
Stag with small / medium hollows and decorticating bark	-26.2223	149.7923	
Wallaby lay	-26.2213	149.7902	
Large hollow log	-26.2215	149.7899	



Habitat feature	Latitude	Longitude	Photo
Stag with small hollows and decorticating bark	-26.2221	149.7925	
Stag with medium hollow	-26.2205	149.795	
Stag with decorticating bark	-26.2205	149.7951	
Stag with small hollows and decorticating bark	-26.2197	149.7932	
Stick Nest	-26.2204	149.7952	

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Appendix C – Weed species



Scientific name	Common Name	Status	Abundance
Chloris gayana	Rhodes grass *		Occasional
Chloris virgata	Feathertop Rhodes grass	*	Occasional
Cirsium vulgare	Spear thistle	*	Rare
Eragrostis trichophora	Hairyflower Lovegrass	*	Rare
Erigeron bonariensis	Flaxleaf fleabane	*	Occasional
Gomphrena celosioides	Gomphrena weed	*	Occasional
Lepidium bonariense	Argentine peppercress	*	Rare
Megathyrsus maximus	Guinea grass	*	Occasional
Melinis repens	Natal grass	*	Frequent
Opuntia stricta	Common prickly pear	Restricted - Category 3	Occasional
Opuntia tomentosa	Velvety tree pear	Restricted - Category 3	Occasional
Portulaca oleracea	Pigweed	*	Rare
Solanum nigrum	Black nightshade	*	Rare
Symphyotrichum subulatum	Asterweed	*	Rare
Urochloa mosambicensis	Sabi grass	*	Occasional
Xanthium occidentale	Noogoora burr	*	Rare