

Grey-headed Flying Fox Assessment Memo: Moreton Hill Wind Farm

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1 Background

As part of the ecological assessment program undertaken in 2023 for the Moreton Hill Wind Farm, assessment for the potential presence of the nationally significant Grey-headed Flying-fox *Pteropus poliocephalus* were undertaken.

The species occurs in the coastal belt from Rockhampton in central Queensland to Mount Gambier in South Australia (Menkhorst and Knight 2011). Only a small proportion of the range is in use at any one time as the species selectively forages dependant on the availability of food. As a result, patterns of occurrence and relative abundance vary greatly between seasons and years.

The Grey-Headed Flying-fox is known to be highly mobile within the distribution of the national population and is known to be fluid dependant on the abundance and distribution of food sources.

1.1 Grey-headed Flying-fox Camps

The nearest known roost sites (known as camps) for Grey-headed Flying-fox were located at Hexham, approximately 60 kilometres south west, and Colac (DCCEEW 2024), and approximately 60 kilometres south of the study area. Engagement with the Victorian Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) 15 May 2023 revealed a camp with numbers in the low thousands, was present at Lismore, approximately 20 kilometres south of the study area (Geoff Brooks, DEECA, *pers. comms.* 2023). The presence of this camp was confirmed by Ecology and Heritage Partners in June 2023. The camp contained a number of large Cypress *Cupressus* sp. and Sugar Gum *Eucalyptus cladocalyx* trees that the Grey-headed Flying-fox were roosting within, clearly visible from the roadside.

As part of the assessment of potential impacts for the species undertaken in Section 6.1 of Ecology and Heritage Partners (2024), it was determined that the study area is located at the edge of the foraging range for Grey-headed Flying-fox using the Lismore camp. As such, individuals that may visit or pass through the study area during nightly foraging activity, or when moving to areas of more suitable habitat are at risk (albeit, low) of turbine collision.

2 Lismore Camp

On 19 February 2024, two zoologists, experienced in the detection of the species, surveyed the Lismore Camp, finding no evidence of the species. A local Landowner approached the on-site zoologists, advising they had not seen any Grey-headed Flying-fox for 'some months'. While travelling eastward along the Hamilton Highway, 15 Grey-headed Flying-fox were observed flying west, suggesting a camp west of Lismore. On 20 February 2024, the zoologists surveyed all publicly accessible locations with suitable treed vegetation, again finding no

evidence of the species. The Hexham Camp was then surveyed, with over 2000 Grey-headed Flying-fox recorded at this well-established camp.

Grey-headed Flying-fox are nomadic bats, that may occupy permanent, seasonal, or temporary camps, ranging from a few dozen individuals to hundreds of thousands (TRC 2017). As such, it is considered likely that the 2023 Grey-headed Flying-fox records at Lismore were from a temporary camp that has not persisted into 2024, given the lack of evidence (i.e. audible calls, direct sightings, scats) of the species at these locations.

Given Grey-headed Flying-fox is no longer utilising the Lismore Camp, it is considered that the potential risk to the species as a result of the Moreton Hill Wind Farm is negligible. The Hexham Camp – located approximately 60 kilometres south-west of the proposed windfarm is outside the known foraging range of the species, and therefore, the risk of collision is substantially reduced.

Ongoing monitoring of the potential presence of the Grey-headed Flying-fox is proposed to be undertaken in accordance with the requirements that will be detailed in the Bat and Avifauna Management (BAM) Plan (See Section 7.2.1 of Ecology and Heritage Partners [2024]).

I trust the forgoing is of assistance. Please don't hesitate to contact me if further information is required.

Kind Regards



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Ecology and Heritage Partners Pty Ltd

References

- DCCEEW 2024. National Flying-fox Monitoring Viewer [WWW Document]. URL <https://www.environment.gov.au/webgis-framework/apps/ffc-wide/ffc-wide.jsf> (accessed 07/03/2024). Commonwealth Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, Canberra, ACT.
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