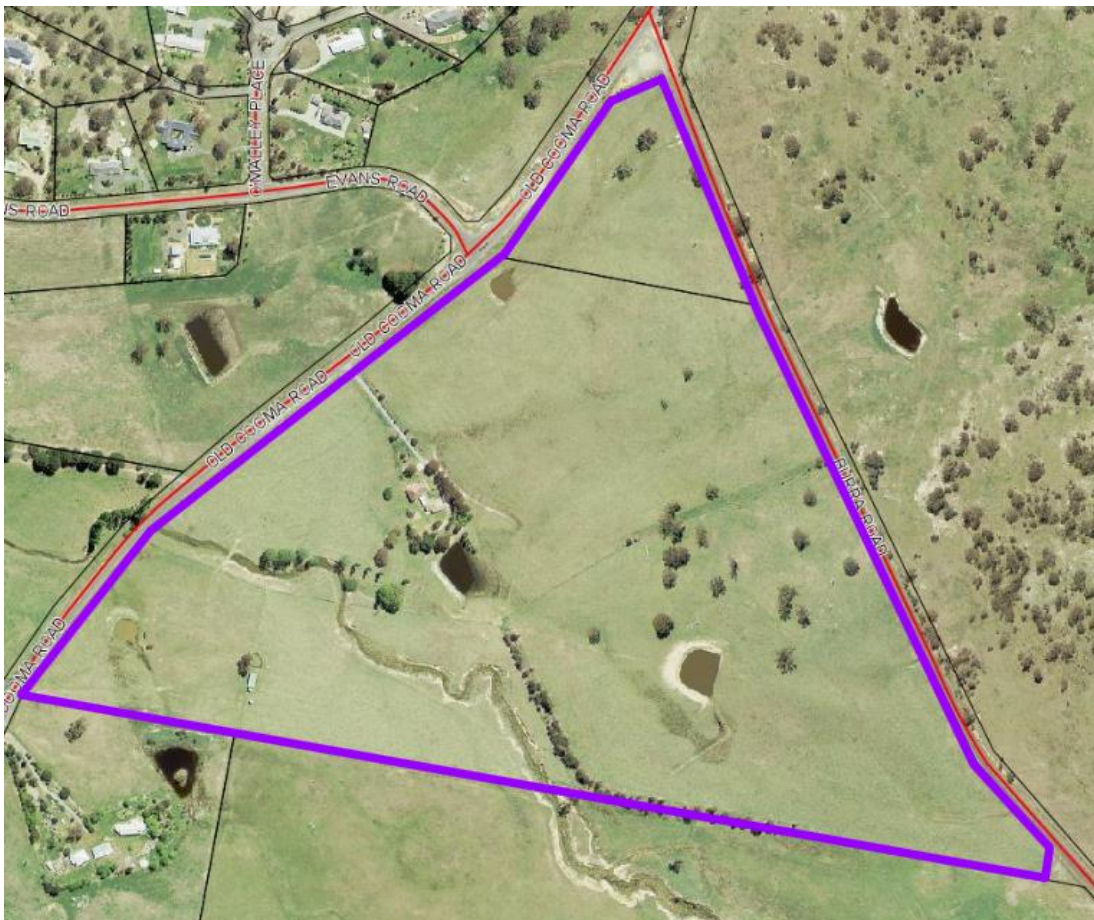


Basic Vegetation Assessment for the Preliminary Environmental Review of 1187 Old Cooma Road Googong

DRAFT
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Executive Summary

The property at 1187 Old Cooma Road, Googong, is being evaluated as a potential future cemetery site. As part of the preliminary environmental review a basic vegetation assessment was completed by Mary Appleby, including ground survey on 6 April 2017.

The original vegetation of the site is part of the critically endangered Box Gum Grassy Woodland, however it has been substantially modified and does not meet the condition criteria to be considered as part of that EPBC listed community.

Whilst it is noted that the time of year was not ideal for vegetation survey, and some native wildlife habitat in the form of tree hollows and rocky outcrops were observed, no significant impediments to the development of the site as a cemetery potentially including small natural areas were detected.

Background

The property at 1187 Old Cooma Road, Googong, encompassing Lot 126 DP 754881 and Lot 2 DP 112382, is being evaluated as a potential future cemetery site.

The property is presently used for cattle grazing, and has been farmed since approximately the 1800s. The farm was native pasture until the 1950s, when it was pasture improved and sown to phalaris (Steve Gibbs, pers. comm.).

Survey method

The survey was completed by Mary Appleby, a Project Officer at QPRC with extensive experience in vegetation survey in the local area.

The survey was simply a walk-through of the site, with more detailed sampling in areas likely to have differing vegetation (e.g. along drainage lines, near the creek and dams) or potentially richer habitat sites (rocky knolls, piles of fallen timber, creek and drainage lines, and mature hollow-bearing trees). Because of the presence of significant reptile and bird species known to occur nearby, rocky knolls and large tree hollows were also inspected in more detail.

A high resolution aerial photography survey was undertaken around the same time and may be used to improve future mapping of environmental features at the site.

Survey results

The original vegetation of the site is Apple Box- Yellow Box-Blakely's Red Gum Grassy Woodland, still present in a relatively intact form at several sites nearby. This vegetation community is part of the critically endangered White Box-Yellow Box-Blakely's Red Gum Grassy Woodland and Derived Grassland (*Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act)), more commonly referred to as Box Gum Grassy Woodland. However, the vegetation at the site does NOT meet the condition criteria to be considered as part of the EPBC listed community, as the understorey has been substantially

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destroyed, apart from a few very small (<10m radius) patches along the northern sections of the Old Cooma Road boundary. These patches retain native groundcover – mainly Kangaroo Grass (*Themeda triandra*), with some Wallaby Grass (*Rytidosperma* sp.), Windmill Grass (*Chloris truncata*), Redleg Grass (*Bothriochloa macra*) and Mat Grass (*Hemarthria uncinata*). The only native forb sighted was Short-flowered Matrush (*Lomandra bracteata*) in these patches. It is possible that there are some spring-emergent forbs (e.g. Bulbine Lily) present, but the overall size of these patches and their condition is such that their prospect is irretrievable.

The vast majority of the site is dense, relatively weed-free Phalaris pasture. Paddocks south of the homestead were inspected, but had been recently harvested.

Drainage lines and dams contain native wetland species (Rushes: Pinrush – *Juncus filicaulis*, *J. subsecundus*; Sedges: Tall Sedge *Carex appressa*, Short-stem Sedge - *Carex breviculmis* and Common Bog Sedge – *Schoenus apogon*; and Swamp Dock – *Rumex brownii*), and introduced Dock (*Rumex crispus*). The creek vegetation is dominated by Tall Sedge (*Carex appressa*) and other species found in drainage lines, as well as River Tussock (*Poa labillardieri*), Native Bluebell (*Wahlenbergia gracilis*) and St John's Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*). Milfoil (*Myriophyllum crispatum*) is found submerged to emergent within the creek itself.

The remnant overstorey trees (Apple Box - *Eucalyptus bridgesiana*, Yellow Box – *E. melliodora*, Blakely's Red Gum – *E. blakelyi* and Candlebark - *E. rubida*) are sparse, and occur only in the area north of the homestead. Most have hollows suitable for nesting birds and small mammals. While some native bird species were noted in the area (Galah, Magpie, Mudlark), these were significantly outnumbered by Starlings (exotic) and Noisy Miners (*Manorina melanocephala*), a native pest species using several of these nest sites. All trees are showing signs of quite advanced dieback, and there is no natural regeneration. All have livestock camps with a range of weed species, particularly Sorrel (*Acetosella vulgaris*), Wireweed (*Polygonum aviculare*) and Black Nightshade (*Solanum nigrum*). Shelterbelts nearby have a variety of indigenous and non-indigenous native species, which provide food, shelter and some habitat, but are not sufficiently mature to provide hollows for nesting birds, bats or other small mammals. There is approximately 200 linear metres of fallen timber on site, which provides good habitat for lizards, other reptiles and small mammals. There were no signs of any of these creatures, however, and a more thorough survey would be needed to detect them. Similarly, rocky outcrops were inspected for both significant native forbs, which often occur in these more protected areas, and for significant herpetofauna (Striped Legless Lizard – *Delma impar*, Pink-tailed Worm-lizard – *Aprasia parapulchella*, and Little Whip-snake – *Suta flagellum*) known to occur nearby. Nothing of significance was found. Signs of other native animals (scats, skeletal remains) included kangaroo, owl (species unknown) and wombat.

Conclusion

The survey was completed in mid Autumn, which is not an ideal time to detect most plant species, and it is recommended that any subsequent detailed vegetation surveys be completed in Spring. The small remnants of native vegetation remaining are insufficient to require ongoing protection as endangered ecological community, although rocky areas around mature eucalypts and native grass areas near the Old Cooma Road boundary could be rehabilitated.

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No significant flora or fauna impediments to the development of the site as a cemetery were detected, particularly under the assumption that small areas may be retained as a relatively natural part of the cemetery landscape.

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Attachment 1 – Plant species list

POTENTIAL CEMETERY SITE, OLD COOMA ROAD, GOOGONG: RESULTS OF HABITAT ASSESSMENT

Flora

Common name	Scientific name	Setting
*Phalaris	<i>Phalaris aquatica</i>	pasture
Hairy Panic	<i>Panicum effusum</i>	All sites except drainage lines
*Cats Ear	<i>Hypochoeris radicata</i>	all sites
*Spear thistle	<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	All sites
*Sub Clover	<i>Trifolium subterraneum</i>	pasture
Pinrush	<i>Juncus filicaulis</i>	All sites
Rush	<i>Juncus subsecundus</i>	Wetter areas, creek & drainage lines
*Fleabane	<i>Conyza bonariensis</i>	scattered
*Ribwort, Common plantain	<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	All sites
*Dock	<i>Rumex crispus</i>	scattered
Swamp dock	<i>Rumex brownii</i>	Scattered through pasture and in drainage lines, creek verge and wetter areas
*Onion Grass	<i>Romulea rosea</i>	Scattered
River tussock	<i>Poa labillardieri</i>	Creek margins
*Paspalum	<i>Paspalum dilatatum</i>	scattered
Tall sedge	<i>Carex appressa</i>	Dams, creek, drainage lines
Short sedge	<i>Carex breviculmis</i>	Dams, creek, drainage lines
*Wild Oats	<i>Avena fatua</i>	scattered
*Tall Fescue	<i>Festuca elatior</i>	scattered
*Cocksfoot	<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	scattered
*Pink Stars	<i>Centaurea erythraea</i>	scattered
Common Bog Sedge	<i>Schoenus apogon</i>	Scattered, dams & wetter areas
Mat grass	<i>Hemarthria uncinata</i>	Scattered in wetter areas
Redleg grass	<i>Bothriochloa macra</i>	Scattered on margins of Kangaroo grass patches
Windmill grass	<i>Chloris truncata</i>	Scattered; larger patch in south paddock
*Barley grass	<i>Hordeum leporinum</i>	At base of trees in cattle camps
*Crane's Bill Geranium	<i>Geranium molle</i>	Scattered in rocky areas
*Common Stork's-bill	<i>Erodium cicutarium</i>	scattered in rocky areas
*Sorrel	<i>Rumex acetosella</i>	widespread
*Skeleton Weed	<i>Chondrilla juncea</i>	scattered
*Goose Grass	<i>Eleusine tristachya</i>	Small patches
*Hairgrass	<i>Aira caryophylla</i>	Small patches
*Wireweed	<i>Polygonum aviculare</i>	Cattle camps
*Black nightshade	<i>Solanum nigrum</i>	Cattle camps
*Small-flowered Mallow	<i>Malva parviflora</i>	Cattle camps
Wallaby Grass	<i>Rytidosperma sp.</i>	Native grass patches near N Old Cooma Rd boundary

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Kangaroo Grass	<i>Themeda triandra</i>	Native grass patches near N Old Cooma Rd boundary
Native Bluebell	<i>Wahlenbergia stricta</i>	Scattered in native grass patches and along creek edge
*Common sedge	<i>Cyperus eragrostis</i>	Drainage lines
Milfoil	<i>Myriophyllum crispatum</i>	Creek
Apple Box	<i>Eucalyptus bridgesiana</i>	Scattered
Blakely's Red Gum	<i>Eucalyptus blakelyi</i>	Scattered
Brittle Gum	<i>Eucalyptus mannifera</i>	Isolated + shelterbelt
Candlebark	<i>Eucalyptus rubida</i>	Scattered
Yellow Box	<i>Eucalyptus melliodora</i>	Scattered
Swamp Gum	<i>Eucalyptus ovata</i>	Shelterbelt (planted)
Ribbon Gum	<i>Eucalyptus viminalis</i>	Shelterbelt (planted)
Narrow-leaved Peppermint	<i>Eucalyptus radiata</i>	Shelterbelt (planted)
Silver Wattle	<i>Acacia dealbata</i>	Shelterbelt (planted)
Ovens River Wattle	<i>Acacia pravissima</i>	Shelterbelt (planted)
Parramatta Wattle	<i>Acacia parramattensis</i>	Shelterbelt (planted)
Black Wattle, Green Wattle	<i>Acacia decurrens</i>	Shelterbelt (planted)
*Cootamundra Wattle	<i>Acacia baileyana</i>	Shelterbelt (planted)

Fauna

Birds	Common name	Scientific name
Direct sighting only	Galah	<i>Eolophus roseicapilla</i>
	Magpie	<i>Cracticus tibicen</i>
	Mudlark	<i>Grallina cyanoleuca</i>
	Crimson Rosella	<i>Platycercus elegans</i>
	*Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>
	+Noisy Miner	<i>Manorina melanocephala</i>
Mammals		
Indirect observation (tracks, scats)	Eastern Grey Kangaroo	<i>Macropus giganteus</i>
	Wombat	<i>Vombatus ursinus</i>