

Minimising Ecological Impact and Avoiding BDAR Trigger on Rural Development

Blue Mountains, NSW

Overview

First Field Environmental Pty Ltd provided **ecological and bushfire input** for a rural residential development in the Blue Mountains, supporting the design of a **primary dwelling and associated infrastructure** on a large property (~217,760 m²) zoned C2 and C3.

Engaged **prior to development application (DA) preparation**, our role was to guide site planning to minimise ecological impact, manage bushfire requirements, and avoid triggering additional approval pathways.

The Challenge

The project involved several competing constraints:

- ✓ The site was **bushfire-prone land**
- ✓ Native vegetation clearing was required for:
 - Dwelling footprint
 - Asset protection zones (APZ)
 - Property access
- ✓ The client and Council sought to **minimise vegetation removal**
- ✓ There was a risk of triggering the **Biodiversity Offset Scheme (BDAR)**
- ✓ Access to the dwelling required consideration of:
 - A new ~600 m driveway through native vegetation, or
 - An easement over neighbouring land

The project required careful planning to balance **ecology, bushfire compliance, cost, and design outcomes**.



Our Role

First Field Environmental was engaged by the **surveyor and client** to provide early ecological and bushfire input.

Key services included:

- ✓ Targeted **flora surveys**, including seasonal surveys for threatened species
- ✓ **Fauna habitat assessment**, including detailed consideration of potential koala habitat
- ✓ Advice on **vegetation retention and clearing minimisation**

- ✓ Bushfire input, including:
 - Asset protection requirements
 - Design of **passing and turning bays** along a 600 m driveway to meet RFS standards
- ✓ Strategic advice on **site layout and infrastructure placement**, including:
 - Dwelling location
 - Wastewater treatment system placement (within engineering and slope constraints)
- ✓ Assessment of **access options**, including:
 - New driveway vs easement over neighbouring land

Our role extended beyond reporting – we actively shaped design decisions.

The Approach

We worked closely with the client and project team to:

- ✓ Identify opportunities to **minimise ecological impact early**
- ✓ Align ecological outcomes with **bushfire and engineering constraints**
- ✓ Evaluate alternative design scenarios, particularly for property access
- ✓ Provide **clear, practical advice** to support decision-making

Collaborate with all project stakeholders, including:

- Surveyor
- Designers
- Client

This ensured ecology and bushfire considerations were **integrated, not conflicting**

The Outcome

- ✓ Vegetation clearing was **minimised** in line with client and Council expectations
- ✓ The project avoided triggering the **Biodiversity Development Assessment Report (BDAR)**
- ✓ A more cost-effective solution was achieved by:
 - Advocating for an **easement over neighbouring land** rather than constructing a new 600 m accessway
- ✓ Bushfire access requirements were met through:
 - Designed passing and turning bays compliant with RFS standards
- ✓ Site design was improved across:
 - Access
 - Infrastructure placement
 - Environmental outcomes
- ✓ The client gained a **clear understanding of ecological and bushfire considerations**

Why this project matters

This project demonstrates First Field Environmental's ability to:

- ✓ Provide **early-stage strategic advice** that shapes better outcomes
- ✓ Balance **ecological constraints, bushfire requirements, and cost considerations**
- ✓ Help clients **avoid unnecessary approval triggers**
- ✓ Deliver **practical, solution-focused advice**
- ✓ Collaborate effectively across multidisciplinary teams



DISCUSS YOUR PROJECT

If you are considering acquiring or developing a site, early ecological advice can significantly reduce risk. Contact First Field Environmental Pty Ltd to discuss your project.

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