New Guidance Released for Preparing or Assessing Biodiversity Development Assessment Reports

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The NSW Department of Planning and Environment has recently released a Biodiversity Development Assessment Report Template (‘**the BDAR Template’**) to assist accredited assessors in preparing Biodiversity Development Assessment Reports (‘**BDAR**’) for proposed developments.

The BDAR Template has been developed in accordance with best practice and sets out the minimum requirements for a BDAR in accordance with the Biodiversity Assessment Method 2020 (‘**the BAM 2020**’). It is not compulsory for accredited assessors to use the BDAR Template.

The Biodiversity Development Assessment Report

A BDAR is a report prepared by a person accredited under section 6.10 of the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* (NSW) (‘**the BC Act**’) in relation to proposed development. A BDAR provides guidance on how a developer can avoid and minimise potential biodiversity impacts and identifies the number and class of biodiversity credits that need to be offset to achieve a standard of 'no net loss' of biodiversity.

Section 6.12 of the BC Act requires that a BDAR “assesses in accordance with the biodiversity assessment method the biodiversity values of the land” and "sets out the measures that the proponent of the proposed development … proposes to take to avoid or minimise the impact of the proposed development".

The Biodiversity Assessment Method 2020

The BAM 2020 is an assessment manual that provides a consistent method for the assessment of biodiversity, including assessing certain impacts on threatened species and ecological communities, their habitats and impacts on biodiversity values.

To undertake the BAM 2020, the accredited assessor can enter field-collected data into a ‘Biodiversity Assessment Calculator’ (accessible here) and determine the number and class of biodiversity credits.

An accredited assessor must apply the BAM 2020 and document the results of the biodiversity assessment in a BDAR. A decision maker then assesses the application against the requirements of the legislation that the application is being assessed under and determines whether to approve or refuse the application.

The Guidance for the Biodiversity Assessment Development Report Template

The NSW Department of Planning and Environment has also released the Guidance for the Biodiversity Development Assessment Report Template ('**the Guidance for the BDAR Template**'). The Guidance for the BDAR Template is a tool that links sections of the template with sections of the BAM 2020, operational manuals and other sources of requirements and guidelines.

If accredited assessors are uncertain of what is expected in a section of the template, they can use the table of references in the Guidance for the BDAR Template to point them to more details. Decision-makers can also use the Guidance for the BDAR Template as a reference for the minimum requirements for a BDAR.

You can access the BDAR Template and the Guidance for the BDAR Template here.