

EPBC Approval Number

2016/7847

Project Name

Scenic Rim Trail – Thornton Trailhead to Spicers Canopy Nature Reserve, Queensland

Proponent

THRL Pty Ltd trading as Spicers Scenic Rim Trail
ABN 22 137 592 593

Action

Spicers Retreats Hotels and Lodges Pty Ltd (Spicers) has developed a 53 km multi-day walk from the privately-owned Thornton View Nature Refuge to the privately-owned Spicers Peak Nature Reserve, via the Main Range National Park and Gondwana Rainforests of Australia World Heritage Area. The walk, named the Scenic Rim Trail, follows a series of existing tracks in the Park connected by a new series of tracks established by Spicers. Two eco camps have been constructed in the Park (outside of the World Heritage Area).

Date of Submission

28 November 2024

Declaration of accuracy

In making this declaration, I am aware that sections 490 and 491 of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth) (EPBC Act) make it an offence in certain circumstances to knowingly provide false or misleading information or documents. The offence is punishable on conviction by imprisonment or a fine, or both. I declare that all the information and documentation supporting this compliance report is true and correct in every particular. I am authorised to bind the approval holder to this declaration and that I have no knowledge of that authorisation being revoked at the time of making this declaration.

Signed  _____

Kira Klein

General Manager – Scenic Rim Trail

Spicers Retreats Hotels and Lodges Pty Ltd

Document Preparation History:

Version No.	Date of Issue	Issued by
2023/24 Version 1	28/11/2024	Kira Klein

Scenic Rim Trail- Thornton Trailhead to Spicers Canopy Nature Reserve, Queensland

Approval EPBC 2016/7847

2023/24 Annual Compliance Report

9 December 2023 – 8 December 2024



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Table of Terms and Abbreviations

ALA	Atlas of Living Australia
BAAM	Biodiversity Assessment and Management Pty Ltd
BDCP	Baseline Data Collection Plan
CAP	Corrective Action Plan
DAWE	Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment
EPBC Act	<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i>
GRAWHP	Gondwana Rainforest of Australia World Heritage property
MNES	Matters of National Environmental Significance
PWaSM	Plan for Wastewater and Sewage Management
QPWS	Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service
SRT	Scenic Rim Trail - Thornton Trailhead to Spicers Canopy Nature Reserve

SRTMP Scenic Rim Trail Management Plan
SWMP Sewage and Wastewater Monitoring Plan

1.0 PURPOSE

This document sets out the status of compliance with the conditions imposed under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth) (EPBC Act) through Approval EPBC 2016/7847 within the required reporting period of 9 December 2023 to 8 December 2024 for the Scenic Rim Trail (SRT) - Thornton Trailhead to Spicers Canopy Nature Reserve, Queensland (the Project).

2.0 BACKGROUND

On 18 January 2019, the Minister for the Environment and Energy (now Minister for Agriculture, Water and the Environment) (the Minister) approved the construction and operation of the Scenic Rim Trail subject to conditions under the EPBC Act. The Minister, through EPBC 2016/7847, approved the proposed action of:

To construct and operate a five to six day supervised bush walk trail and four associated campsites from Mt Mistake to Spicers Peak Nature Refuge, within and adjacent to the Main Range National Park, Queensland.

The controlling provisions to which EPBC 2016/7847 relates are:

- World Heritage Properties (sections 12 and 15A, EPBC Act).
- National Heritage Places (sections 15B and 15C, EPBC Act).
- Listed threatened species and communities (sections 18 and 18A, EPBC Act).

The conditions of Approval EPBC 2016/7847 were varied by the Minister on 2 July 2019, to delete conditions 8, 9, 14, 16, 21, 22, 26, 27, 28, 29 and 32 attached to the approval and substitute with the conditions specified in the variation, and again on 10 March 2020, to delete attachments 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 attached to the approval and substitute with the attachments specified in the variation.

The Action commenced on 16 September 2019 and construction was completed in April 2020. Commercial operation of the walking trail commenced on 21st June 2020.

3.0 SCOPE

This Annual Compliance Report outlines key areas of works and activity in relation to EPBC 2016/7847. This Report assesses:

- Compliance with the conditions listed within EPBC 2016/7847 by Spicers and its contractors.
- Records of any unavoidable adverse impacts on Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES), mitigation measures applied to avoid adverse impacts on MNES and rehabilitation work undertaken in connection with any unavoidable adverse impacts on MNES.
- Non-compliance with the conditions of EPBC 2016/7847.
- Amendments to plans needed to achieve compliance with the conditions of EPBC 2016/7847.

This Annual Compliance Report covers the period of 9 December 2023 to 8 December 2024.

4.0 CONDITION COMPLIANCE

Condition 22 of EPBC 2016/7847 states:

Within 60 business days of every 12 month anniversary of commencement of the action, or as otherwise agreed to in writing by the Minister, the approval holder must publish a report on its website addressing compliance with each of the conditions, and any data, reports and analyses arising from the implementation of the SRTMP and BDCP and any other management plans as specified in the conditions. Documentary evidence providing proof of the date of publication and non-compliance with any of the conditions of this approval must be provided to the Department at the same time as the compliance report is published. Reports must remain on the website for the life of this approval. The Minister may provide written consent to the approval holder to cease reporting under this condition if satisfied additional reports are not warranted. Note: The first compliance report may report a period of less than 12 months so that it and subsequent compliance reports align with the similar requirement under state approval.

4.1 Compliance

The status of compliance with each condition under EPBC 2016/7847 is set out in Appendix 1.

4.1.1 Unavoidable Impacts on Matters of National Environmental Significance

World Heritage Properties and National Heritage Places

No known unavoidable impacts have occurred to World Heritage Properties or National Heritage Places during the reporting period.

Listed threatened species and communities

No known impacts on listed threatened species and communities are considered attributable to the Scenic Rim Trail Project during the reporting period.

4.1.2 Mitigation Measures

No additional mitigation measures have been required or implemented as a result of unavoidable impacts on MNES.

4.1.3 Plan Amendments

No amended plans have been resubmitted to the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (DAWE) as a result of an identified non-compliance or a request made by DAWE.

4.1.4 Commonwealth EPBC 2016/7847 Compliance Status – Active Conditions

All conditions relating to the construction and requirements stipulated to be completed prior to commencement were detailed in the 2020 annual report.

4.1.5 Baseline Data 8A

The approval holder must not implement any onsite disposal of sewage or wastewater until the Minister has approved a Sewage and Wastewater Monitoring Plan (SWMP). An application for

the approval for dispersal of sewage or wastewater has not yet been lodged. To provide supporting information to accompany the approval application, Morton Environmental and Health Pty Ltd was engaged to conduct a hydraulic assessment of the irrigation area to determine if the application of treated effluent would lead to excessive deep drainage and subsequent impact to Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES) values.

Two assessment trials were conducted on 22nd July and 5th September, during which treated effluent was applied to the irrigation area at a sustained rate and groundwater movement was monitored by a series of piezometers. Results from both trials indicated the application of treated effluent to the irrigation field created no contribution to an increase in piezometric head down-gradient of the irrigation area and therefore, does not interact or contribute to local groundwater. Furthermore, sampling of treated effluent was conducted within proximity to both assessment trials, which returned Total Nitrogen and Total Phosphorus results not considered to be excessive and unlikely to impact on MNES values.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Commonwealth EPBC 2016/7847 Compliance Status – Active Conditions

Scenic Rim Trail Management Plan			
14.a.ii	Minimise, manage and remediate erosion along the Scenic Rim Trail;	Compliant	Guides are required to report gps locations, condition and evidence of erosion along trails to the Senior Operations Coordinator (SOC). The SOC is required to record all reports and notify the General Manager of key sightings. Identified remediation work (if required) will be scheduled in the ongoing maintenance program.
14.a.iii	Reduce the risk of spread of existing vertebrate pests, weeds and pathogens, including chytrid fungus;	Compliant	Operational vehicles are gurnied after each use to reduce the risk of spread. A boot washing station was installed in 2020 and continues to be maintained by the Spicers property manager. Weeds at camps within the leased area have been removed by hand and lantana managed in collaboration with Main Range National Park Ranger in Charge throughout the year.
14.a. iv	Reduce the risk of introduction and establishment of new vertebrate pests, weeds and pathogens, including chytrid fungus;		
14.a. v	Control any new and existing weeds and pathogens outside of the Main Range National Park along the Scenic Rim Trail and at any camps;		

14.a.vi	Ensure trail guides are trained to identify any new or existing invasive species of weeds;	Compliant	Trail guides receive training on weed identification via field guide manuals.
14.a.vii	Report any new or existing invasive species of weeds, pests or pathogens to the Queensland Government agency responsible for the management of the Main Range National Park;	Compliant	<p>Guides are required to report gps locations, condition and evidence of new or existing invasive species of weeds, pests or pathogens along trail to the Senior Operations Coordinator. The General Manager responsible for reporting key sightings to Senior Ranger in Charge.</p> <p>Refer to appendix 3 - Natural Values Report, which reports the findings of weeds, pests & pathogens and has been shared with the Department of Environment and Science and Senior Ranger in Charge of Main Range National Park.</p>
14.a.ix	Minimise the impact of artificial light and noise on the Hastings River Mouse at Timbergetters Ecocamp	Compliant	<p>Light Level audit was conducted by BAAM ecology refer to Ecological Monitoring Program Annual Report 2024.</p> <p>The two rooms in the Woodcutters ecocamp with the brightest internal light sources were the kitchen, with light levels ranging from 230 lux to 275 lux, and the guest bathrooms, with light levels ranging from 90 lux to 510 lux. Light levels were relatively low at distances of 3-4 m from the edge of the building windows, ranging from 3.0 lux to 3.4 lux, decreasing to 0.4-0.6 lux at 10-12 m and less than 0.1 lux at distances of 16-30 m. Light spill around the Woodcutters ecocamp was slightly above full moon light levels (typically 0.05-0.2 lux) at distances up to around 12 m from the edge of the buildings, but at distances further than this, ambient light levels reduced to 0.1 lux or lower, which is less than the natural light levels under a full moon. Hastings River Mouse habitat occurs under a tree canopy and typically has dense groundcover; consequently, light spill is highly unlikely to affect Hastings River Mouse behaviour at distances further than around 15 m from the ecocamp.</p> <p>Recommendations: No recommendations are made</p>
14.a.x	Remove food waste and litter from the Scenic Rim Trail and at Timbergetters Ecocamp and Amphitheatre View Wilderness Ecocamp to outside of the GRAWHP and Main Range National Park	Compliant	All rubbish including food waste is removed from the Ecocamps at the end of each walk and disposed of outside of Main Range National Park. Rubbish is stored within sealed waste containers whilst at camp.

14.c	Specify the details of a 10-year annual ongoing monitoring program (including methodology, effort, timing, frequency and responsibilities) capable of predicting and detecting:	Compliant	The SRTMP required under conditions 10-13 has specified the details of a 10-year annual ongoing monitoring program under Sections 9, 9.2, 9.3, 9.5 and 9.6 of the SRTMP.
	<p>i. a decrease of the population of Hastings River Mouse at the Timbergetters Ecocamp compared to the baseline population established under condition 8.a.;</p> <p>Capture of feral rodents during Hastings River Mouse trapping surveys.</p>	Compliant	<p>A total of two Hastings River Mouse captures occurred, likely of the same individual, both at the control site.</p> <p>The 2023 survey is the second consecutive year that Hastings River Mouse has not been captured in the environs of the Woodcutters Ecocamp; however, the zero captures from 400 trap nights in 2023 is little different from the single capture from 400 trap nights during the baseline survey; due to the naturally low and variable trapping rates for this species, there is no evidence of a significant impact of the Project on Hastings River Mouse relative abundance in the vicinity of the ecocamp based on the monitoring data to date. No corrective action required.</p> <p>No feral rodents were captured during the 2023 survey. No corrective action required.</p>
	ii. a decrease of the population of Fleay's Frog and Mountain Frog at each crossing of the new trails at Blackfellow Creek and Dalrymple Creek compared to the baseline population established under condition 8.b.;	Compliant	<p>Fleay's Frog - Frog abundance decreased significantly in operation year 4 compared with baseline surveys at both Blackfellow and Dalrymple creeks. However, since this change did not differ between upstream control and downstream impact sites, it indicates no significant impact under the BACI design. Tadpole abundance increased significantly at Blackfellow Creek but decreased significantly at Dalrymple Creek in operation year 4 compared with baseline surveys. However, since this change did not differ between upstream control and downstream impact sites, it indicates no significant impact under the BACI design No corrective action required.</p> <p>Mountain Frog - Frog calling activity decreased significantly between baseline and operation year 4 periods at both downstream 'impact' and upstream 'control' sites at Blackfellow Creek. The absence of significant change in frog calling activity between the downstream and upstream transects indicate no significant impact under the BACI design. No corrective action required.</p>
	iii. changes in water quality compared to the baseline established under condition 8.c. at	Compliant	Considering the changes in nutrient levels overtime section 5.5 and Graphs 1-6 and Table

	<p>either crossing of the new trails at Blackfellow Creek and Dalrymple Creek; and</p>		<p>11, Table 18, Table 19 the following observations are made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) There is no discernible trend between control sites and impacted sites; b) The 13 relatively high results in the last four years above the WQO for TN and Total Phosphorus are across both control and potentially impacted sites, as well as at locations monitoring creek crossings and EcoCamps; and c) There is no increase in Nitrogen or Phosphorus overtime. <p>No corrective action required.</p>
	<p>iv. a decrease of riparian habitat quality at either crossing of the new trails at Blackfellow Creek and Dalrymple Creek compared to the baseline established under condition 8.d.</p>	<p>Compliant</p>	<p>There was no evidence of damage to riparian vegetation or evidence of feral animal activity within 100 m upstream or downstream of the Dalrymple Creek crossing. There was evidence of Feral Pig activity downstream of the Blackfellow Creek crossing; otherwise, no damage to riparian vegetation was detected. Feral pigs were active in Blackfellow Creek during the baseline surveys, so the Feral Pig activity during the fourth year of operation is not attributable to the Project. No corrective action required as QPWS already has Pig traps operational on the Winder Track above Blackfellow Creek.</p>
Annual Compliance Reporting			
<p>22</p>	<p>Within 60 business days of every 12 month anniversary of commencement of the action, or as otherwise agreed to in writing by the Minister, the approval holder must publish a report on its website addressing compliance with each of the conditions, and any data, reports and analyses arising from the implementation of the SRTMP and BDCP and any other management plans as specified in the conditions. Documentary evidence providing proof of the date of publication and non-compliance with any of the conditions of this approval must be provided to the Department at the same time as the compliance report is published. Reports must remain</p>	<p>Compliant</p>	<p>Documentary evidence providing proof of the date of publication and non-compliance with any of the conditions of this approval were provided to the Department.</p> <p>https://scenicrimtrail.com/about/environmental-protection-and-biodiversity/</p>

	on the website for the life of this approval. The Minister may provide written consent to the approval holder to cease reporting under this condition if satisfied additional reports are not warranted. Note: The first compliance report may report a period of less than 12 months so that it and subsequent compliance reports align with the similar requirement under state approval.		
Reporting non-compliance			
23	The approval holder must notify the Department in writing of any: incident; non-compliance with the conditions; or non-compliance with the commitments made in plans. The notification must be given as soon as practicable, and no later than 2 business days after becoming aware of the incident or noncompliance.	Compliant	
Other			
24	Vegetation transect survey of Winder trail	Observations	<p>Existing Winder Track Management: There was little detectable change in vegetation at the transect sites between September 2020 and March 2021. By April 2022 and 2023, an increase in shrub cover in ecotone areas was apparent as rainforest tree saplings became established following the fire in 2019, and by March 2024 shrub cover had become dominant. In September 2020, there was limited evidence of recent feral pig activity along the existing Winder management track, but in March 2021 there was extensive evidence of recent feral pig activity along much of the track. In April 2022, it was apparent that feral pig activity had been reduced, but recent evidence of feral pig activity was observed at scattered locations along the existing Winder management track. Similarly, in January and April 2023 and March 2024, recent evidence of feral pig activity was observed at scattered locations along the existing Winder management track.</p> <p>Re-opened Winder Track Management: There was little detectable change in vegetation at the transect sites between September 2020 and March 2021, besides the effects of surface soil disturbance by feral pigs. In September 2020, no evidence of recent feral pig activity was detected along the re-opened Winder management track, but in March 2021 there was extensive evidence</p>

			<p>of recent feral pig feeding activity along most of the track traversed during the survey; feral pig diggings extended for up to 20-30 m on both sides of the track and included extensive areas of soil surface disturbance. In April 2022, it was apparent that feral pig activity had been much reduced since the previous survey, but recent evidence of feral pig activity was observed at scattered locations including close to Transect 3. Similarly, in January 2023 and March 2024 there was limited feral pig damage along the sides of the reopened management track, but recent evidence of feral pig activity at scattered locations along. The only notable change in vegetation between April 2022 and January 2023 was a further increase in ground vegetation cover (mostly ferns) following above-average rainfall through the summer season. This dense ground cover was still present in March 2024 after another good wet season. Consistent with previous surveys, no introduced weed species were present in any vegetation layer at monitoring sites T3 and T4. In March 2024 it was apparent that a brush-cutting tractor had travelled along a portion of the reopened Winder management track and had widened the track by 1-2m through brushcutting the groundcover and rainforest tree saplings that were growing along the edge of the track. This was an extension of the track maintenance slashing on the existing Winder management track.</p> <p>Slashing was conducted by QPWS.</p>
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Scenic Rim Trail Condition Reports 2023/2024 Reporting Period

Appendix 2. Vegetation Transect Survey - Re-opened Winder Trail 2023/2024

[0435-005TM4-Winder-vegetation-transect-survey-technical-memo_2024.pdf](#)

Appendix 3. Natural Values Health Check Report 2024

[Natural Values Health Check 2024.docx](#)

Appendix 4. Ecology Monitoring Report 2023/2024

[Scenic-Rim-Trail-Ecological-Monitoring-Report-2024_Version-0-1.pdf](#)

Appendix 5. Water Monitoring Report 2023/2024

[2024_Water-Quality-Monitoring.pdf](#)