



## Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action

PO Box 500, East Melbourne,  
Victoria 8002 Australia

MIN-250703912

Isaac Carne

Goongerah Environment Centre 7203 Bonang Road Goongerah VIC 3888  
geco@geco.org.au

Dear Isaac Carne

Thank you for your email of 15 July 2025 to Steve Dimopoulos MP, Minister for Environment, regarding damage to endangered Watson's Tree Frog habitat in Errinundra National Park. As this matter is in my area of responsibility, the Minister has asked that I respond on his behalf.

This letter is also in response to your emails to John Bradley, former Secretary to the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) on 13 May 2025 and Sam Quigley, Director Forest and Fire Operation Division, Gippsland on 15 July 2025. I apologise for the delay in our response; this is a matter we take seriously, and we needed to take the time to review it thoroughly.

I can confirm DEECA did undertake planned road maintenance works in the Errinundra National Park on BA Road earlier this year. This included weed management and culvert cleaning with a backhoe. A bulldozer was not used to deliver these works.

Values specialists review planned road works to identify a broad array of values that require protection in the planned works area. They determine how the activity may impact on values and consider mitigation measures to reduce or, as required, eliminate the impacts. Biodiversity specialists consider standard mitigation measures in the first instance for consistency purposes, but sometimes the activity type or location may require bespoke mitigations to be created and implemented. Works are only approved to commence after all necessary mitigations have been applied.

DEECA utilises the Victorian Biodiversity Atlas (VBA) to review and assess biodiversity values for planned works. All new species records submitted to the VBA undergo an expert review process to ensure that quality evidence-based data is accepted into the database.

DEECA has produced a Watson's Tree Frog - Fact Sheet to assist staff in the identification of tadpoles, mature frogs and potential habitat. Additionally, the fact sheet identifies potential threats and mitigations to protect the species and its habitat.

Mitigation advice for protection of values during culvert cleaning was provided to field staff undertaking works with a backhoe and was followed. While avoiding a pothole in the road, the operator drove through a puddle in the drain which was later found to be habitat for Watson's Tree Frog tadpoles. BA Road is a publicly accessible road, and there is evidence that other public vehicles have also impacted the site.

Bespoke mitigation advice has previously been provided by Biodiversity Specialists for weed management activities in the vicinity of Watson Tree Frog detection sites, which overtime has been deemed appropriate to become the standard mitigation measure for this species. DEECA staff attempted to carry out the spraying works in adherence with the mitigation advice. However, a review showed that further improvements for implementing mitigations could be made.

DEECA Biodiversity Specialists conducted a field inspection after the incident was reported to determine the level of impact to potential Watson's Tree Frog habitat, to review the mitigation advice that had been provided to field staff and how it was implemented in the field. They make recommendations based on the findings of their review.

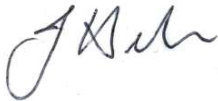
We are taking steps to ensure similar impacts do not occur in the future including:

- review and update the Fact Sheet and mitigation advice for Watson's Tree Frog to ensure it reflects current best practice for the species.
- developing improved processes for staff undertaking works, including more effective communication of the presence of important species and how to protect them.
- providing greater education to our staff in the implementation of mitigation advice that has been provided by our values specialists.

DEECA takes matters such as these very seriously, and I thank you for raising this matter with the Minister.

If you would like more information about this matter, please contact Sam Quigley, Director – Forest and Fire Operations Division - Gippsland, DEECA at [sam.quigley@deeca.vic.gov.au](mailto:sam.quigley@deeca.vic.gov.au).

Yours sincerely



**Jason Hellyer**  
A/Executive Director, Forest and Fire Operations Division

20/10/2025