Threatened Faunal Species Management Plan key to on-time commencement and delivery of Powerline Replacement Project, 2014.

Image: An inhabitant of this rare forest community is the threatened Dandenong Burrowing Crayfish. Source: hikingfiasco.com

Company Name

Acacia Environmental Management

Service

ProvidedEnvironmental / Ecological Consultancy and Field Works, Extensive use and knowledge in both chemical and non-chemical weed control techniques

Acacia Environmental Management deliver strategic planning and service delivery in partnership with primary land managers. Acacia can assist agencies tasked with land management understand their regulatory requirements, site values and threatening processes impacting their site/s. A tailored plan can be developed to suit the specific needs of your organisation – we can even deliver the on-ground works.

Situation

In 2014, AusNet Services (a Victorian electricity distribution business) embarked on an ambitious two year works program to replace 40km of ageing overhead powerlines with underground cables in the Dandenong Ranges, east of Melbourne. The project was driven by the need to improve supply reliability and to mitigate the risk of powerline related fire ignition in one of the world's most fire prone areas.

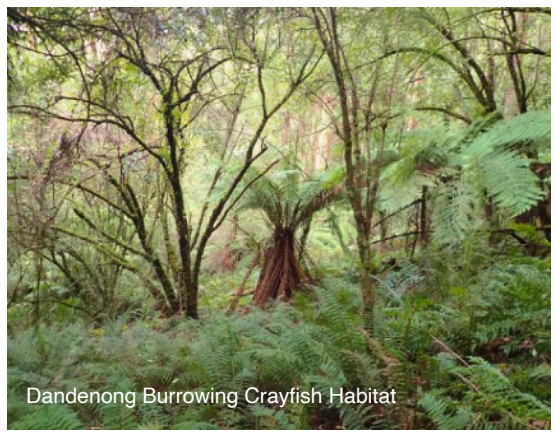
Brief

The constrained mountainous terrain of the Dandenong Ranges posed numerous planning, design and construction challenges all set within an area of outstanding ecological social and economic significance. As an established and trusted service provider to AusNet Services and having extensive experience in the utility sector, Acacia Environmental Services (Acacia) was engaged to provide end to end environmental consultancy and field services.

During project planning, habitats capable of supporting the little know and elusive terrestrial Burrowing Crayfish *(Engaeus urostrictus),* a threatened species endemic to the Dandenong Ranges, were identified as intersecting with proposed high disturbance worksites. While worksites were pre-positioned where possible within roadways, their lush adjacent roadside environments provided optimal habitat for the Crayfish.

Solution

To do nothing was not an option as stakeholders including the local municipal council and environment group demanded assurances that the works be planned and executed in a manner that avoids and minimises impacts to the Crayfish as well as other local aquatic invertebrates including the critically endangered Kallista Stonefly *(Leptoperla kallistae)* and two species of Freshwater Amphipods (*Austrogammarus spp*).



Dandenong Burrowing Crayfish Habitat

Image: The Dandenong Burrowing Crayfish has a maximum recorded carapace length* of approximately 20 mm, a short broad rostrum and an almost spineless triangular tail fan.

For more information, visit
acaciaenvironmental.com.au
or call **(03) 9710 1166**

Solution Cont..

Acacia drew on its peer connections with research staff in the Applied Aquatic Ecology team at Victoria's Arthur Rylah Institute (ARI) home to the to the world's foremost experts on Engaeus species. A collaborative endeavour ensued, backed by AusNet Services which saw Acacia lead the development of a Threatened Faunal Species Management Plan (TFSMP) believed to be the first of its kind for civil construction works. The TFSMP was the critical instrument necessary for AusNet Services to meet statutory obligations and to gain stakeholder support for its proposed works. In recognition of the volunteer work of the local environment group and the need to protect and enhance critical streamside habitats in the vicinity to worksites, Acacia on behalf of AusNet Services, provided specialist weed mapping and related field works.

Results

The implementation of the TFSMP into project planning and delivery was essential to the timely commencement of works and project milestones being met as well as the continued delivery of the project over successive years.

The TFSMP and broader environmental management framework developed, implemented and executed by Acacia on behalf of AusNet were resoundingly successful and have since been adopted by the local municipal council as the benchmark for utility installation works within its local government area.

Acacia continues to be a trusted and preferred supplier of environmental consultancy and field works to AusNet Services.

Image: Tiny holes underfoot often go unnoticed (Abc: Jo Khan)