The hollows data was reanalysed following the printing of the BITA Timber Assessment Report and as a result the total number of hollows/ha changed slightly.

5.4 Tree hollows

The average total number of hollows identified across the project area was 24.9/ha for all sampled strata. This consists of 16.2 coppice or butt hollows/ha and 8.7 branch or trunk hollows /ha. The significance of existing hollows, including coppice and butt hollows, is recognised as a key selection criterion for determining habitat trees for retention prior to harvesting.

The dataset shows that Grey Box consistently contained more hollows than any other species. See Table 5.6.

Table 5.6: Species distribution of branch or trunk hollows and coppice or butt hollows.

Species	Hollow Type	
	Coppice or Butt (/ha)	Branch or Trunk (/ha)
Grey Box	8.0	2.8
Red Box	2.9	1.7
Red Stringybark	1.1	1.2
Yellow Box	0.3	0.8
Long-leaved Box	0.4	0.8
Red Ironbark	2.5	0.7
Yellow Gum	1.0	0.5
Broad-leaved Peppermint	0.0	0.2
White Box	0.0	0.0
Red River Gum	0.0	0.0
Malle	0.0	0.0
Messmate	0.0	0.0
Blue Gum	0.0	0.0
Manna Gum	0.0	0.0
TOTAL	**16.2**	**8.7**

The distribution of hollows within the forest by diameter class is shown in Table 5.7. The table indicates that the majority of hollows in the forest are concentrated in the smaller diameter classes. This is because these diameter classes have many more stems per hectare than the larger diameter trees.

Table 5.7: Distribution of hollows within the forest by diameter class.

Hollow Type	Diameter Class				Total
	<20cm	20-40cm	41-60cm	>60cm	
Coppice /butt 2-5 cm	3.3	1.5	0.2	0.0	5.1
Coppice /butt 5.1-10 cm	3.2	1.9	0.4	0.1	5.7
Coppice /butt 10.1-20cm	1.9	1.3	0.3	0.1	3.5
Coppice /butt >20cm	0.8	0.7	0.3	0.1	1.8
Branch /trunk 2-5 cm	0.2	1.2	0.6	0.5	2.6
Branch /trunk 5.1-10 cm	0.2	0.8	1.2	1.0	3.1
Branch /trunk 10.1-20cm	0.0	0.5	0.8	0.9	2.3
Branch /trunk >20cm	0.0	0.1	0.2	0.4	0.7
TOTAL	**9.6**	**8.0**	**4.0**	**3.2**	**24.9**

Only 0.4 % of all trees assessed have a DBH of greater than 60cm however these trees contribute a total of 3.2 hollows/ha. This suggests that as the DBH increases, the number of hollows/ha also increase. Current habitat tree prescriptions select trees from the larger diameter classes first.

Of the average 8.7 branch or trunk hollows/ha observed across the project area, only 0.2/ha (or 3.2%) were identified in trees assessed as current sawlog, growing stock for sawlog or fencing timber trees. (Sawlog growing stock was included as these trees currently contain timber suitable for fencing however they are being retained for future sawlog use). In addition, all existing coppice or butt hollows are protected during harvesting operations by cutting high stumps as necessary. This strongly suggests that current sawlog and fencing timber harvesting operations pose an insignificant threat to existing hollow bearing trees. By contrast trees assessed as current firewood trees accounted for 2.2 branch or trunk hollows/ha, however the majority are probably contained within stems greater than 50 cm DBHOB. Such trees are not harvested for firewood in practice, but were regarded as current product stems in order to meet both the targeted post harvesting basal area of 8 to 10 m^2/ha, and the minimum requirement for habitat trees at each plot. In addition it is important to note that habitat tree marking practices have subsequently been modified, such that selection now occurs on a whole coupe basis rather than by an individual hectare approach. This modified practice ensures optimal habitat tree selection and protection of hollow bearing trees, prior to harvesting operations.

The proportion of potentially available major timber products within habitat trees, and other trees retained for non-silvicultural purposes, is 20% of sawlogs (not containing sleepers), 40% of sleepers, 13% of strainers and 17% of sawn posts. This is in consideration of all species within assessed strata across the project area, and indicates the volume of potentially merchantable timber in retained trees. By comparison growing stock presently contains 20% of potentially available sawlogs, 21% of sleepers, 60% of strainers and 48% of sawn posts. However the majority of growing stock stems will become available for timber harvesting in the future, with greater volumes and often higher value products yielded.

Data collected on supplementary ecological assessment (Point to Plant Sampling) sheets is not discussed in this report (refer to Appendix 8).