

Clearing Desktop Report – Short Form

1. PROPOSAL DETAILS

Proposal Name:	Great Eastern Highway SLK 102.92 – Christmas Road Intersection Upgrade		
Region/Directorate:	Wheatbelt		
Local Government:	Shire of Northam		
Road/Bridge Name & Number:	Great Eastern Highway (H005)		
Proposal Location (SLK):	SLK 102.92		
CDR Short Form TRIM Number:	D24#1284567, Redacted (D24#1327230)		
Spatial Data TRIM Number:	CPS818 (D24#1284395), Proposal Area (D24#1267918)		
EOS Number:	3453		
Expected Proposal Start Date:	January 2025		
Oracle Project No:	30000379	Task Code:	19101
LISC TRIM Number:	D24#990898	HRA TRIM Number:	D24#991093

2. PURPOSE OF CLEARING

The Region proposes to undertake intersection upgrade works to improve road user safety on entry to and exit from Christmas Road.

The scope of works will include the widening of Great Eastern Highway (GEH) to accommodate a Basic Rural Right (BAR) treatment onto Christmas Road. The angle of the intersection is proposed to change from 70 to 90 degrees to improve sightlines.

A small amount of remnant vegetation along the edge of Christmas Road (RHS) is proposed to be cleared to allow for the change in road alignment onto Great Eastern Highway (Figure 1, Appendix 1).

3. ALTERNATIVES TO CLEARING

The Proposal involves the clearing of up to five trees (0.02 ha) along Great Eastern Highway/Christmas Road to allow for the construction of a safer intersection alignment.

Accordingly, there is limited scope to alter the clearing.

All of the trees proposed to be cleared are in Completely degraded condition.

4. MEASURES TO AVOID, MINIMISE, MITIGATE AND MANAGE PROPOSAL CLEARING IMPACTS

The following alternatives to clearing were considered during the development of the Proposal:

- A range of options were assessed in the design stage of this intersection upgrade.
- Changing the angle of the intersection to 90 degrees will improve sightlines without significant additional roadworks. Further, the design was amended to install kerbing along Christmas Road and GEH to reduce the need for table drains (minimising the disturbance footprint and reducing the amount of required clearing).
- Main Roads retains frangible vegetation where a clear zone is to be established for road projects. For this project, however, clearing will only be required to accommodate the road formation, with no additional clear zone being established. Accordingly, the retention of frangible vegetation does not apply to this proposal.
- Reducing the speed limit to minimise clearing requirements, while still balancing safety (driver fatigue) and freight efficiency. Speed Limits are an essential mechanism to ensure the safe and efficient operation of road networks. The application of appropriate speed limits and other traffic management measures is a key mechanism in managing vehicle speeds to achieve desired safety, mobility, traffic management, local amenity, and road user expectations. There are several factors involved in road safety, including road conditions, driver behaviour and overall road design. Except in special situations, reducing speed limits below national standards on state and national roads is not typically supported as it has the potential to contribute to driver frustration, impatience, tiredness and recklessness. The environmental values protected by reducing the speed limit, do not justify the impacts on freight efficiencies nor road user safety. Accordingly, the reduction of the speed limits to avoid clearing of native vegetation for this proposal is not proposed.

5. APPROVED POLICES AND PLANNING INSTRUMENTS

The clearing of native vegetation in Western Australia is regulated under the *Environmental Protection Act 1986* (EP Act) and the Environmental Protection (Clearing of Native Vegetation) Regulations 2004 (Clearing Regulations).

In addition to the matters considered in accordance with section 51O of the EP Act (see Section 1.3), Main Roads has also had regard to the following documents.

Environmental Protection Policies:

- Environmental Protection (Peel Inlet - Harvey Estuary) Policy 1992
- Environmental Protection (Western Swamp Tortoise Habitat) Policy 2011

Other legislation of relevance for assessment of clearing and planning/other matters:

- *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* (WA) (BC Act)
- *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984* (WA) (CALM Act)
- *Country Areas Water Supply Act 1947* (WA) (CAWS Act)
- *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth) (EPBC Act)
- *Planning and Development Act 2005* (WA) (P&D Act)
- *Soil and Land Conservation Act 1945* (WA)
- *Rights in Water and Irrigation Act 1914* (WA) (RIWI Act)
- *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972* (WA) (AHA)
- *Town Planning and Development Act (WA) 1928*

Relevant other policies and guidance documents:

- Environmental Offsets Policy (Government of Western Australia, 2011)
- A guide to the assessment of applications to clear native vegetation (DEC, December 2014)
- Procedure: Native vegetation clearing permits (DWER, October 2019)
- Environmental Offsets Guidelines (Government of Western Australia, August 2014)
- Technical guidance – Flora and Vegetation Surveys for Environmental Impact Assessment (EPA, 2016)
- Technical guidance – Terrestrial Vertebrate Fauna Surveys for Environmental Impact Assessment (EPA, 2020)
- Approved conservation advice under section 266B of the EPBC Act for threatened flora/fauna/vegetation communities
- Approved Recovery Plans for threatened species
- EPBC Act Referral guidelines for the three threatened black cockatoo species
- Strategic advice - EPA

6. CLEARING AREA

Clearing Area (ha):	0.02 ha	No. Trees Cleared:	Up to 5 (one DBH tree, no hollows)
Species Name(s):	<i>Eucalyptus loxophleba</i> subsp. <i>loxophelba</i> (York Gum)		
Easting and Northing:	116.753576 , -31.637630		

7. EXISTING ENVIRONMENT AND SITE INFORMATION

Site Vegetation Description/Association:	Vegetation Association 352: Medium woodland; York gum											
Site Vegetation Condition:	Completely degraded											
Pre-European Extent Remaining (%):	The below table displays the current extents of the remaining Vegetation for VA: 352 on a Statewide and LGA level. <table><tr><th>Scale</th><th>Current Extent (ha)</th><th>% Remaining</th></tr><tr><td>Statewide</td><td>142,012</td><td>19.61</td></tr><tr><td>LGA (Northam)</td><td>7,623</td><td>11.41</td></tr></table>			Scale	Current Extent (ha)	% Remaining	Statewide	142,012	19.61	LGA (Northam)	7,623	11.41
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Statewide	142,012	19.61										
LGA (Northam)	7,623	11.41										

8. ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSAL AGAINST CLEARING PRINCIPLES

Is vegetation to be cleared at variance with:

Principle (a) – Native vegetation should not be cleared if it comprises a high level of biological diversity.

Justification or Evidence:

One vegetation type occurs within the Clearing Area:

- Vegetation Association (VA) 352: Medium woodland; York gum.

Although VA 352 retains less than the 30% threshold Statewide guideline value, the Completely degraded condition of the vegetation in the Clearing Area reduces its significance, as detailed in Principle (e).

The Clearing Area is not located within the mapped buffer area of the Eucalypt Woodlands of the Western Australian (WA) Wheatbelt Threatened (EPBC Act) and Priority (BC Act) Ecological Community (TEC/PEC). Additionally, in accordance with Main Roads *Technical Guidance on the Threatened Ecological Community Eucalypt Woodlands of the Western Australian Wheatbelt* (2024), none of the trees proposed for clearing meet the requirements of a TEC/PEC as they do not meet the criteria specified in Category D due to being in Completely degraded condition.

A desktop assessment was undertaken and according to the DBCA Threatened and Priority Flora and WA Herbarium databases, the closest Threatened and Priority flora records within 5km of the Clearing Area are:

Flora	Distance from Clearing area
<i>Acacia aphylla</i> (T)	2.9 km west
<i>Acacia lirellata</i> subsp. <i>lirellata</i> (P3)	4.7 km south east
<i>Daviesia nudiflora</i> subsp. <i>Drummondii</i> (P3)	4.9 km north east

The potential occurrence of conservation significant flora within the Clearing Area is considered unlikely due to the Completely Degraded condition of vegetation due to disturbance and edge effects..

According to DBCA Threatened and Priority fauna database, the closest records within 5km of the Clearing Area are:

Fauna	Distance from Clearing area
<i>Falco peregrinus</i> (Peregrine Falcon) (OS) in 2012	2.6 km west
<i>Macrotis lagotis</i> (Bilby) (VU) in 1917	4.4 km east north
<i>Tyto novaehollandiae</i> (Masked Owl) (P3) in 1972	3.5 km south west

Due to the distance of the fauna records, location of the Clearing Area between two adjacent roads, and the Completely degraded condition of the vegetation, it is unlikely these species would occur in the area.

One DBH tree is located in the Clearing Area, but no trees contain hollows suitable for black cockatoo breeding. None of these trees showed signs of breeding or roosting by black cockatoos. Although within the modelled breeding range of Carnaby's Cockatoo, due to the distance from known breeding (>20km) and roosting (~26km) locations, it is unlikely these trees would be utilised for future black cockatoo breeding given they are not species that would typically form hollows.

Foraging habitat within the Clearing Area is considered to be low quality with no species known to be utilised as key food sources by black cockatoos(https://www.dpaw.wa.gov.au/images/documents/plants-animals/threatened-species/carnabys/Plants_used_by_Carnabys_black_cockatoo_20110415.pdf).

The proposed clearing is not likely to impact black cockatoos as outlined in Principle (b), given the small quantity of clearing, lack of suitable hollows, lack of evidence of use by or presence of black cockatoos, and low quality of foraging habitat.

	Based on the above, the native vegetation proposed to be cleared is not considered to comprise a high level of biological diversity, with no conservation significant flora and fauna species or TEC/PECs to be significantly impacted. The proposed clearing is not at variance to this Principle.								
Principle (b) – Native vegetation should not be cleared if it comprises the whole or a part of, or is necessary for the maintenance of, a significant habitat for fauna indigenous to Western Australia.	According to DBCA Threatened and Priority fauna database, the closest records within 5km of the Clearing Area are: <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Fauna</th><th>Distance from Clearing area</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td><i>Falco peregrinus</i> (Peregrine Falcon) (OS) in 2012</td><td>2.6 km west</td></tr> <tr> <td><i>Macrotis lagotis</i> (Bilby) (VU) in 1917</td><td>4.4 km east north</td></tr> <tr> <td><i>Tyto novaehollandiae</i> (Masked Owl) (P3) in 1972</td><td>3.5 km south west</td></tr> </tbody> </table> Due to the distance of the fauna records, location of the Clearing Area between two adjacent roads, and the Completely degraded condition of the vegetation, it is unlikely these species would occur in the area. According to the DSEWPAC (2012) Black Cockatoo Referral Guidelines, the Clearing area is located in the modelled breeding range of Carnaby's Cockatoo. According to the DBCA Threatened and Priority Fauna layer, 31 records (165 individuals) exist (from 1930 to 2013) for black cockatoos within the 10km study area, with the closest record being 6.7 km west of the Clearing Area (in 2001). 29 of the 31 records were Carnaby's Cockatoo. According to the DBCA Black Cockatoo Roost GIS layer, the closest record was 26 km south of the Clearing Area. According to the DBCA White Tailed Black Cockatoo Breeding Site GIS layer, the closest records were more than 20 km west of the Clearing Area. Given the lack of evidence of use, lack of suitable hollows, distance from known breeding and roosting locations, it is unlikely these trees would be utilised for future black cockatoo breeding given they are not species that would typically form hollows. York gum is a species that is considered to have a low priority for planting for Black Cockatoos according to: https://www.dpaw.wa.gov.au/images/documents/plants-animals/threatened-species/carnabys/Plants_used_by_Carnabys_black_cockatoo_20110415.pdf This is supported by Ecoscape (2022), who reported York Gum is considered to have low to moderate value foraging habitat for Carnaby's cockatoo on a biological survey south of Northam within the same Beard vegetation association. An inspection of the trees on 25 July, 13 September and 2 October 2024 by Wheatbelt Environment Officers did not identify any hollows suitable for Black Cockatoos or any evidence of other conservation significant fauna. Given that the trees are in Completely degraded condition and no evidence of use was observed, it is unlikely these trees provide important habitat for black cockatoos. The removal of up to five trees (one DBH, no hollows) is therefore, considered unlikely to impact black cockatoos. As the road reserve is narrow where the trees are located, and there are minimal to no shrubs or understorey vegetation, noting the condition was Completely degraded condition, the potential for ground dwelling fauna is unlikely. The small quantity (0.02 ha) of native vegetation proposed to be cleared is unlikely to comprise significant habitat for fauna indigenous to Western Australia. Based on the above, the proposed clearing is not at variance to this Principle.	Fauna	Distance from Clearing area	<i>Falco peregrinus</i> (Peregrine Falcon) (OS) in 2012	2.6 km west	<i>Macrotis lagotis</i> (Bilby) (VU) in 1917	4.4 km east north	<i>Tyto novaehollandiae</i> (Masked Owl) (P3) in 1972	3.5 km south west
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Principle (c) – Native vegetation should not be cleared if it includes, or is necessary for the continued existence of, threatened flora.	According to DBCA Threatened and Priority Flora, and WA Herbarium GIS layers, the closest Threatened flora records within 5km of the Clearing Area are: <table border="1" data-bbox="507 190 1449 275"> <tr> <th>Flora</th><th>Distance from Clearing area</th></tr> <tr> <td><i>Acacia aphylla</i> (T)</td><td>west</td></tr> </table> The potential occurrence of conservation significant flora within the Clearing Area is considered unlikely due to the Completely degraded condition of vegetation. Give the distance between the closest known record of Threatened species and the Clearing Area the risk of impact to Threatened flora from the proposed clearing is low. Based on the above, the proposed clearing is not at variance to this Principle.	Flora	Distance from Clearing area	<i>Acacia aphylla</i> (T)	west
Flora	Distance from Clearing area				
<i>Acacia aphylla</i> (T)	west				
Principle (d) – Native vegetation should not be cleared if it comprises the whole or a part of, or is necessary for the maintenance of, a threatened ecological community.	According to the Main Roads TEC/PEC layer, none of the trees are located within the mapped buffer area of the Eucalypt Woodlands of the Western Australian (WA) Wheatbelt; a Threatened Ecological Community (TEC) listed as Critically Endangered under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act) and a State Priority Ecological Community (PEC) (Priority 3). Additionally, in accordance with Main Roads <i>Technical Guidance on the Threatened Ecological Community Eucalypt Woodlands of the Western Australian Wheatbelt</i> (2024), none of the trees proposed for clearing meet the requirements of a TEC/PEC as they do not meet the criteria specified in Category D due to being in Completely degraded condition. Based on the above, the proposed clearing is not at variance to this Principle.				
Principle (e) – Native vegetation should not be cleared if it is significant as a remnant of native vegetation in an area that has been extensively cleared.	One vegetation association of Beard (1976) has been mapped over the Clearing Area, namely: Vegetation Association 352 described as Medium woodland; York gum. The pre-European extent remaining of this Vegetation Association is 142.012 ha (19.61%) at a Statewide level with 7,623 ha (11.41%) at a LGA (Northam) level. Vegetation within the Clearing Area is in Completely degraded condition and has low species diversity due to the minimal number of shrubs or understorey vegetation and presence of introduced weed species. Vegetation within the Clearing Area is not a good representative of VA 352 with the separation of this patch of vegetation between two adjacent roads limiting connectivity to other larger patches of remnant vegetation. Clearing of up to five trees (approximately 0.02 ha) in Completely degraded condition, equates to approximately 0.0003% of this vegetation association at a LGA level if the vegetation were considered representative of VA 352. Based on the condition and separated location of the vegetation, the Clearing Area is unlikely to represent an area of significant remnant native vegetation. Based on the above, the proposed clearing is not at variance to this Principle.				
Principle (f) – Native vegetation should not be cleared if it is growing in, or in association with, an environment associated with a watercourse or wetland.	According to Surface_Hydrolines_Regional layer, no mapped watercourses or wetlands intersect the Clearing Area. One watercourse, Grass Valley Brook, is located in close proximity of the Clearing area, however vegetation in the clearing area is not growing in a location that is within or in association with this watercourse. Additionally, York Gum is not considered to be a riparian species. Based on the above, the proposed clearing is not at variance to this Principle.				
Principle (g) – Native vegetation should not be cleared if the clearing of the vegetation is likely to cause appreciable land degradation.	DPIRD mapping indicates that the Clearing Area has: 7% of map unit has a very high to extreme water erosion hazard, 10% of map unit has a high to extreme wind erosion hazard, 2% of map unit has very poor to poor site drainage potential, and 2% of map unit has a moderate salinity hazard. The CSIRO ASRIS Acid Sulphate Soils layer indicates that the area is classified as ‘Low Probability of Occurrence’.				

	The proposed small amount of clearing of 0.02 ha (up to five trees) in between two existing adjacent roads from an area that is in Completely degraded condition, is unlikely to cause appreciable land degradation. Based on the above, the proposed clearing is not at variance to this Principle
Principle (h) – Native vegetation should not be cleared if the clearing of the vegetation is likely to have an impact on the environmental values of any adjacent or nearby conservation area.	According to DBCA Lands and Waters layer, no Nature Reserves, Conservation Areas or Bush Forever Areas are located within or adjacent to the Clearing Area. The closest DBCA reserve is located 9.7 km east of the Clearing Area and no mapped Bush Forever sites occur within 10km of the Clearing Area. Based on the above, the proposed clearing is not at variance to this Principle.
Principle (i) – Native vegetation should not be cleared if the clearing of the vegetation is likely to cause deterioration in the quality of surface or underground water.	According to the RIWI Act Surface Water Areas and Irrigation Districts (DWER-037), RIWI Act Groundwater Areas (DWER-034) and CAWSA Part 2A Clearing Control Catchments (DWER-004) layers, a Public Drinking Water Source Area, Groundwater Area or CAWS Catchment Area does not occur within or close to the Clearing Area. The Clearing Area is located within a surface water area (Avon River System) proclaimed under the RIWI Act. According to Surface_Hydrolines_Regional layer, no mapped watercourses intersect the Clearing Area. One watercourse, Grass Valley Brook, is located in close proximity of the Clearing Area. Clearing is proposed to be undertaken during low or no flow conditions, and the minimal clearing proposed in an area between two existing adjacent roads, is not expected to significantly alter natural drainage or surface run-off patterns. The proposed clearing is not likely to cause deterioration in the quality of surface or groundwater. Based on the above, the proposed clearing is not at variance to this Principle.
Principle (j) – Native vegetation should not be cleared if clearing the vegetation is likely to cause, or exacerbate, the incidence or intensity of flooding.	DPIRD mapping indicates that the Clearing Area has: • 2% of the map unit has a moderate to high flood hazard, and • 2% of map unit has a moderate to very high waterlogging and inundation risk. A review of ArcGIS shapefiles has confirmed that the proposed clearing will not disturb or interrupt any natural drainage and surface run-off patterns. Clearing of 0.02ha of native vegetation in Degraded to Completely degraded condition from an area that is between two adjacent roads, is unlikely to cause or exacerbate, the incidence or intensity of flooding in this area. Based on the above, the proposed clearing is not at variance to this Principle.
Methodology Used and References:	DPIRD mapping (https://maps.agric.wa.gov.au/nrm-info/) Main Roads GIS Shapefiles Site Observations (25 July, 13 September and 2 October 2024) DSEWPAC (2012) Black Cockatoo Referral Guidelines Photographs of each tree: Appendix 1 Ecoscape (2022) (D22#1051365)
9. REHABILITATION, REVEGETATION AND OFFSETS	
Offset Proposal:	No offset proposal is required as the proposed clearing will not result in a significant residual impact on native vegetation within the region.
Revegetation and Rehabilitation:	No temporary clearing will be undertaken as part of the Proposal activities.

10. COMPLIANCE WITH CPS818

The clearing associated with the Proposal is not at variance with the Clearing Principles. Additional management actions under CPS 818 are detailed below.

Impact of Clearing	Yes/No or NA	Further Action Required
1. Proposal is within a Region that: - has rainfall greater than 400mm; and, - is South of the 26th parallel; and, - works are necessary in 'Other than dry conditions'; and, - works have potential for uninfested areas to be impacted.	No	Standard Vehicle and Plant Management Actions from Annexure 204B (TABLE 204B.9.1), Hygiene Checklists (D17#859669) and Vehicle, Plant and Machinery Hygiene Vehicle Register Template (D23#179551) will be applied.
2. Do the proposed works require clearing within or adjacent to DBCA managed lands in non-dry conditions?	No	No further action required.
3. Main Roads has been notified by DWER or an environmental specialist that the area to be cleared is susceptible to a pathogen other than dieback.	No	No further action required.
4. Weeds are likely to spread to and result in environmental harm to adjacent areas of native vegetation that are in good or better condition.	NA	No further action required.

Completed By:

Name	REDACTED
Signature	REDACTED
Job Title	Senior Environmental Officer
Date	11 October 2024

Once all sections are completed, send the form to CRSP for review and endorsement.

DECISION ON CLEARING ASSESSMENT

Name	REDACTED
Signature	REDACTED
Job Title	Senior Environment Officer
Date	15/10/2024

Appendix 1



DBH York Gum adjacent to Christmas Road (4 October 2024)



Four York Gum (non DBH) adjacent to Christmas Road (4 October 2024)



Figure 1: CPS818 Clearing Area