Clearing Desktop Report – Short Form

1. PROPOSAL DETAILS

Proposal Name:	M041 York Merredin Road 76.6 - 87.2 SLK - Removal of seven trees		
Region/Directorate:	Wheatbelt		
Local Government Authority:	Quairading		
Road/Bridge Name and No:	M041 York Merredin Road		
Proposal Location (SLK):	76.6 - 87.2		
TRIM Link to Spatial Data:	D22#1093531		
EOS Number:	2824		
Expected Proposal Start Date:	January 2023		
Project No:	30000432	**Task Code:**	19126

2. PURPOSE OF CLEARING

Wheatbelt Region propose to undertake shoulder sealing works along M041 York Merredin Road. Seven trees have been identified (Figure 1) that will be too close to the edge of the new seal (<1m), so need to be removed for safety reasons.

An Elevated Work Platform (EWP), Truck and Chipper are likely be used to remove the trees. The stumps are likely to be ground down to below soil level due to the closeness to the proposed seal. Mulch will be blown back into road reserve if possible, or removed to approved spoil area. The Proposal area is largely void of understorey and it is unlikely that any understorey vegetation will be impacted from vehicle machinery movements.

The trees are located between 79.49 and 80.24 SLK.

3. ALTERNATIVES TO CLEARING

As this Proposal is for the removal of seven trees that occur within 1m of the proposed road seal, the removal of the trees are required for safety reasons, and there is limited scope to alter the clearing. All vegetation (two Sheoak and five Wandoo) proposed to be cleared are in a Degraded – Completely Degraded condition.

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

There are limited measures to avoid, mitigate clearing impacts, being the removal of seven trees due to safety issues.

The trees will be removed progressively using an EWP, minimising the impact on surrounding vegetation using other felling techniques. The trees will be mulched with chip being used as mulch on adjacent land if there is no understorey vegetation in the proposed mulching spread area. Otherwise, the chipped mulch will be removed offsite.

5. APPROVED POLICES AND PLANNING INSTRUMENTS

The clearing of native vegetation in Western Australia is regulated under the *Environmental Protection Act* (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	**No. Trees Cleared:**	7
Species Names:	Sheoak (2) and Wandoo (5)		
Easting and Northing:	117.522246, -31.971604 (centroid of trees to be cleared)		

7. EXISTING ENVIRONMENT AND SITE INFORMATION	
Site Vegetation Description/Association:	Vegetation Association 94 described as Shrublands; scrub-heath on yellow sandplain banksia-xylomelum alliance in the Geraldton Sandplain & Avon-Wheatbelt Regions
Site Vegetation Condition:	Degraded – Completely Degraded
Pre-European Extent Remaining (%):	67,461 ha (19.47%) remains at a Statewide level with 576 (11.19%) remaining at a LGA level

8. ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSAL AGAINST CLEARING PRINCIPLES	
Is vegetation to be cleared at variance with:	**Justification or Evidence:**

Principle (a) – Native vegetation should not be cleared if it comprises a high level of biological diversity.	It is proposed to clear vegetation (seven medium sized trees consisting of two (2) Sheoak and five (5) Wandoo trees), that are located within 2m of the existing road seal and within 1m of the proposed additional seal. The vegetation consists of little to no understorey and is in degraded to completely degraded condition. According to Main Roads GIS WA Herbarium layer and GIS Rare Flora layer, the closest records of *Banksia cuneata* (T) are located south and west of the Proposal area. No *Banksia cuneata* were observed in the MRWA site inspection on 29 July 2022 and the closest record to the proposal (south of the Proposal area) is located in a Sandalwood Plantation. No impacts on flora are expected due to the localised nature of the removal of the seven trees. According to Main Roads GIS TEC/PEC layer, the Proposal area is not mapped as a PEC/TEC. DBCA Managed Lands (Badjaling North Nature Reserve), occurs either side of the road reserve between 76.2 and 77.3 SLK, approximately 2.2km west of the Proposal area. Due to the distance and the nature and scale of the vegetation clearing, no impacts are anticipated. The Proposal area is not located within a mapped Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA). The vegetation to be cleared do not consist of trees of a suitable Diameter by height (DBH) for Black Cockatoo species, and the trees do not contain hollows (MRWA, 2022). As the trees are about 7m high (medium sized), they offer limited foraging habitat for Black Cockatoos. Based on the above, the Proposal area has limited biodiversity value and 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 Main Roads GIS Rare Fauna layer, the closest record was P*etrogale lateralis lateralis* (Black-footed rock-wallaby) (EN) 410m south east of the Proposal area. This is likely to be an incorrect record as there are numerous records in a straight line, all recorded in 2017 from a scat count. The next closest record is Common Sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*) 2.6km west of the Proposal area. Only one record of White tailed Black Cockatoo was recorded within the 10km Study area. Other mapped fauna within the Study area included a Beverley shield-back spider (1), Black-footed rock-wallaby (34), Chudich (1), Common Greenshank (1), Mortlock River shield-backed trapdoor spider (2), Red-necked stint (1), and Woma python (southwest subpop.) (1). Removal of vegetation (seven trees) in a degraded to completely degraded condition is unlikely that Proposal activities will have an impact on any of these species. The DAWE Protected Mater Search Tool identified 29 nationally listed threatened species (comprising 5 birds, four mammals, 18 plants, one reptile and one spider) potentially occurring in the 10 km Study area. Due to the Degraded – Completely Degraded nature of the Proposal area, these species are unlikely to occur or be transient to the area. The Proposal area is within the mapped range of Carnaby's Black Cockatoo, but outside the range of Baudin's and Forest Red-tailed Black Cockatoo. As assessed in Principal A, the vegetation does not consist of trees of suitable DBH for Black Cockatoo and the vegetation provides little foraging value. No evidence of Black Cockatoos was observed by Main Roads staff (MRWA, 2022).

	The seven trees are highly unlikely to be significant habitat for fauna indigenous to Western Australia. Based on the above, the proposed clearing is not at variance to this Principle.
Principle (c) – Native vegetation should not be cleared if it includes, or is necessary for the continued existence of, rare flora.	According to Main Roads GIS WA Herbarium layer and GIS Rare Flora layer, the closest records of *Banksia cuneata* (T) are located south, and west of the Proposal area. No *Banksia cuneata* were observed in the MRWA site inspection on 29 July 2022 and the closest record to the proposal (south of the Proposal area) is located in a Sandalwood Plantation. No impacts on this rare flora are expected. A record of *Acacia ataxiphylla* subsp. magna individual east the Proposal area. Based on the distance to the individual and the minor nature and scale of vegetation clearing proposed, no impacts on this species of rare flora are expected. Based on the above, the proposed clearing is not at variance to this Principle.
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.	The Proposal area is not mapped as a PEC/TEC. Further, being isolated trees in a degraded to completely degraded condition, it would not meet the requirements of Wheatbelt Woodlands TEC. 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 Proposal area, namely Vegetation Association 694: Shrublands described as scrub-heath on yellow sandplain banksia-xylomelum alliance in the Geraldton Sandplain & Avon-Wheatbelt Regions. The pre-European extent remaining of this Vegetation Association is 67,461 ha (19.47%) at a Statewide level with 576 (11.19%) remaining at a LGA level. The removal of seven trees (approximately 0.02 ha, equates to 0.003% of this vegetation association at a LGA level, and is not likely to represent vegetation that is significant as a remnant. 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.	Wandoo and Sheoak are not representative of riparian vegetation. The closest mapped waterway is approximately 1.6km south of the Proposal area. 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 Natural Resource Information (WA) mapping indicates that the area has: • 0% high to extreme water erosion hazard • 0% high to extreme wind erosion hazard • 4% very poor to poor site drainage potential • 65% moderate salinity hazard The Australian Soil Resource Information System (ASRIS) has been used to determine the likelihood of Acid Sulphate Soils (ASS) occurring within the Proposal area. The ASRIS database (accessed 12-Oct-2022) indicates there is a very low probability of occurrence within the Proposal area. The removal of seven trees is unlikely to cause appreciable land degradation, especially as the majority of the land where the vegetation is located is covered with road infrastructure and agricultural pursuits. Based on the above, the proposed clearing is not at variance to this Principle.
Principle (h) – Native vegetation should not be cleared if the	A search of Main Roads GIS shapefiles layers indicates that the closest nature reserve, conservation areas or Bush Forever Sites is the Badjaling North Nature

clearing of the vegetation is likely to have an impact on the environmental values of any adjacent or nearby conservation area.	Reserve, which is located either side of the road reserve between 76.2 and 77.3 SLK. This is approximately 2km to the west of the Proposal area. Based on the distance to the nearest conservation area and the minor nature and scale of vegetation clearing proposed, no impacts to this area are anticipated. 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.	The Proposal area is not located in a Public Drinking Water Source Area, Groundwater Area or CAWS Catchment Area. The Proposal area is within a surface water area (Avon River System) proclaimed under the RIWI Act. There are no watercourses in the vicinity of the clearing. The small scale of the clearing and degraded condition of the vegetation is unlikely to affect surface or groundwater in the local area. The removal of the trees may require some minor excavation below the surface, but as the Proposal is planned to occur over the summer months, will not intersect groundwater, will not require dewatering, and no change to surface or groundwater level or quality is expected. 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.	The removal of seven trees is unlikely to cause, or exacerbate, the incidence or intensity of flooding. DPIRD mapping indicates that the area has: • 2% moderate to high flood hazard • 63% moderate to very high waterlogging and inundation risk A review of ArcGIS shapefiles has confirmed that the proposed works will not disturb or interrupt any natural drainage and surface run-off patterns. Based on the above, the proposed clearing is not at variance to this Principle.
Methodology Used and References:	Proposal Area (Figure 1) (Appendix 1) Australian Soil Resource Information System (ASRIS) Mapping (http://www.asris.csiro.au/mapping/viewer.htm) DPIRD mapping (https://maps.agric.wa.gov.au/nrm-info/) Main Roads GIS Shapefiles

Completed By:	
Job Title	Senior Environment Officer
Date	12-Oct-2022

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

DECISION ON CLEARING ASSESSMENT		
Clearing Assessment	**ENDORSED ☒**	**REFUSED ☐**
Comments	I note that the vegetation to be cleared is in a degraded to completely degraded condition, does not consist of an ESA, PEC or TEC and does not hold significant flora or fauna habitat values. I endorse the recommendation that the removal of seven trees (0.02ha of vegetation) in a degraded to completely degraded condition is not at variance with the clearing principles.	
Job Title	Principal Environment Officer	
Date	10/11/2022	

Appendix 1: Figures and Photographs

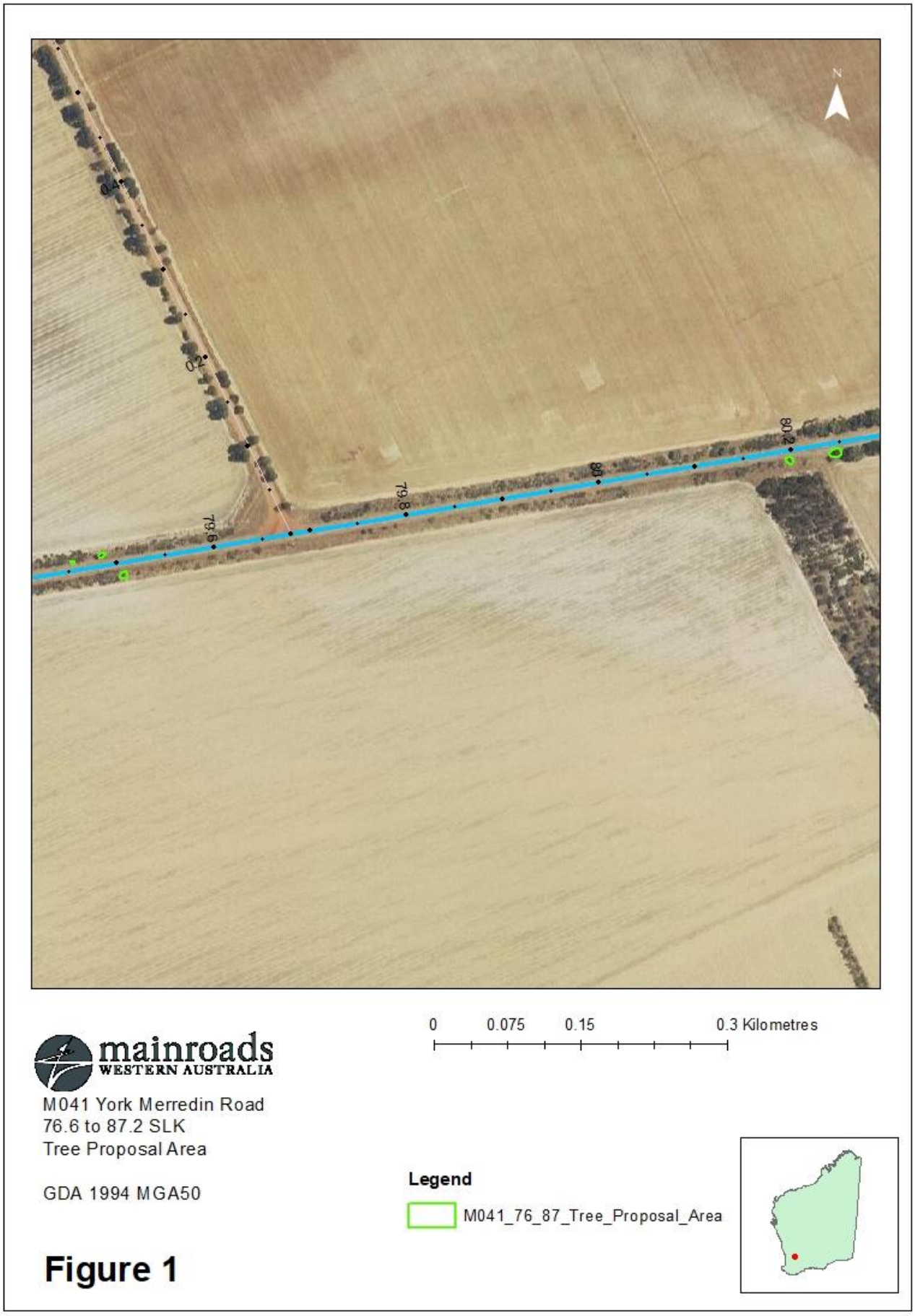

Figure 1: Tree Proposal Area