Clearing Desktop Report – Short Form

1. PROPOSAL DETAILS

Proposal Name:	T6/7 Northam Pithara (M032) SLK 46 – 92.8 Low-Cost Shoulder Seal (LCSS)		
Region/Directorate:	Regional Management & Operations Directorate / Wheatbelt		
Local Government:	Shires of Wongan - Ballidu & Goomalling		
Road/Bridge Name & Number:	Northam Pithara (M032)		
Proposal Location (SLK):	SLK 46 – 92.8		
CDR Short Form TRIM Number:	D24#606026		
Spatial Data TRIM Number:	D24#507381		
EOS Number:	3061		
Expected Proposal Start Date:	June 2024		
Oracle Project No:	30000432	**Task Code:**	19110
LISC TRIM Number:	D22#923125	**HRA TRIM No:**	D24#410116

2. PURPOSE OF CLEARING

Proposal involves the clearing of 0.0005 ha (one tree) of native vegetation to improve the overall road safety for road users under Main Roads WA Low Cost Shoulder Sealing (LCSS) Program. Sealing the shoulders reduces the likelihood of vehicle run off.

Northam Pithara Road is a single carriageway road starting in Northam and extending all the way to Pithara. The road currently has a lane width of 3.0m, and in some areas less than 3.0m. Current Australian Safety Standards require the provision of standard traffic lane widths of 3.5m on rural roads. The existing narrow lane width on Northam Pithara Road is a safety issue for road users as it is non-compliant with the current Australian Safety Standards. Increasing the lane width to 3.5m ensures the road complies with current standards to enhance overall safety of the road, lessening the risk of serious injuries or death caused by vehicle run off.

The proposed works entail widening of Northam Pithara Road to achieve 3.5m wide traffic lanes and 1m sealed shoulders in each direction. Culvert extension works will also be undertaken to address drainage that will be affected by the road widening works.

The proposed works align with MRWA's Towards Zero Roads Safety Strategy of a minimum 1.0m sealed shoulder.

3. ALTERNATIVES TO CLEARING

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

- Preferentially locating the new alignment in cleared pasture areas over the existing road reserve is considered cost prohibitive due to the cost of resumption of farmland and construction of a new road rather than widening the existing alignment and premature redundancy of State road asset, lack of adequate funding, stakeholder engagement, and resource requirements. Under this option, clearing would still be required for tie-ins to the existing road network.
- Not upgrading the road will potentially result in a poorer safety outcome and may result in future fatalities or serious injuries and further degradation of the State road asset.

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

The following measures have been considered and will be applied where applicable to avoid, minimise, mitigate, and manage clearing impacts:

- 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 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.
- Vegetation to be cleared will be marked prior to clearing and the movement of machinery will be restricted to identified locations. This approach aims to prevent accidental over-clearing. It should be noted that no understorey and ground layer native vegetation is present in the area and consequently, only 0.0005 ha (one tree) of vegetation will be impacted during clearing.

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):	0.0005 ha	**No. Trees Cleared:**	1

Species Name(s):	*Eucalyptus loxophleba* (York Gum)
Easting and Northing:	50J 477269 6571485

7. EXISTING ENVIRONMENT AND SITE INFORMATION

Site Vegetation Description/Association:	Vegetation broadly aligns with the pre-European vegetation association number 1023, Medium woodland; York gum, wandoo & salmon gum (*Eucalyptus salmonophloia*), as mapped within the Pre-European Vegetation DPIRD-006 database. One *Eucalyptus loxophleba* (York Gum), constituting an area of up to 0.0005 ha will be impacted.
Site Vegetation Condition:	Vegetation to be cleared is located directly adjacent to cleared road maintenance corridor "maintenance zone" and is considered to be in Completely Degraded condition.
Pre-European Extent Remaining (%):	

Levels	% Remaining
Statewide	10.79
IBRA Bioregion Avon Wheatbelt	10.84
IBRA Subregion Katanning	12.32
Local Government Authority Shire of Narrogin	15.98

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.	The Clearing Area consists of one vegetation association described as: Medium woodland; York gum, wandoo & salmon gum (*Eucalyptus salmonophloia*). The vegetation is in Completely Degraded condition as evidenced by photographs provided in Appendix 1. According to the Main Roads GIS layer, the Clearing Area is not located within and Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA). A desktop assessment did not any identify any Threatened or Priority flora species in the Clearing Area or and none are likely to occur. The proposal to clear one tree is unlikely to affect any ecological linkage that may exist. does not intersect any TEC/PECs. The Clearing Area is located within the buffer of Carnaby's Breeding Area. The tree proposed to be cleared is not a DBH tree and therefore, does not contain hollows to support black cockatoo breeding. *Eucalyptus loxophleba* provides only low quality foraging habitat for black cockatoos. No evidence of foraging was observed in the Clearing Area. Based on the above, 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.	*Eucalyptus loxophleba* (York Gum) (0.0005 ha) is considered low quality foraging habitat for Carnaby's Cockatoo (*Zanda latirostris*). The tree has been confirmed to not be a DBH tree due to trunk size (<500mm); and does not provide suitable breeding hollows

	for black cockatoos (Kirkby, 2021). No impact to breeding habitat will occur from proposed works. Given the one tree proposed to be cleared represents low quality foraging habitat and is in an area where vegetation has been determined to be in Degraded to Completely Degraded condition habitat value is considered low. The closest Black Cockatoo Breeding Site (DBCA restricted dataset) is located approximately 1.3 km east of the Clearing Area. The closest known Black Cockatoo roost site (DBCA restricted dataset) is located 34 km south from the proposed clearing area. The closest confirmed Carnabys Cockatoo Roost site (DBCA 050 database) is located over 98km south of the Clearing Area. Proposed clearing is outside the likely feeding area of known roost sites however is within foraging area of one identified Black Cockatoo breeding site. The clearing of one York Gum tree, of low foraging quality is not considered to have a significant impact on Carnaby Cockatoo foraging habitat in the immediate area. The tree is located within the road reserve corridor that has isolated trees (Wandoo, Tuart and York Gum) extending the whole road alignment that provide equal or better-quality foraging value for Black Cockatoos. A Black Cockatoo DBH tree assessment was completed in 2021 over an 80km section of this road alignment which was inclusive of the proposed Clearing Area. Over 50 trees were identified as DBH potential breeding trees however did not contain evidence of Carnaby Cockatoo use, all suitable hollows in the survey area were occupied during the survey by either Long-billed Corella's or Galah's (Kirby, 2021). Higher quality foraging habitat is available within 15km of the clearing area including over 2,000 ha of DBCA managed reserves directly adjoining the road reserve approximately 13km north of the Clearing Area. Based on the above assessment, clearing of 0.0005ha of potential Carnaby's Cockatoo low quality foraging habitat is not considered significant. One York Gum in a highly disturbed area with no understory present, does not represent significant habitat for fauna indigenous to Western Australia. Based on the above, the proposed clearing is not likely to be at variance to this Principle.
Principle (c) – Native vegetation should not be cleared if it includes, or is necessary for the continued existence of, threatened flora.	A desktop review of known Priority and Threatened flora locations (DBCA-036 & WA Herbarium database) did not identify any flora species within 2km of the clearing area. The closest species *Microcorys eremophiloides* (Threatened), was recorded in 1996, approximately 2.1km east of the Clearing Area. A biological survey within the road reserve extending over the clearing area was completed in 2022. No protected flora species were recorded within 2km of the Clearing Area. The Clearing Area is directly adjacent to cleared roadside and in Completely

	Degraded condition with no lower story native vegetation. No Priority flora occurs within remnant vegetation adjoining the Clearing Area. No impact to Priority or Threatened flora will occur. 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.	A desktop assessment of mapped Threatened Ecological Communities (TEC) identified the presence of a buffered TEC - Eucalypt woodlands of the Western Australian Wheatbelt (Wheatbelt Woodlands) 'Critically Endangered', located approximately 800m north and west of the Clearing Area. Vegetation in the Clearing Area is in Completely Degraded condition and is not representative of any 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.	The Clearing Area is mapped as occurring within Vegetation Association 1023 (Medium woodland; York gum, wandoo & salmon gum (*Eucalyptus salmonophloia*)) mapped for the area (Government of Western Australia, 2019). Vegetation Association 1023 has less than 30% of pre-European extent remaining at the State, IBRA bioregion, IBRA subregion and Shire of Narrogin levels. However, there is no medium woodland within the Clearing Area (or immediately adjacent to) and vegetation consists only of isolated trees in Completely Degraded condition. The vegetation of the Clearing Area does not form a significant linkage across the landscape and is therefore not considered to be a significant remnant of Vegetation Association 1023. 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.	The Clearing Area does not intersect any watercourses. The nearest watercourse (major tributary) is located over 3 km to the south of the Clearing Area. Native vegetation is not associated with any watercourse or wetland. 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.	It is unlikely the proposed clearing of one tree will cause appreciable land degradation due to the minor nature of the clearing and the native vegetation is located in an area already in highly disturbed condition. 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.	There are no reserves or conservation areas located within or adjacent to the Clearing Area. The nearest reserve is located 8 km northeast from the Clearing Area. Given the distance to the site, proposed clearing will not impact on any reserves or conservation areas. 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	Clearing of one tree with a small ground footprint in an area that is already highly disturbed will not cause deterioration in the quality of surface or underground water.

to cause deterioration in the quality of surface or underground water.	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 local area consists of hilly terrain with granitic and gneissic rock outcrops with dominant hard neutral yellow mottled soils. Based on the presence of hard soils and minimal area of native vegetation proposed to be cleared, it is unlikely clearing of one tree will cause or exacerbate the incidence or intensity of flooding. The Clearing Area does not occur within floodplain area (DWER-020 database) or area identified as a Flood Risk (DPIRD-007). Based on the above, the proposed clearing is not at variance to this Principle.
Methodology Used and References:	D22#923125 Northam Pithara (M032) SLK 46 – 92.8 LCW LISC; D21#1153902 Potential Carnaby's Cockatoo Breeding Hollow Assessment (Kirkby,2021); Shapefile of clearing area/trees; TRIM D24#428644 DBCA/DWER database review

9. REHABILITATION, REVEGETATION AND OFFSETS

Offset Proposal:	No offset proposal is required as the proposed clearing will not result in significant residual impacts to 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 or not likely to be 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,	**Yes**	Standard Vehicle and Plant Management Actions 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.	**No**	No further action required

Completed By:

Name	[REDACTED]
Signature	[REDACTED]
Job Title	Senior Environment Officer
Date	22/04/2024

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

DECISION ON CLEARING ASSESSMENT	
Name	[REDACTED]
Job Title	Senior Environment Officer
Date	29/04/2024

APPENDIX 1 - Proposal Clearing Area

Figure 1. Map of Areas to be cleared

SLK 81.55 Tree will be 1.7m from the edge line marking LHS
Tree is 5.2m from the CL.

Plate 1 Photographs of one York Gum tree to be cleared