

Clearing Desktop Report – Short Form



1. PROPOSAL DETAILS

Proposal Name:	South Coast Highway – Stokes 2B Overlay – additional clearing		
Region/Directorate:	Goldfields-Esperance		
Local Government:	Shire of Esperance		
Road/Bridge Name & Number:	South Coast Highway (H008)		
Proposal Location (SLK):	SLK 396.15 to SLK 400		
CDR Short Form TRIM Number:	D24#1317902		
Spatial Data TRIM Number:	D24#1317933		
EOS Number:	1550		
Expected Proposal Start Date:	December 2024		
Oracle Project No:	30003699	Task Code:	720.01
LISC TRIM Number:	D34#1334101	HRA TRIM Number:	D24#890080

2. PURPOSE OF CLEARING

Main Roads Western Australia (Main Roads) is proposing to undertake widening and overlay on an ageing 4km section of South Coast Highway (H008) that is beginning to deteriorate. The works will include extension of culverts, table drains and re-grading of existing offshoot drains.

3. ALTERNATIVES TO CLEARING

There are no feasible alternatives as not undertaking the proposed works will result in continued deterioration of the road pavement and narrow sealed width which pose a risk to the safety of the public using the road.

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

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

- 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.

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):	0.081 ha	No. Trees Cleared:	Unknown
Species Name(s):	Acacia cyclops Shrubland (Ac) Shrubs (1-2m) - <i>Acacia cochlearis</i>, <i>A. cyclops</i>, <i>Adenanthos cuneatus</i>, <i>Rhagodia preissii</i>, <i>Spyridium globulosum</i>, <i>Templetonia retusa</i>, Sedges - <i>Desmocladius flexuosus</i>, <i>Dianella revoluta</i>, <i>Ficinia nodosa</i>, <i>Lepidosperma gladiatum</i> Phymatocarpus maxwellii Shrubland (Pm) Shurbs (1-2m) - <i>Phymatocarpus maxwellii</i>, <i>Lambertia inermis</i>, <i>Melaleuca striata</i>, <i>Taxandria spathulata</i>, <i>Xanthorrhoea platyphylla</i>, <i>Hakea trifurcata</i>, <i>Hibbertia acerosa</i>, <i>Isopogon polycephalus</i>, <i>Adenanthos cuneatus</i>, (<i>Banksia armata</i> occasionally) Sedges - <i>Anarthria gracilis</i>, <i>Chordifex laxus</i>, <i>Caustis dioica</i>, <i>Lepidosperma</i> sp. Cordingup (G. F. Craig 6138)		
Easting and Northing:	121.1354064 °E / 33.7666392 °S		

7. EXISTING ENVIRONMENT AND SITE INFORMATION

Site Vegetation Description/Association:	Vegetation Association 47: Shrublands – tallerack mallee-heath See Section 6 for specific species.
Site Vegetation Condition:	Degraded to Very Good
Pre-European Extent Remaining (%):	13-35%

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.	A review of DBCA datasets and previous biological survey (Southern Ecology, 2018) did not identify any Threatened Ecological Communities (TECs) or Priority Ecological Communities (PECs) with the proposed clearing area. The area is mapped as pre-European vegetation association 47. A review of DBCA Threatened and Priority Flora GIS datasets identified 5 Threatened and Priority Species within 20 km of the proposal area, none of which are located within the proposed clearing area. Likewise, no species of conservation significance were identified within the proposed clearing area during a previous biological survey conducted by Southern Ecology (2018). A desktop review of DBCA Threatened and Priority Fauna GIS dataset identified 29 Threatened and Priority Species within a 20 km radius of the proposal area. A previous biological survey (Southern Ecology, 2018) indicated that whilst these species may traverse the proposal area, the native vegetation proposed to be cleared does not provide suitable habitat for these species. Analysis of aerial imagery indicates the proposed clearing area is located directly adjacent to the existing road network and maintenance zone. The proposed clearing area contains no conservation significant flora and fauna and is not associated with important biodiversity features such as watercourses. The small size of the proposed clearing area in a narrow linear orientation adjacent to existing road infrastructure does not represent an area comprising a high level of biological diversity. Based on the above, the proposed native vegetation 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.	A desktop review of DBCA Threatened and Priority Fauna GIS dataset identified 29 Threatened and Priority species within a 20km radius of the proposed clearing. Majority of the species are birds which inhabit wetland or coastal areas, neither of which are represented within the Proposal Area. Of the 29 species four are likely to occur within or adjacent to the proposal area, being the Peregrine Falcon, Black Cockatoo, Malleefowl and Chuditch. No records were located within the proposal area with the nearest records of these four conservation significant species being: • Malleefowl record located 9 km from the proposal area. • Chuditch record located 8 km from the proposal area. • Black Cockatoo record located 1 km from the proposal area. • Peregrine Falcon record located adjacent to the proposal area. Southern Ecology (2018) concluded that the two vegetation types proposed to be cleared did not provide suitable habitat for these conservation species with no evidence of presence or use recorded within the proposal area during the biological survey. The proposed clearing area does not intersect any vegetation mapped by Southern Ecology (2018) to be suitable for black cockatoo foraging and roosting. Whilst a range of fauna species may potentially utilise the habitat within the proposed clearing area for dispersal or foraging, the small scale, degraded condition of the vegetation and a large remnant patch of vegetation within the surrounding area in better condition, it is unlikely to comprise the whole or part of, or be necessary for the maintenance of, a significant habitat for fauna.

	Based on the above, the proposed native vegetation 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, threatened flora.	A search of DBCA Threatened flora, WA Herbarium and survey results from a biological survey by Southern Ecology (2018), did not identify the presence of any Tthreatened flora within the proposed clearing area. 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 review of the DBCA Threatened and Priority Ecological Communities (TEC/PEC) GIS dataset indicates that the native vegetation proposed to be cleared is not located within, or in proximity of a mapped TEC/PEC. A biological survey by Southern Ecology (2018) did not consider any of the native vegetation proposed to be cleared as representative of a Threatened ecological community. 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 proposed clearing area is mapped as pre-European vegetation association (VA) 47. This association has greater than 30% pre-European extent remaining at a state and Bioregion level. Pre-European Vegetation Representation <table><tr><th>Pre-European Vegetation Association</th><th>Scale</th><th>Pre-European (ha)</th><th>Current Extent (ha)</th><th>% Remaining</th><th>% Remaining in DBCA reserves</th></tr><tr><td rowspan="4">Veg Assoc No. 47</td><td>Statewide</td><td>1,033,054.74</td><td>370,435.09</td><td>35.86</td><td>17.93</td></tr><tr><td>IBRA Bioregion <i>Esperance Plains</i></td><td>959,935.91</td><td>336,492.07</td><td>35.05</td><td>18.58</td></tr><tr><td>IBRA Sub-region <i>Recherche</i></td><td>413,535.24</td><td>62,275.32</td><td>15.06</td><td>1.74</td></tr><tr><td>Local Government Authority <i>Shire of Esperance</i></td><td>279,332.68</td><td>37,511.41</td><td>13.43</td><td>1.00</td></tr></table> There is ~1,200 ha of native vegetation extent mapped as VA 47 located within 2km of the proposal area to the north, east and west. Given the extent of this remnant, the vegetation in this patch is likely to be in better condition, providing higher quality habitat and corridors for fauna to traverse. No conservation significant flora taxa, or ecological communities occur within the proposed Clearing Area, as detailed in Principles (a) and (c). 75% of the vegetation proposed to be cleared is in degraded condition with the remaining 25% (0.02 ha) being in good or very good condition. Noting that the minimal extent of clearing (0.081 ha) is directly adjacent to the existing road network and a large remnant vegetation patch is 2km adjacent, the vegetation proposed to be cleared does not represent a significant remnant of native vegetation in an extensively cleared landscape.	Pre-European Vegetation Association	Scale	Pre-European (ha)	Current Extent (ha)	% Remaining	% Remaining in DBCA reserves	Veg Assoc No. 47	Statewide	1,033,054.74	370,435.09	35.86	17.93	IBRA Bioregion <i>Esperance Plains</i>	959,935.91	336,492.07	35.05	18.58	IBRA Sub-region <i>Recherche</i>	413,535.24	62,275.32	15.06	1.74	Local Government Authority <i>Shire of Esperance</i>	279,332.68	37,511.41	13.43	1.00
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	Based on the above, the proposed clearing is not likely to be 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.	A review of ArcGIS databases indicates there are no mapped watercourses or wetlands within the proposed clearing area. The vegetation to be cleared is not growing in, or near to an environment associated with a wetland or watercourse. Based on the above, the proposed native vegetation 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 proposed clearing area displays: • No water erosion hazard; • No wind erosion hazard; • No restrictions on site drainage potential; • No salinity hazard; and • No acid sulphate soil hazard. The removal of up to 0.081 ha of native vegetation will no cause appreciable land degradation in areas directly adjacent to the existing road network. Based on the above, the proposed native vegetation 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.	The proposed clearing is not located within or adjacent to DBCA Managed Lands or Lands of Interest. A review of DBCA GIS datasets indicates that the proposal area is not adjacent to or nearby any conservation areas. The nearest DBCA Managed Lands, Benwenerup (Stokes) National Park, is located 3.8 km south of the proposal area. A review of available GIS datasets indicates that the proposed vegetation clearing does not intersect or is not adjacent to any mapped Environmentally Sensitive Areas (ESA's) Based on the above, the proposed native vegetation 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.	A review of ArcGIS database indicates there are no mapped watercourses or wetlands within or adjacent to the proposed clearing area. The proposed clearing area is not within a Proclaimed Surface Water Area, Proclaimed Groundwater Area or Public Drinking Water Source Area. The minimal clearing proposed will not alter natural drainage patterns or cause deterioration in the quality of surface or groundwater. Based on the above, the proposed native vegetation 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 0.081ha of native vegetation adjacent to the existing road network is unlikely to cause or exacerbate, the incidence or intensity of flooding. The function of existing road network drainage structures will not be impacted by the proposed clearing and natural drainage patterns will not be altered. Based on the above, the proposed native vegetation clearing is not at variance to this Principle.

Methodology Used and References:	Biological Survey: Southern Ecology (2018). South Coast Hwy Biological Survey SLK 371.5 – 380, 392.9 – 403 and 466.7 – 474.44. Unpublished report by Southern Ecology for Main Roads Western Australia (SE1712). ArcGIS database
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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, - works are necessary in 'Other than dry conditions'; and, - works have potential for uninfested areas to be impacted.	Yes	Standard Vehicle and Plant Management Actions from Annexure 204B (TABLE 204B.9.1), <u>Hygiene Checklists, Vehicle, Plant and Machinery Hygiene Vehicle Register Template</u> will be applied. A dieback survey has been undertaken and a dieback management plan prepared for the project.
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	Environment Officer
Date	23/10/2024

DECISION ON CLEARING ASSESSMENT	
Name	[REDACTED]
Signature	[REDACTED]
Job Title	Senior Environment Officer
Date	24/10/2024