

SCHEDULE FOUR – Report under the NV Act 2003 in relation to a Minor Variation (clause 27 of the Native Vegetation Regulation 2005)

This report has been prepared by a Level 3 Accredited Expert for the purposes of clause 27(4) of the Native Vegetation Regulation 2005.

Accreditation number: 30619

PVP reference number: 8606

Summary

I am of the opinion that:

- a) a minor variation to the Assessment Methodology would result in a determination that the proposed clearing will improve or maintain environmental outcomes (other than a variation that is not allowable under this clause), and
- b) strict adherence to the Assessment Methodology in this particular case is unreasonable and unnecessary.

The Property Vegetation Plan (PVP) under consideration is for clearing Invasive Native Scrub (INS) in the Central West Catchment Management Authority (CMA) area. The property being assessed comprises a total of 2111 hectares (ha) and the extent of INS on the property is 340 ha.

The minor variation is to allow for up to 80% of the INS extent to be cleared during the first phase of treatment. The clearing type is nil to minimal disturbance to soil and groundcover. After the initial clearing of INS, the cleared vegetation will be left in-situ on the ground. The retention of the woody vegetation will reduce the potential for soil erosion and create patches of ground protected from wind and heavy rain, and will collect rainwater. The protected areas will increase the capture of moisture and will provide groundcover species with an optimal environment in which to establish and grow.

The cleared vegetation left in-situ after the INS is initially cleared can be removed after; the CMA is satisfied that the groundcover has re-established and achieved a groundcover of greater than 50% and the groundcover consists of greater than 75% native groundcover. Groundcover is determined by use of the Step Point Method (Assessment Method 3) described in Native Vegetation Management in NSW Information Sheet 12.

The proposed minor variation improves or maintains environmental outcomes by creating a mosaic of native vegetation with dense and more open areas of native trees, shrubs and groundcover across the landscape in accordance with the intent of the assessment methodology.

Strict adherence to the Assessment Methodology in this particular case is unreasonable and unnecessary due to the fact that the cleared vegetation will be retained in-situ on the ground until native groundcover has re-established. Removal of the cleared INS will only take place once the CMA is satisfied that the specified levels of groundcover are achieved.

Description of the proposed clearing

The proposed clearing involves the management of Invasive Native Scrub in the Central West Catchment Management Area.

There are two zones, zone A and B, where the following INS species are behaving invasively throughout the vegetation community. In zone A the INS species subject to clearing are White Cypress Pine (*Callitris glaucophylla*), Budda (*Eremophila mitchelli*), Emu Bush (*Eremophila longifolia*) and Wilga (*Geijera parviflora*).

In zone B the INS species subject to clearing are Broadleaf Hopbush (*Dodonea viscosa* subsp. *spatulata*), White Cypress Pine (*Callitris glaucophylla*), Puntly Bush (*Senna filifolia*), Wilga (*Geijera parviflora*) and Yarran (*Acacia homalophylla*).

During the initial clearing event, up to 80% of the INS extent will be cleared and left in-situ until the groundcover vegetation has re-established.

The date of the initial clearing event is to be recorded by the landholder who must notify the CMA of the date of clearing. The initial clearing date must be recorded in the official CMA file relating to the PVP agreement.

The cleared INS (80% of INS extent) must be retained in-situ for at least six months after the date of clearing and can be removed only when the groundcover has reached at least 50% cover of which 75% is cover of native species. The CMA is required to inspect the cleared areas and be satisfied that the groundcover has re-established to the required levels of cover prior to giving consent to the removal of the INS that was left in-situ post clearing.

Twenty percent of the INS extent will be retained and therefore maintain denser woody vegetation within an open woodland community.

All White Cypress Pine above 20 cm DBH will be retained.

All hollow bearing trees will be retained.

The proposed minor variation does not relate to any of the following aspects of the Assessment Methodology:

- a) riparian buffer distances or associated offset requirements,
- b) classification of vegetation as likely habitat for threatened species,
- c) classification of a plant species as a threatened species or a component of an endangered ecological community,
- d) classification of the condition of vegetation,
- e) classification of the vegetation type or landscape type as over-cleared,
- f) the assessment of the regional value of vegetation.

Details of the proposed minor variation

The Environmental Outcomes Assessment Methodology (EAOM) [Chapter 7 – Invasive Native Scrub Assessment] requires the following:

- 5) Where the following types of clearing are carried out:
- clearing plants at a paddock scale with nil to minimal disturbance to soil and groundcover.
- a) The clearing does not exceed 60% of the extent of invasive native species on the property, except as set out in 5 b) below.
- b) Up to a further 20% of the extent of invasive native species on the property is cleared only if the Catchment Management Authority is satisfied that land that was initially cleared by either of these types of clearing has achieved a groundcover of greater than 50% (or higher percentage as determined by the CMA) and the groundcover consists of greater than 75% (or higher percentage as determined by the CMA) native groundcover.
- c) Groundcover is maintained in perpetuity on land initially cleared by this type of clearing from the date the Catchment Management Authority is satisfied the land is at the groundcover set out in set out in paragraph 6 (b) unless clearing is permitted by a property vegetation plan or consent under the *Native Vegetation Act 2003*.

The minor variation is to allow for 80% (rather than 60%) of the INS extent to be cleared during the initial clearing event.

The cleared vegetation is retained in-situ. Removal of the vegetation left in-situ will only take place once the CMA is satisfied that the groundcover has reached the specified groundcover levels and after six months has elapsed from the date of clearing.

Reasons for recommending the proposed minor variation: *(include evidence that the minor variation will improve or maintain environmental outcomes)*

The proposed minor variation improves or maintains environmental outcomes due to the following reasons: the cleared INS will be retained on the ground in-situ until groundcover species have re-established, and the retention of the cleared INS on the ground will mitigate the potential for soil erosion, and encourage water retention and establishment, growth and survival of groundcover species.

Minor variation

The minor variation is to allow 80% of the INS extent to be cleared during the initial clearing event. The cleared INS will be retained in-situ on the surface of the soil until the groundcover has re-established and the CMA is satisfied that the groundcover levels meet the abovementioned criteria.