GOVERNMENT OF
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

CLEARING PERMIT

Granted under section 51E of the Environmental Protection Act 1986

Purpose Permit number:	CPS 10062/1
Permit Holder:	Regional Power Corporation, trading as Horizon Power (Horizon Power)
Duration of Permit:	From 1 September 2023 to 1 September 2029

The permit holder is authorised to clear *native vegetation* subject to the following conditions of this permit.

PART I – CLEARING AUTHORISED

1. Clearing authorised (purpose)

The permit holder is authorised to clear *native vegetation* for the purpose of geotechnical investigation.

2. Land on which clearing is to be done

Lot 505 on Deposited Plan 64832, Exmouth

3. Clearing authorised

The permit holder must not clear more than 2.2 hectares of *native vegetation* within the area cross-hatched yellow in Figure 1 of Schedule 1.

4. Period during which clearing is authorised

The permit holder must not clear any *native vegetation* after 1 September 2028.

PART II – MANAGEMENT CONDITIONS

5. Avoid, minimise, and reduce impacts and extent of clearing

In determining the *native vegetation* authorised to be cleared under this permit, the permit holder must apply the following principles, set out in descending order of preference:

(a) avoid the clearing of *native vegetation*;

(b) minimise the amount of *native vegetation* to be cleared; and

(c) reduce the impact of clearing on any environmental value.

6. Weed management

When undertaking any clearing authorised under this permit, the permit holder must take the following measures to minimise the risk of introduction and spread of *weeds*:

(a) clean earth-moving machinery of soil and vegetation prior to entering and leaving the area to be cleared;

(b) ensure that no known *weed*-affected soil, *mulch*, *fill*, or other material is brought into the area to be cleared; and

(c) restrict the movement of machines and other vehicles to the limits of the areas to be cleared.

7. Directional clearing

The permit holder must conduct clearing activities in a slow, progressive manner in one direction, towards adjacent *native vegetation*, to allow fauna to move into adjacent *native vegetation* ahead of the clearing activity.

8. Flora management – pre-clearance survey

(a) Prior to undertaking any clearing authorised under this permit within the area cross-hatched yellow in Figure 1 of Schedule 1, the permit holder must engage a *botanist* to conduct a pre-clearance *targeted flora survey* of the areas to be cleared to identify possible occurrences of following *priority flora* species:

- *Tinospora esiangkara* (priority 2);
- *Corchorus congener* (priority 3); and
- *Eremophila forrestii* subsp. *capensis* (priority 3).

(b) Where *priority flora* is identified in relation to condition 8(a) of this permit, the permit holder shall ensure that:

(i) no clearing occurs within 20 metres of identified priority 2 flora species, unless approved by the *CEO* in writing; and

(ii) clearing of no more than 50 per cent of individuals identified, within the permit area, of identified priority 3 flora species, unless approved by the *CEO* in writing.

(c) the permit holder must provide the results of the *targeted flora survey* in a report to the *CEO* within three months of undertaking any clearing authorised under this permit.

(d) If any of the abovementioned *priority flora* are identified within the area cross-hatched yellow in Figure 1 of Schedule 1, the *targeted flora survey* report must include the following:

(i) the location of each *priority flora*, identified under condition 8(a), either as the location of individual plants, or where this is not practical, the areal extent of the population and an estimate of the number of plants, recorded using a Global Positioning System (GPS) unit set to Geocentric Datum Australia 2020 (GDA2020), expressing the geographical coordinates in Eastings and Northings or decimal degrees;

(ii) the species name of each *priority flora* species identified under condition 8(a); and

(iii) the methodology used to survey the permit area.

9. Fauna management – western pebble-mound mouse habitat

(a) Within seven (7) days to undertaking any clearing authorised under this permit within the area cross-hatched yellow in Figure 1 of Schedule 1, the permit holder shall engage a *fauna specialist* to undertake a pre-clearance survey of the areas to be cleared for the western pebble-mound mouse (*Pseudomys chapmani*) including the identification and inspection of mounds.

(b) Where evidence of mounds is identified under condition 9(a) of this permit, the Permit holder shall:

(i) engage a *fauna specialist* to flag the location of the mounds; and

(ii) not clear within 50 metres of the flagged mound/s.

(c) Where western pebble-mound mouse mounds are identified under condition 9(a) of this permit, the permit holder shall include the following in a report submitted to the *CEO* within three months of undertaking any *clearing* authorised under this permit:

(i) The location of any western pebble-mound mouse mounds identified, using a Global Positioning System (GPS) unit set to Geocentric Datum Australia 2020 (GDA2020), expressing the geographical coordinates in Eastings and Northings or decimal degrees;

(ii) the location of any western pebble-mound mouse, as referred to under condition 9(a) of this Permit, captured using a Global Positioning System (GPS) unit set to Geocentric Datum Australia 2020 (GDA2020), expressing the geographical coordinates in Eastings and Northings or decimal degrees;

(iii) the date, time, vegetation type and weather conditions at each location western pebble-mound mouse are captured under condition 9(d)(ii) of this permit;

(iv) the name of the *fauna specialist* that undertook clearance surveys under condition 9(a) of this permit; and

(v) the methodology used to survey the permit area.

10. Fauna management – subterranean fauna habitat

(a) Prior to undertaking any clearing authorised under this permit within the area cross-hatched yellow in Figure 1 of Schedule 1, the permit holder must engage a *fauna specialist* with experience in *karst* landscapes to conduct a survey of the areas to be cleared, to identify caves, sinkholes and fissures within the *karst* environment which have the potential to provide habitat for *troglofaunal*/*stygofauna*.

(b) Where caves, sinkholes and fissures are identified under condition 10(a), the permit holder must ensure that no clearing occurs within 10 metres of identified caves, sinkholes and fissures, unless approved by the *CEO* in writing.

(c) Where caves, sinkholes and fissures are identified under condition 10(a) of this permit, the permit holder shall include the following in a report submitted to the *CEO* within three months of undertaking any *clearing* authorised under this permit:

(i) The location of any identified caves, sinkholes and fissures, using a Global Positioning System (GPS) unit set to Geocentric Datum Australia 2020 (GDA2020), expressing the geographical coordinates in Eastings and Northings or decimal degrees; and

(ii) The methodology used to survey the permit area.

11. Fauna management – backfilling

The Permit holder must:

(a) backfill all test pits on the day of drilling/excavating with excavated material; or

(b) fence all test pits on the day of drilling/excavating with fine mesh to prevent fauna access; or

(c) cover all test pits on the day of drilling/excavating with a cover which prevents entry to the pits by fauna species;

(d) cover all bore holes at the end of each day and backfill upon completion.

12. Vegetation management – watercourses and drainage line surface flow

Permit Holder must:

(a) avoid clearing riparian vegetation, where practicable; and

(b) maintain the existing surface flow of any watercourse that is to be impacted by the authorised clearing.

13. Revegetation and rehabilitation (temporary works)

The permit holder must:

(a) retain the vegetative material and topsoil removed by clearing authorised under this permit and stockpile the vegetative material and topsoil in an area that has already been cleared;

(b) as soon as is practicable, and no later than six (6) months following clearing authorised under this permit, *revegetate* and *rehabilitate* the areas that are no longer required for the authorised purpose for which they were cleared under this permit, by:

(i) re-shaping the surface of the land so that it is consistent with the surrounding five metres of land;

(ii) ripping the ground on the contour to remove soil compaction; and

(iii) laying the vegetative material and topsoil retained under condition 13(a) on the cleared area(s).

PART III - RECORD KEEPING AND REPORTING

14. Records that must be kept

The permit holder must maintain records relating to the listed relevant matters in accordance with the specifications detailed in Table 1.

Table 1: Records that must be kept

No.	Relevant matter	Specifications
1.	In relation to the authorised clearing activities generally	(a) the species composition, structure, and density of the cleared area; (b) the location where the clearing occurred,

No.	Relevant matter	Specifications
		recorded using a Global Positioning System (GPS) unit set to Geocentric Datum Australia 2020 (GDA2020), expressing the geographical coordinates in Eastings and Northings; (c) the date that the area was cleared; (d) the size of the area cleared (in hectares); (e) actions taken to avoid, minimise, and reduce the impacts and extent of clearing in accordance with condition 5; (f) actions taken to minimise the risk of the introduction and spread of *weeds* in accordance with condition 6;
2.	In relation to flora management pursuant to condition 8	(a) the name and location of each *priority flora* species, recorded using a Global Positioning System (GPS) unit set to Geocentric Datum Australia 2020 (GDA2020), expressing the geographical coordinates in Eastings and Northings; (b) actions taken to demarcate *priority flora* species recorded and their relevant buffers; and (c) actions taken to avoid the clearing of *priority flora* species.
3.	In relation to fauna management pursuant to condition 9	(a) result of the pre-clearance survey undertaken in accordance with condition 9; and (b) a copy of the *fauna specialist*'s report.
4.	In relation to fauna management pursuant to condition 10	(a) result of the survey undertaken in accordance with condition 10; and (b) a copy of the *fauna specialist*'s report.
5.	In relation to fauna management pursuant to condition 11	(a) actions taken to cover or backfill all boreholes and test pits
6.	In relation to the *revegetation* and *rehabilitation* of areas pursuant to condition 13	(a) the size of the area *revegetated* and *rehabilitated*; (b) the location of any *revegetated* and *rehabilitated* areas, recorded using a Global Positioning System (GPS) unit set to Geocentric Datum Australia 2020 (GDA2020), expressing the geographical coordinates in Eastings and Northings or decimal degrees; (c) a description of the *revegetation* and *rehabilitation* activities undertaken; and (d) the date(s) on which the *revegetation* and *rehabilitation* was undertaken.

15. Reporting

The permit holder must provide to the *CEO* the records required under condition 14 of this permit when requested by the *CEO*.

DEFINITIONS

In this permit, the terms in Table 2 have the meanings defined.

Table 2: Definitions

Term	Definition
CEO	Chief Executive Officer of the department responsible for the administration of the clearing provisions under the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*.
clearing	has the meaning given under section 3(1) of the EP Act.
botanist	means a person who holds a tertiary qualification specialising in environmental science or equivalent, and has a minimum of two (2) years work experience in Western Australian flora identification and undertaking flora surveys native to the bioregion being inspected or surveyed, or who is approved by the CEO as a suitable environmental specialist for the bioregion, and who holds a valid flora licence issued under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*.
CEO	Chief Executive Officer of the Department responsible for the administration of the clearing provisions under the *Environmental Protection Act 1986.*
condition	a condition to which this clearing permit is subject under section 51H of the *EP Act*.
fauna specialist	means a person who holds a tertiary qualification specialising in environmental science or equivalent, and has a minimum of 2 years work experience in fauna identification and surveys of fauna native to the region being inspected or surveyed, or who is approved by the *CEO* as a suitable fauna specialist for the bioregion, and who holds a valid fauna licence issued under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*.
fill	means material used to increase the ground level, or to fill a depression.
department	means the department established under section 35 of the *Public Sector Management Act 1994* (WA) and designated as responsible for the administration of the EP Act, which includes Part V Division 3.
EP Act	*Environmental Protection Act 1986* (WA)
karst	an area of exposed limestone with distinctive features such as caves, caverns and sinkholes and often with underground streams.
mulch	means the use of organic matter, wood chips or rocks to slow the movement of water across the soil surface and to reduce evaporation.
native vegetation	has the meaning given under section 3(1) and section 51A of the EP Act.
priority flora	means those fauna taxa describes as priority fauna, classes 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 in the *Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions Threatened and Priority Fauna List for Western Australia* (as amended);
rehabilitate/ed/ion	means actively managing an area containing native vegetation in order to improve the ecological function of that area.
revegetate/ed/ion	means the re-establishment of a cover of local provenance native vegetation in an area using methods such as natural regeneration, direct

Term	Definition
	seeding and/or planting, so that the species composition, structure and density is similar to pre-clearing vegetation types in that area
stygofauna	aquatic fauna which inhabits various types of groundwater.
targeted flora survey	means a field-based investigation, including a review of established literature, of the biodiversity of flora and vegetation of the permit area, focusing on habitat suitable for flora species that are being targeted and carried out during the optimal time to identify those species. Where target flora are identified in the permit area, the survey must also include a minimum of a 10 metre radius of the surrounding areas to place the permit area into local context.
temporary works	means access tracks, spoil areas, side tracks, site offices, storage areas, laydown areas, extraction sites, camps, project surveys, pre-construction activities, and similar works associated with a project activity that are temporary in nature.
troglofauna	air-breathing fauna which inhabit air-filled voids or caves below the ground.
weeds	means any plant – (a) that is a declared pest under section 22 of the *Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007*; or (b) published in a Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions species-led ecological impact and invasiveness ranking summary, regardless of ranking; or (c) not indigenous to the area concerned.

END OF CONDITIONS

Meenu Vitarana
MANAGER

Officer delegated under Section 20
of the Environmental Protection Act 1986

8 August 2023

Schedule 1

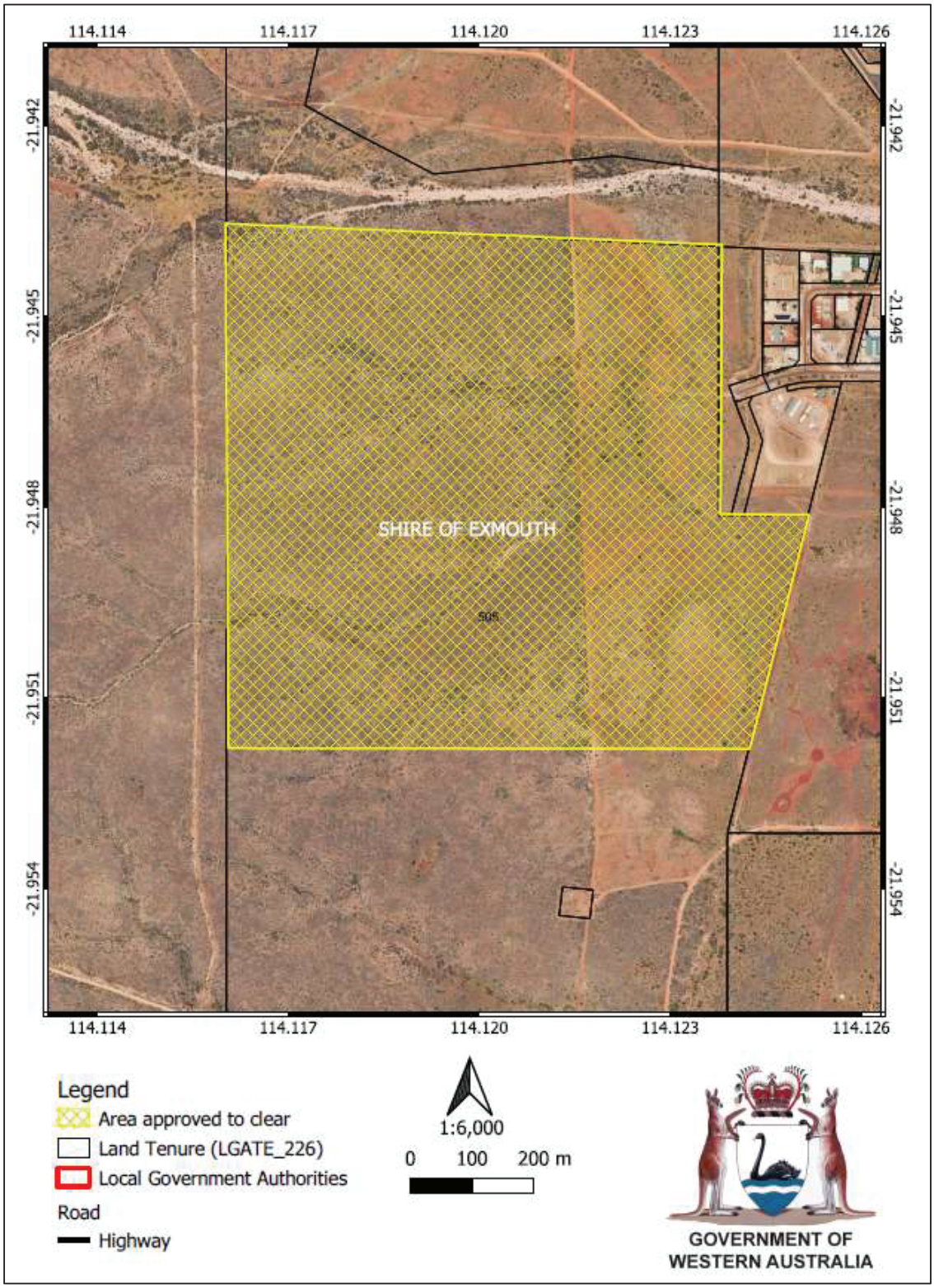

Figure 1: Map of the boundary of the area within which clearing may occur

Government of Western Australia
Department of Water and Environmental Regulation

Clearing Permit Decision Report

1 Application details and outcome

1.1. Permit application details

Permit number:	CPS 10062/1
Permit type:	Purpose permit
Applicant name:	Regional Power Corporation, trading as Horizon Power (Horizon Power)
Application received:	30 January 2023
Application area:	2.2 hectares of native vegetation within a 75.7 hectare clearing footprint
Purpose of clearing:	Geotechnical investigation for a solar farm installation
Method of clearing:	Mechanical
Property:	Lot 505 on Deposited Plan 64832
Location (LGA area/s):	Shire of Exmouth
Localities (suburb/s):	Exmouth

1.2. Description of clearing activities

The vegetation proposed to be cleared is contained within a single contiguous area (see Figure 1, Section 1.5). The proposed clearing purpose is for geotechnical investigation to obtain information on the physical properties of the soil/rock to assess the site suitability and determine earthworks and foundation requirement for a project of renewable power infrastructure (solar farm) construction in Exmouth (Horizon Power, 2023b).

The clearing activities include (Horizon Power, 2023b):

- Geotechnical survey work: up to 12 test pits of 100 square metres (10 metre × 10 metre) per pit, with the depths of up to 4 metres (total clearing area of 0.12 hectares).
- Vehicle and machinery access: mainly comprised of machinery driving over and parking on native vegetation (total area of up to 2.08 hectares).

1.3. Decision on application

Decision:	Granted
Decision date:	8 August 2023
Decision area:	2.2 hectares of native vegetation within a 75.7 hectare clearing footprint, as depicted in Section 1.5, below.

1.4. Reasons for decision

This clearing permit application was submitted, accepted, assessed and determined in accordance with sections 51E and 51O of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986* (EP Act). The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) advertised the application for 21 days and no submissions were received.

In making this decision, the Delegated Officer had regard for the site characteristics (see Appendix A), relevant datasets (see Appendix E.1), the findings of a flora and fauna survey, the clearing principles set out in Schedule 5 of

the EP Act (see Appendix B), relevant planning instruments and any other matters considered relevant to the assessment (see Section 3). The Delegated Officer also took into consideration the purpose of the clearing is for geotechnical investigation serving for the construction of a solar farm which aligns with the state government decarbonisation policy.

The assessment identified that the proposed clearing will result in:

- Impacts to habitat for the western pebble-mound mouse
- potential impacts to habitat for subterranean species
- impacts to three priority flora species (*Corchorus congener*, *Eremophila forrestii* subsp. *capensis* and *Tinospora esiangkara*)
- potential introduction and spread of weeds into adjacent vegetation, which could impact on the quality of the adjacent vegetation and its habitat values and
- potential impacts on surface watercourses.

After consideration of the available information, as well as the applicant's minimisation and mitigation measures (see Section 3.1), the Delegated Officer determined the potential impacts of the proposed clearing be minimised and managed to unlikely lead to an unacceptable risk to environmental values.

The Delegated Officer decided to grant a clearing permit subject to conditions to:

- avoid, minimise to reduce the impacts and extent of clearing
- take hygiene steps to minimise the risk of the introduction and spread of weeds
- undertake slow, progressive one directional clearing to allow terrestrial fauna to move into adjacent habitat ahead of the clearing activity
- avoid clearing critical habitat for western pebble-mound mouse
- avoid caves, sinkholes and fissures within the karst environment
- securing of any test pits at the end of each day and backfilling once complete to avoid trapping fauna
- avoid clearing Priority 2 flora species
- clear not more than 50 per cent of the identified individuals of Priority 3 and 4 flora species
- implement management measures to minimise impacts to watercourses and drainage line surface flow and
- Revegetation of temporary cleared areas.

1.5. Site map

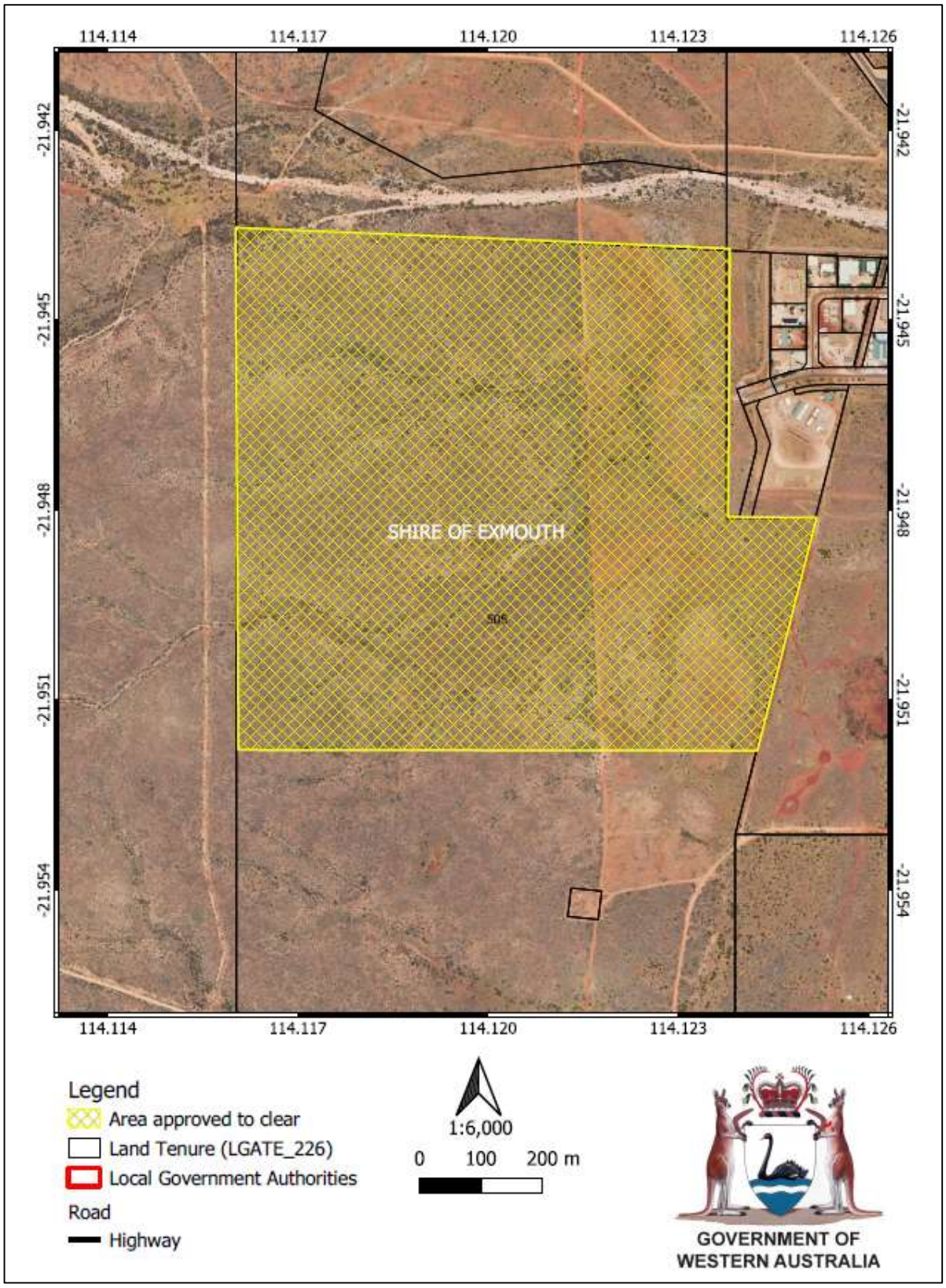

Figure 1 Map of the application area

The area crosshatched yellow indicates the area authorised to be cleared under the granted clearing permit.

2 Legislative context

The clearing of native vegetation in Western Australia is regulated under the 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 1.4), the Delegated Officer has also had regard to the objects and principles under section 4A of the EP Act, particularly:

- the precautionary principle
- the principle of intergenerational equity
- the polluter pays principle
- the principle of the conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity.

Other legislation of relevance for this assessment include:

- *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* (WA) (BC Act)
- *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth) (EPBC Act)

The key guidance documents which inform this assessment are:

- *A guide to the assessment of applications to clear native vegetation* (DER, December 2013)
- *Procedure: Native vegetation clearing permits* (DWER, October 2019)
- Technical guidance – *Flora and Vegetation Surveys for Environmental Impact Assessment* (EPA, 2016)
- Technical guidance – *Terrestrial Fauna Surveys for Environmental Impact Assessment* (EPA, 2016)

3 Detailed assessment of application

3.1. Avoidance and mitigation measures

Information was submitted by the applicant, demonstrating that avoidance and minimisation has been undertaken, specifically:

(i) During site selection:
- Placement of the Project adjacent to the existing power station to reduce the clearing associated with additional transmission line infrastructure.
- Utilization of the existing power station as opposed to construction of a new power station within a new footprint.

(ii) During the geotechnical investigation:
- Where possible, pre-existing access tracks will be used, and vehicles and machinery will exit the site along the same route used for access.
- Mechanical clearing is not proposed for the development of formal access tracks.
- Areas of degraded, sparsely vegetated and/or previously cleared areas will be preferentially selected for the location of test pit and laydown areas.
- Works will be undertaken systematically to minimise re-run and compaction of access tracks.
- Standard weed and hygiene management practices which will be applied to these works.
- An avoidance locations map will be supplied to contractors to avoid the single active mound mouse mound and two possibly active mounds on the site. A 50-metre buffer will be applied to these sites.
- Creeks and minor drainage lines, and Priority flora will be avoided if possible.
- Mechanical clearing will be undertaken slowly and in a one-way direction to allow fauna to move offsite if present.
- Cleared areas will be restored by backfilling with the topsoil will be respread over the surface. Recontouring of soil within the test pit and laydown areas will be undertaken.

The Delegated Officer was satisfied that the applicant has made a reasonable effort to avoid and minimise potential impacts of the proposed clearing on environmental values.

3.2. Assessment of impacts on environmental values

In assessing the application, the Delegated Officer has had regard for the site characteristics (see Appendix A) and the extent to which the impacts of the proposed clearing present a risk to biological, conservation, or land and water resource values.

The assessment against the clearing principles (see Appendix B) identified that the impacts of the proposed clearing present a risk to biological values (fauna, flora and biodiversity) and water resources. The consideration of these

impacts, and the extent to which they can be managed through conditions applied in line with sections 51H and 51I of the EP Act, is set out below.

3.2.1. Biological values (Biodiversity and Fauna) - Clearing Principles (a) and (b)

Assessment

The desktop assessment identified that there are 76 conservation significant fauna species recorded in the local area, including 40 bird species, 15 mammal species, 11 invertebrate species, six reptile species and three fish species. Of which, 39 of these species are migratory bird species or shorebird species associated with coastal habitats not represented within the application area and an additional five species are species only found in marine environments.

Based on the analysis on suitability on habitat, distance of closest mapped records, number of known records in the local area, and survey results, four terrestrial fauna species and nine subterranean fauna species may possibly occur within the application area (See Appendix B.4 for fauna analysis table).

Terrestrial species

Four terrestrial species include:

- Cape Range stone gecko *(Diplodactylus capensis)* (P2)
- Peregrine falcon *(Falco peregrinus)* (OS)
- Black-footed rock-wallaby *(Petrogale lateralis lateralis)* (EN)
- Western pebble-mound mouse *(Pseudomys chapmani)* (P4)

Cape Range stone gecko

Cape Range stone gecko (*Diplodactylus capensis*) (Priority 2) is a gecko species endemic to Australia and their distribution is particularly associated with the local landscape of Cape Range (ALA, 2008). There are 58 records of Cape Range stone gecko in the application area with the closest record only two kilometres from the application area. A biological survey has been undertaken with nocturnal searching targeting this species and no individuals were recorded (GHD, 2022). Due to the suitable habitat for this species presents in the application area footprint (GHD, 2022), the proposed clearing is likely to have impacts on suitable habitat for the Cape Range stone gecko. However, considering the extent of similar habitat within the local area and the applicant's proposed avoidance and mitigation measures, the impacts of the proposed clearing on the habitat of this reptile species are unlikely to be significant.

Peregrine falcon

The peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*) (Other Specially Protected Fauna) is found Australia-wide and occurs in a range of habitats including woodlands, grasslands and coastal cliffs, usually near watercourses (DAWE, 2020). Preferred roosting and breeding habitat for the peregrine falcon includes granite outcrops and coastal cliffs, but in the absence of these habitats, the species has been known to utilise the nests of other bird species or tree hollows for breeding (Marchant et al., 1993). It is considered that the habitat present within the application area may also provide suitable transient foraging habitat for this species as individuals migrate through the landscape. An individual of peregrine falcon was observed at a distance of two kilometres in the west of the application area during the biological survey (GHD, 2022). As such, the peregrine falcon is likely to be a transient visitor to the application area. However, noting that the peregrine falcon is a highly mobile species with a large home range that does not rely on special niche habitats, it is unlikely that the application area represents significant habitat for the species.

Black-footed rock-wallaby

Black-footed rock-wallaby *(Petrogale lateralis lateralis)* (Endangered) was historically widespread but is now restricted to parts of Cape Range, Calvert Range, granite rocks in the Avon Wheatbelt and Salisbury Island. Their habitat is associated with rocky landscape with complex caves and crevices (DBCA, 2017). More than 300 records of black-footed rock wallabies are mapped within the local area with the closest distance of two kilometres from the application area. However, considering no suitable habitat (rocky gullies) is present within the application area, the proposed clearing is unlikely to have an impact on the habitat for this endangered wallaby species.

Western pebble-mound mouse

Western pebble-mound mouse *(Pseudomys chapmani)* (Priority 4) is a native rodent and only found in Western Australia. This species' known distribution was reported to be restricted to the non-coastal, central and eastern part of the Pilbara region (Start, 1996). The status of this species in Cape Range is unclear and known from historical evidence (DBCA, 2023; Start, 1996). There is only one record of this species mapped in the local area (50-km radius) which is approximately 40 km away the application area (GIS database).

The biological survey (GHD, 2022) identified nine mounds (including two mounds confirmed active) of the western pebble-mound mouse in the application area (Figure 2). Considering the significance of the new records of this species for the Cape Range region, advice from the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) was sought and DBCA provided the following advice (DBCA., 2023):

- Due to the presence of active and non-active mounds and the regional significance of the new records, the mounds and surround habitat should be retained.
- A minimum buffer of 50 metres (in all directions) of any mound should be implemented.

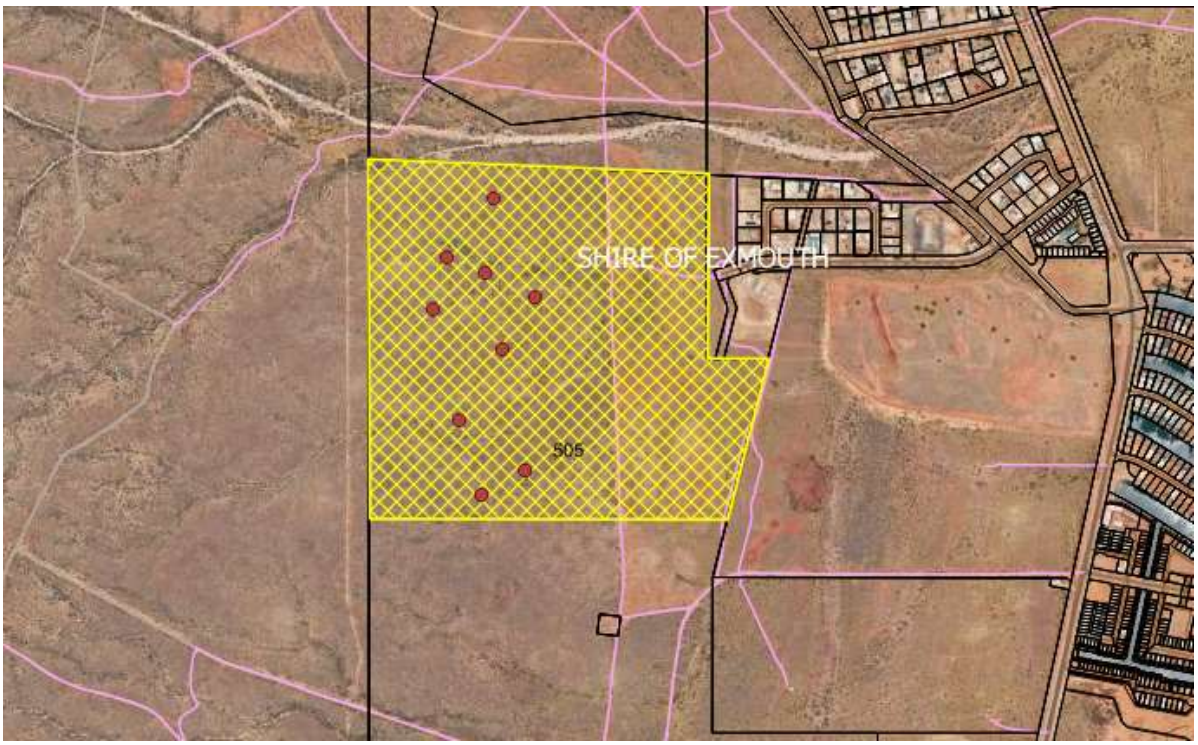

Figure 2. Locations of western pebble-mound mouse mounds (red dots) identified within the application area.

Subterranean species

The following subterranean threatened and priority fauna species have been recorded within the local area and are likely associated with the Cape Range Sub-terranean Waterways wetland system mapped within the application area:

- Eastern Cape Range bamazomus *(Bamazomus subsolanus)* (T)
- Northern Cape Range draculoides *(Draculoides brooksi)* (T)
- Cameron's Cave pseudoscorpion *(Indohya Damocles)* (T)
- Cave gudgeon *(Milyeringa veritas)* (T)
- Blind cave eel *(Ophisternon candidum)* (T)
- Lance-beaked cave shrimp *(Stygiocaris lancifera)* (T)
- Spear-beaked cave shrimp *(Stygiocaris stylifera)* (P4)
- A stygiochiropus millipede (Cape Range) *(Stygiochiropus isolatus)* (T)
- Cameron's Cave millipede *(Stygiochiropus peculiaris)* (T)

The closest records of the above subterranean species are mapped in the distance of 1.14 to 5.47 kilometres from the application area. Given that these species are subterranean, vegetation within the application area is not considered to directly provide habitat for these species, thus the proposed clearing would only be expected to impact on these species from indirect impacts of the clearing to water quality or cave habitat. Since limestone outcropping with small caves has been identified in the application area (GHD, 2022), DBCA advised that fauna habitat such as caves, sinkholes and fissures within the karst environment should be avoided to mitigate potential impacts to troglofaunal/stygofauna habitat (DBCA, 2023). In case that the avoidance is not applicable, a section 40 authorisation is likely to be required (DBCA, 2023).

It is noted that one of the above fauna species, Camerons Cave millipede, as well as a unique assemblage of other fauna species, are endemic to Camerons Cave and the threatened ecological community Camerons Cave Troglobitic Community (DEC, 2012). The Camerons Cave Troglobitic Community is reliant on the humid conditions in Camerons Cave, which are created through contact with the water table and specific surface conditions (DEC, 2012). Given that the application area is located outside the buffer of this TEC and the area to be excavated is small (approximately 0.12 hectares), the proposed clearing is unlikely to significantly impact groundwater quality values within Cameron's Cave and therefore on fauna species from the Camerons Cave Troglobitic Community.

Conclusion

Based on the above assessment, the proposed clearing may impact habitat for the western pebble-mound mouse and subterranean species, and on individuals of fauna, if present at the time of clearing.

For the reasons set out above, it is considered that the impacts of the proposed clearing on fauna habitats can be managed to be environmentally acceptable by avoiding these habitats when clearing and applying a slow, directional clearing method.

Conditions

To address the above impacts, the following management measures will be required as conditions on the clearing permit:

- Slow directional clearing to allow fauna individuals to move into adjacent vegetation ahead of the clearing activity will minimise impact to individuals if present during the clearing.
- Avoiding habitat for western pebble-mound mouse.
- Avoiding caves, sinkholes and fissures within the karst environment.
- Covering test pits at the end of each day and backfilling once complete to avoid trapping fauna.

3.2.2. Biological values (flora and biodiversity) - Clearing Principle (a) and (c)

Assessment:

No threatened flora species are mapped within the local area (GIS database) and were identified in the flora and fauna survey (GHD, 2022).

Given the mapped soil, vegetation types and suitable habitat, the following priority flora species may occur within the application area (see Appendix B.4 for the flora analysis table):

- *Acanthocarpus rupestris* (P2)
- *Brachychiton obtusilobus* (P4)
- *Corchorus congener* (P3)
- *Eremophila forrestii* subsp. *capensis* (P3)
- *Tinospora esiangkara* (P2)

Three species of *Corchorus congener*, *Eremophila forrestii* subsp. *capensis* and *Tinospora esiangkara* were identified within the application area (GHD, 2022) (Figure 3). The remaining two species were not identified within the application area but in another site which is located approximately 1.8 kilometres west of the proposed clearing area (GHD, 2022).

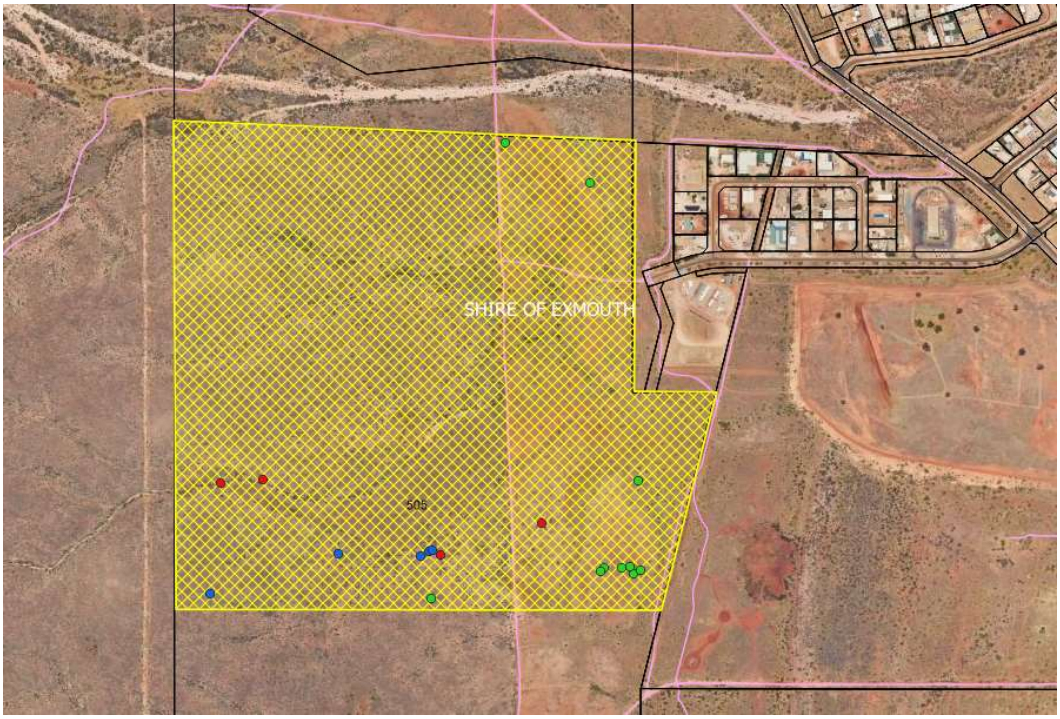

Figure 3. Locations of priority flora species identified within the application area (*Corchorus congener* – green dots, *Eremophila forrestii* subsp. *capensis* – blue dots and *Tinospora esiangkara* – red dots).

Conclusion:

Based on the above assessment, the proposed clearing is likely to impact three species of priority flora including *Corchorus congener*, *Eremophila forrestii* subsp. *capensis* and *Tinospora esiangkara*.

Conditions:

To address the above impacts, the following management measures will be required as conditions on the clearing permit:

- avoid clearing Priority 2 species *Tinospora esiangkara*.
- clear no more than 50% individuals of the Priority 3 species *Corchorus congener* and *Eremophila forrestii* subsp. *capensis*.
- implement weed control measures to minimise the risk of the introduction and spread of weeds into adjacent remnant vegetation.
- revegetation once complete.

3.2.3. Water resources - Clearing Principles (f) and (i)

The eastern portion of the application area lies above the Cape Range Subterranean Waterways wetland system. Even though small caves on limestone outcropping were identified in the application area (GHD, 2022), no information regarding whether these caves are entrances to the karst features beneath the application area is available, therefore it is unknown whether the proposed clearing would result in any impacts on the Cape Range Subterranean Waterways.

However, significant impacts to the wetland system can be considered to be unlikely for the following reasons:

- The vegetation to be cleared is likely to comprise only reasonably shallow rooted species and therefore the proposed clearing is also considered unlikely to otherwise impact any underlying karst features, should they be present.
- The proposed clearing area (2.2 hectares) is very small compared to the estimated area of the mapped wetland (175,000 hectares), and majority of the proposed clearing area (2.08 hectares) is for vehicle access

with the disturbance mostly due to driving over and parking on the vegetation (Horizon Power, 2023b). The proposed clearing is unlikely to have a significant impact on the water quality of the underlying cave features.

- The condition in the permit to avoid caves, sinkholes and fissures within the karst environment (see section 3.2.1) will further mitigate the potential impacts of the proposed clearing on the underground waterways, should they be present.

There are some minor non-perennial watercourses mapped within the application area. The proposed clearing may result in the removal of riparian vegetation which increases the mobilization of soil into the watercourse however, this should only be a short term, localised impact and limited to during the clearing process itself. As the watercourses are non-perennial, if clearing and works are undertaken during the dry season these impacts would be significantly reduced.

Conclusion: Based on the above assessment, the proposed clearing is not likely to significantly impact the subterranean waterways but may result in deterioration of surface water if clearing occurs on the minor watercourse at a time of flow.

Conditions: To address the potential impacts on the surface watercourses, the following management measure will be required as a condition on the clearing permit:

- Vegetation management – avoid clearing of riparian vegetation and maintain the surface flow of any watercourses.

3.3. Relevant planning instruments and other matters

The Shire of Exmouth was invited to provide comments on the clearing permit application, but no response was received. However, the Shire provided comments on the clearing permit application for the construction of the solar farm, CPS 10072/1. For CPS 10072/1, the Shire advised a development approval has not been granted and that the proposal was inconsistent with the Shire's development planning. Since CPS 10062/1 is for the geotechnical investigation to support the solar farm project which does not require a development approval, the Shire's comments will be considered in detailed under CPS 10072/1. The applicant has been advised of the Shire's concerns.

DWER Water Source Protection Planning team advised that they do not oppose the proposed clearing. However, since the application area is located adjacent a Priority 1 area of the Exmouth Water Reserve (west of the application area), a Public Drinking Water Source Area. The applicant is advised to apply best management practice during clearing and other activities, and ensure no activities encroach on to the adjacent Priority 1 area of the Exmouth Water Reserve (DWER, 2023).

The application area is mapped within the Warnangura (Cape Range) Cultural Precinct. No specific sites of Aboriginal Heritage are mapped within the application area. It is the permit holder's responsibility to comply with the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972* (WA) and ensure that no Aboriginal Sites of Significance are damaged through the clearing process.

End

Appendix A. Site characteristics

A.1. Site characteristics

Characteristic	Details
Local context	The area proposed to be cleared is part of an expansive area of native vegetation in the extensive land use zone of Western Australia. It is located two kilometres from the ocean. The proposed clearing area is part of a large area of vegetation. Aerial imagery indicates the local area (50-kilometre radius from the centre of the area proposed to be cleared, not include the ocean) retains approximately 94.4 per cent of the original native vegetation cover.
Ecological linkage	The application area does not lie in any formally mapped or informally ecological linkages. However, the proposed clearing area is located next to an Environmental Sensitive Area at its west edge.
Conservation areas	The nearest conservation area to the application area is Cape Range National Park which is located approximately 6.0 kilometres on the southwest of the application area.
Vegetation description	Flora and Fauna Survey (GHD, 2022) indicate the vegetation within the proposed clearing area consists of: • Plain area (VT01): *Corymbia hamersleyana* isolated trees over sparse shrubland over **Cenchrus ciliaris* tussock grassland and *Triodia epactia* and *T. basedowii* isolated hummock grasses on sandy/clay/loam plains. • Area of limestone hills and ranges (VT02): *Melaleuca cardiophylla* open mid shrubland over sparse low shrubland over *Triodia wiseana* and *T. epactia* hummock grassland on low undulating rocky limestone hills and ranges. • Areas of Drainage Lines (VT03): *Corymbia hamersleyana* open woodland to low isolated trees over *Acacia* spp. tall shrubland over *Senna artemisioides* subsp. *oligophylla, Eremophila longifolia* and *Gossypium robinsonii* open mid shrubland over *Triodia epactia* isolated hummock grasses with **Cenchrus ciliaris*, *Cymbopogon ambiguous* and *Themeda triandra* isolated tussock grasses on rocky sandy/loam broad drainage lines The map on vegetation type is available in Appendix D. This is consistent with the mapped vegetation type: • Cape range Beard 663, which is described as Hummock grassland with scattered shrubs or mallee *Triodia* spp. *Acacia* spp., *Grevillea* spp., *Eucalyptus* spp (Shepherd et al, 2001) The mapped vegetation type retains approximately 89 per cent of the original extent (Government of Western Australia, 2019). *Note: * introduced flora*
Vegetation condition	Flora and Fauna Survey (GHD, 2022) indicate the vegetation within the proposed clearing area is in excellent to poor (Trudgen, 1991) condition, described as: • Excellent: Pristine or nearly so, no obvious signs of damage caused by human activities since European settlement. • Very good: Some relatively slight signs of damage caused by human activities since European settlement. For example, some signs of damage to tree trunks caused by repeated fire, the presence of some relatively non-aggressive weeds, or occasional vehicle tracks. • Good: More obvious signs of damage caused by human activity since European settlement, including some obvious impact on the vegetation structure such as that caused by low levels of grazing or slightly aggressive weeds.

Characteristic	Details
	• Poor: Still retains basic vegetation structure or ability to regenerate it after very obvious impacts of human activities since European settlement, such as grazing, partial clearing, frequent fires or aggressive weeds. The full Trudgen (1991) condition rating scale is provided in Appendix C. The mapping vegetation conditions are available in Appendix D.
Climate and landform	Climate: Mean maximum temperature is 32.0 degrees Celsius. Mean minimum temperature is 17.84 degrees Celsius. Rainfall: Mean annual rainfall is 253.9 millimetres. Landform: Dissected limestone plateaux, hills and ridges with gorges and steep stony slopes supporting hard spinifex, sparse shrubs and eucalypts
Soil description	The soil is mapped as Range System 204Ra, briefly described as pale sandy gravels, gravelly pale deep sand, shallow gravel over duricrust, pale deep sand, some sandy duplexes, yellow deep sand.
Land degradation risk	The land is described as having very low land degradation risk due to acidification, salinity and erosion (DPIRD, 2022).
Waterbodies	The desktop assessment and aerial imagery indicated that there are some minor non-perennial surface watercourses running through the application area. The ocean is located approximately two kilometres east of the application area.
Hydrogeography	The eastern portion of the application area lies within the Cape Range Subterranean Waterways, a subterranean wetland listed in the Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia. The application area lies within the Pilbara Surface Water Area and the Gascoyne Groundwater Are proclaimed under the RIWI Act. The application area is located adjacent to a Priority 1 Public Drinking Water Source Area of Exmouth Water Reserve. Groundwater salinity within the application area is mapped as from 500 to 1000 milligrams per litre total dissolved solids.
Flora	According to available databases, there are 25 priority flora species and no threatened flora species mapped within the local area. The closest recorded species is *Corchorus congener* (P3) which is mapped 500 metres away from the application area footprint
Ecological communities	There is one threatened critically endangered ecological community, Camerons Cave Troglobitic Community, recorded within the local area, approximately 1.7 kilometres south of the application area.
Fauna	The desktop assessment identified that a total of 76 threatened or priority fauna species have been recorded within the local area (excluding marine species), including 26 threatened fauna species, three extinct fauna species, 11 priority fauna species, and 36 specially protected fauna species.

A.2. Vegetation extent

	Pre-European extent (ha)	Current extent (ha)	Extent remaining (%)	Current extent in all DBCA managed land (ha)	Current proportion (%) of pre-European extent in all DBCA managed land
IBRA bioregion*					
Carnavon	8,382,890.35	8,360,801.46	99.74	1,020,434.08	12.17
Vegetation complex					
Beard vegetation association 663*	29,068.26	25,866.32	88.98	7,414.33	25.51
Local area					
50km radius	145,391.2	137,230.90	94.39	-	-

*Government of Western Australia (2019)

A.3. Flora analysis table

With consideration for the site characteristics set out above, relevant datasets (see Appendix E.1), and biological survey information, impacts to the following conservation significant flora required further consideration.

Species name	Conservation status	Suitable habitat features ? [Y/N]	Suitable vegetation type? [Y/N]	Suitable soil type? [Y/N]	Distance of closest record to application area (km)	Number of known records in local area	Were identified within the application area in the survey? [Y, N, N/A]
Acanthocarpus rupestris	P2	Y	Y	Y	3.9	8	N
Brachychiton obtusilobus	P4	Y	Y	Y	1.1	13	N
Corchorus congener	P3	Y	Y	Y	0.5	10	Y
Eremophila forrestii subsp. *capensis*	P3	Y	Y	Y	10.5	16	Y
Tinospora esiangkara	P2	Y	Y	Y	4.4	7	Y

P: priority

A.4. Fauna analysis table

Species name	Conservation status	Suitable habitat features? [Y/N]	Distance of closest record to application area (km)	Number of known records in local area	Most recent record in local area	Are surveys adequate to identify? [Y, N, N/A]
Terrestrial						
Diplodactylus capensis (Cape Range stone gecko)	P2	Y	2.3	58	2007	N/A
Falco peregrinus (Peregrine falcon)	OS	Y	1.3	3	2013	N/A
Petrogale lateralis lateralis (black-footed rock-wallaby)	EN	Y	2.0	323	2020	N/A
Pseudomys chapmani (Western pebble-mound mouse)	P4	limited knowledge of habitat	40.4	1	2011	Y
Subterranean						
Bamazomus subsolanus (Eastern Cape Range bamazomus)	EN	If subterranean waterways/ caves/sinkholes/fissures present	5.5	55	2008	N/A
Draculoides brooksi (Northern Cape Range draculoides)	EN		1.1	47	2008	N/A
Indohya damocles (Cameron's Cave pseudoscorpion)	CR		1.4	27	1995	N/A
Milyeringa veritas (Cave gudgeon)	VU		1.1	99	2018	N/A
Ophisternon candidum (blind cave eel)	VU		1.5	26	2009	N/A
Stygiocaris lancifera (Lance-beaked cave shrimp)	VU		3.3	12	2018	N/A
Stygiocaris stylifera (Spear-beaked cave shrimp)	P4		2.0	5	1996	N/A
Stygiochiropus isolatus (a stygiochiropus millipede (Cape Range))	VU		2.0	6	2015	N/A
Stygiochiropus peculiaris (Cameron's Cave millipede)	CR		1.4	15	1994	N/A

T: threatened, CR: critically endangered, EN: endangered, VU: vulnerable, P: priority

Appendix B. Assessment against the clearing principles

Assessment against the clearing principles	Variance level	Is further consideration required?
Environmental value: biological values		
Principle (a): *"Native vegetation should not be cleared if it comprises a high level of biodiversity."* Assessment: The area proposed to be cleared may contain regionally significant flora, fauna and habitats.	May be at variance	Yes *Refer to Section 3.2.1 and 3.2.2, above.*
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."* Assessment: The area proposed to be cleared is likely to contain significant habitat for conservation significant fauna.	May be at variance	Yes *Refer to Section 3.2.1, above.*
Principle (c): *"Native vegetation should not be cleared if it includes, or is necessary for the continued existence of, threatened flora."* Assessment: The area proposed to be cleared is unlikely to contain habitat for threatened flora species listed under the BC Act.	Not at variance	Yes *Refer to Section 3.2.2, above.*
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."* Assessment: The area proposed to be cleared is not likely to contain flora or fauna species indicative of a threatened ecological community or necessary for the maintenance of nearby threatened ecological communities.	Not likely to be at variance	No
Environmental value: significant remnant vegetation and conservation areas		
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."* Assessment: Extents of the mapped vegetation type and native vegetation in the local area are consistent with the national objectives and targets for biodiversity conservation in Australia. The vegetation proposed to be cleared is not considered to be part of a significant ecological linkage in the local area.	Not at variance	No
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."* Assessment: The closest conservation area is approximately 6.0 kilometres away from the application area. Given the distance to the nearest conservation area, the proposed clearing is not likely to have an impact on the environmental values of nearby conservation areas.	Not likely to be at variance	No
Environmental value: land and water resources		

Assessment against the clearing principles	Variance level	Is further consideration required?
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."* Assessment: The proposed clearing is within the mapped boundary of the Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia 'Cape Range Subterranean Waterways' Given some minor non-perennial watercourses are recorded within the application area, the proposed clearing is likely to impact on- or off-site hydrology and water quality.	May be at variance	Yes *Refer to Section 3.2.3, above.*
Principle (g): *"Native vegetation should not be cleared if the clearing of the vegetation is likely to cause appreciable land degradation."* Assessment: Noting the mapped soil type and the extent of the application area, the proposed clearing is not likely to have an appreciable impact on land degradation.	Not likely to be at variance	No
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."* Assessment: Given number of water courses and the Cape Range Subterranean Waterways are recorded within the application area, the proposed clearing may impact surface and ground water quality.	May be at variance	Yes *Refer to Section 3.2.3, above.*
Principle (j): *"Native vegetation should not be cleared if the clearing of the vegetation is likely to cause, or exacerbate, the incidence or intensity of flooding."* Assessment: The mapped soils and topographic contours in the surrounding area do not indicate the proposed clearing is likely to contribute to increased incidence or intensity of flooding.	Not likely to be at variance	No

Appendix C. Vegetation condition rating scale

Vegetation condition is a rating given to a defined area of vegetation to categorise and rank disturbance related to human activities. The rating refers to the degree of change in the vegetation structure, density and species present in relation to undisturbed vegetation of the same type. The degree of disturbance impacts upon the vegetation's ability to regenerate. Disturbance at a site can be a cumulative effect from a number of interacting disturbance types.

Considering its location, the scale below was used to measure the condition of the vegetation proposed to be cleared. This scale has been extracted from

Trudgen, M.E. (1991) *Vegetation condition scale* in National Trust (WA) 1993 Urban Bushland Policy. National Trust of Australia (WA), Wildflower Society of WA (Inc.), and the Tree Society (Inc.), Perth.

Measuring vegetation condition for the Eremaean and Northern Botanical Provinces (Trudgen, 1991)

Condition	Description
Excellent	Pristine or nearly so, no obvious signs of damage caused by human activities since European settlement.
Very good	Some relatively slight signs of damage caused by human activities since European settlement. For example, some signs of damage to tree trunks caused by repeated fire, the presence of some relatively non-aggressive weeds, or occasional vehicle tracks.
Good	More obvious signs of damage caused by human activity since European settlement, including some obvious impact on the vegetation structure such as that caused by low levels of grazing or slightly aggressive weeds.
Poor	Still retains basic vegetation structure or ability to regenerate it after very obvious impacts of human activities since European settlement, such as grazing, partial clearing, frequent fires or aggressive weeds.
Very poor	Severely impacted by grazing, very frequent fires, clearing or a combination of these activities. Scope for some regeneration but not to a state approaching good condition without intensive management. Usually with a number of weed species present including very aggressive species.
Completely degraded	Areas that are completely or almost completely without native species in the structure of their vegetation; i.e. areas that are cleared or 'parkland cleared' with their flora comprising weed or crop species with isolated native trees or shrubs.

Appendix D. Biological survey information excerpts

Maps on the distribution of vegetation types and vegetation conditions in the application area identified by the Flora and Faunna Survey (GHD, 2022) are shown below. *Note: the southern part of the survey area is outside of the application area.*

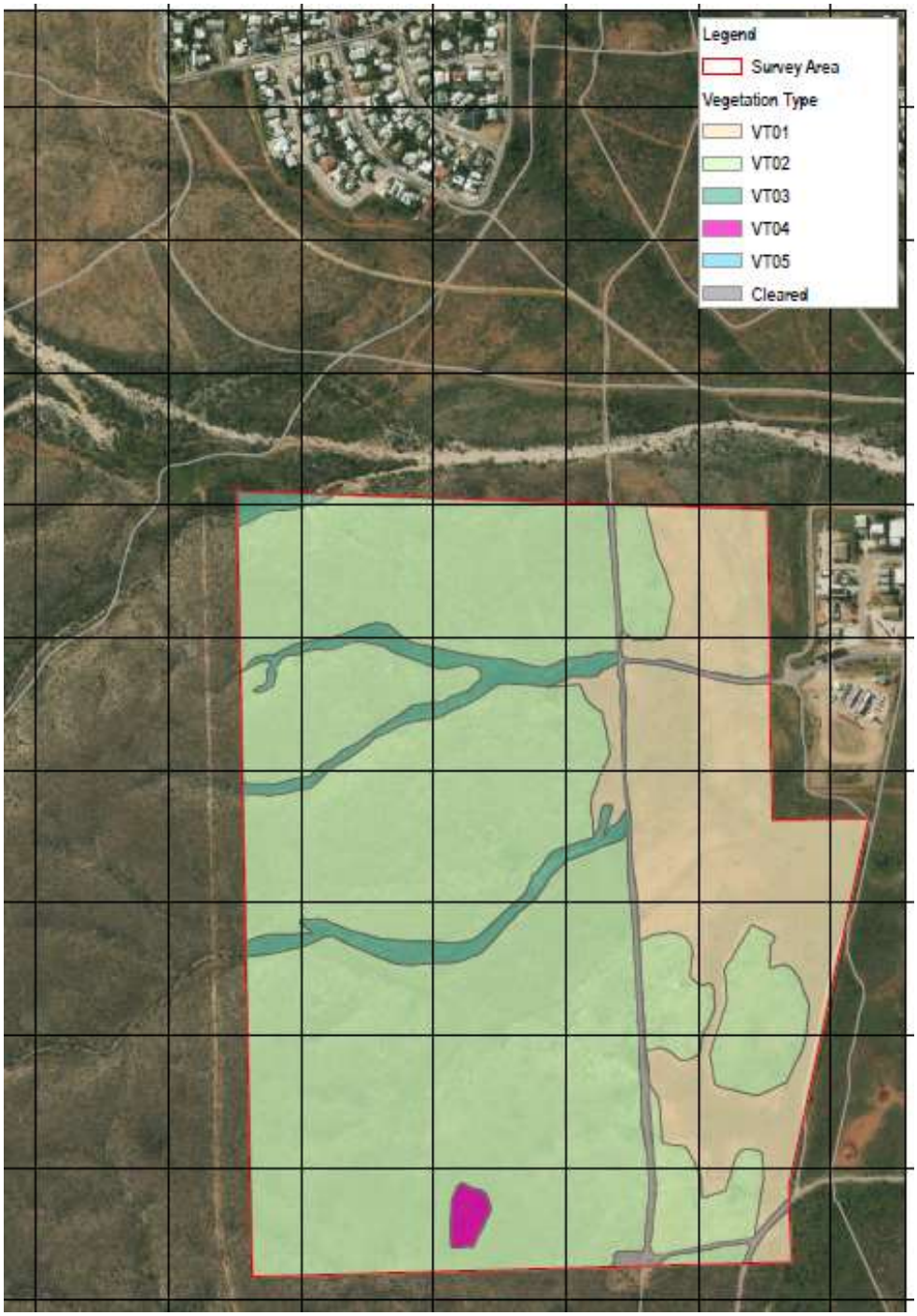

Figure D.1. Map on vegetation types in the application area (VT01, VT02 and VT03)

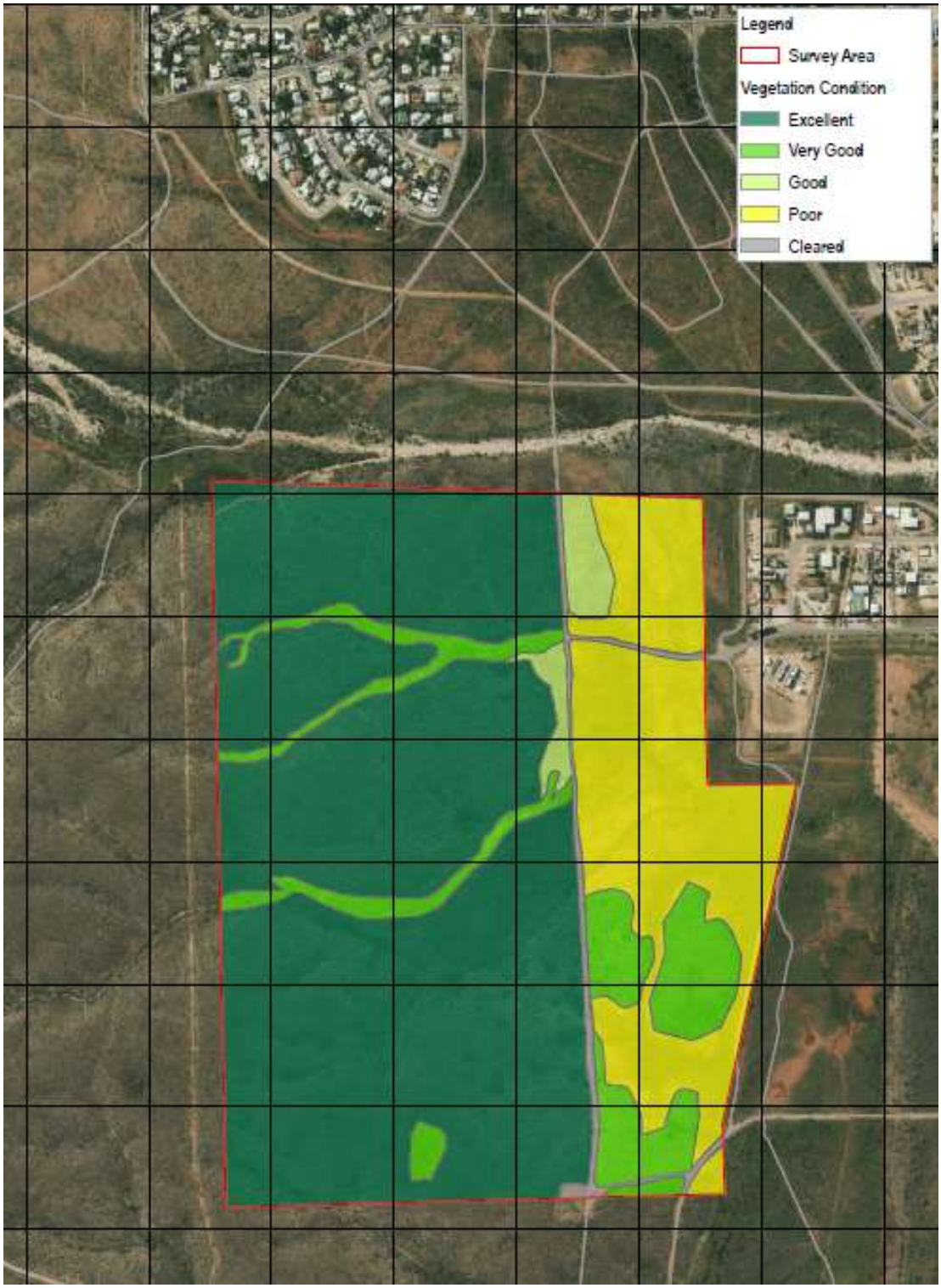

Figure D.2. Map on vegetation conditions in the application area

Appendix E. Sources of information

E.1. GIS databases

Publicly available GIS Databases used (sourced from www.data.wa.gov.au):

- 10 Metre Contours (DPIRD-073)
- Aboriginal Heritage Places (DPLH-001)
- Cadastre (LGATE-218)
- Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia – Western Australia (DBCA-045)
- Groundwater Salinity Statewide (DWER-026)
- Hydrography – Inland Waters – Waterlines
- IBRA Vegetation Statistics
- Imagery
- Local Planning Scheme – Zones and Reserves (DPLH-071)
- Native Title (ILUA) (LGATE-067)
- Pre-European Vegetation Statistics
- Public Drinking Water Source Areas (DWER-033)
- Remnant Vegetation, All Areas
- Soil Landscape Mapping – Best Available

Restricted GIS Databases used:

- ICMS (Incident Complaints Management System) – Points and Polygons
- Threatened Flora (TPFL)
- Threatened Flora (WAHerb)
- Threatened Fauna
- Threatened Ecological Communities and Priority Ecological Communities

E.2. References

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