Department of Mines, Petroleum and Exploration

GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Clearing Permit Decision Report

1. Application details and outcomes

1.1. Permit application details

Permit number:	10712/1
Permit type:	Purpose Permit
Applicant name:	Aragon Resources Pty Ltd
Application received:	2 August 2024
Application area:	150 hectares
Purpose of clearing:	Mineral production and associated activities
Method of clearing:	Mechanical Removal
Tenure:	Mining Lease 52/5
	Mining Lease 52/125
Location (LGA area/s):	Shire of Meekatharra
Colloquial name:	Fortnum Gold Operation

1.2. Description of clearing activities

Aragon Resources Pty Ltd proposes to clear up to 150 hectares of native vegetation within a boundary of approximately 725.9 hectares, for the purpose of mining related infrastructure. The project is located approximately 150 kilometres north-northwest of Meekatharra, within the Shire of Meekatharra.

The application is to allow for mineral production and associated activities.

1.3. Decision on application and key considerations

Decision:	Grant
Decision date:	13 November 2025
Decision area:	150 hectares of native vegetation

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 Mines, Petroleum and Exploration (DMPE) advertised the application for a public comment for a period of 21 days, and no submissions were received.

In making this decision, the Delegated Officer had regard for the site characteristics (Appendix A), relevant datasets (Appendix D), supporting information provided by the applicant including the results of a flora and vegetation survey the clearing principles set out in Schedule 5 of the EP Act (Appendix B), proposed avoidance and minimisation measures (Section 3.1), relevant planning instruments and any other matters considered relevant to the assessment (Section 3.3).

The assessment identified that the proposed clearing may result in:

- the potential introduction and spread of weeds into adjacent vegetation, which could impact on the quality of the adjacent vegetation and its habitat values;
- potential impacts to conservation significant flora, and
- potential land degradation in the form of water and wind erosion.

After consideration of the available information, as well as the applicant's minimisation and mitigation measures (Section 3.1), the Delegated Officer determined the proposed clearing can be minimised and managed to be unlikely to 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;
- commence construction no later than three months after undertaking clearing to reduce the risk of erosion;
- staged clearing to minimise wind erosion;

- avoid clearing watercourses where practicable, and ensure surface flows are maintained or reinstated downstream; and
- implementation of a 10 metre clearance buffer around identified individuals of *Thryptomene sp. Leinster* and *Indigofera gilesii*.

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 (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 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)
- *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984* (WA) (CALM Act)
- *Mining Act 1978* (WA)
- *Rights in Water and Irrigation Act 1914* (RIWI Act)

Relevant agreements (treaties) considered during the assessment include:

- Japan-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement
- China-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement
- Republic of Korea-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement

The key guidance documents which inform this assessment are:

- *A guide to the assessment of applications to clear native vegetation* (DER, December 2014)
- *Procedure: Native vegetation clearing permits* (DWER, October 2021)
- Technical guidance – *Flora and Vegetation Surveys for Environmental Impact Assessment* (EPA, 2016)

3. Detailed assessment of application

3.1. Avoidance and mitigation measures

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. The proponent has outlined the following management measures to minimise impacts to native vegetation (Westgold, 2024):

- prioritise the use of existing access tracks and previously disturbed areas to avoid impacts on conservation significant flora;
- implement a 10 metre clearance buffer around identified individuals of *Thryptomene sp. Leinster* and *Indigofera gilesii*;
- utilise flagging and boundary markers to protect *Eremophila obliquisepala* populations, as well as *Thryptomene sp. Leinster* and *Indigofera gilesii*; and
- clearing will be minimised, with infrastructure locations preferentially selected on areas that have already been disturbed and to avoid, where possible, watercourses and priority flora species.

Following consultation and in recognition of the importance of the preservation of drainage lines, and minimisation of potential environmental impacts, Aragon Resources Pty Ltd agreed to revise the clearing footprint. The updated boundary excludes the drainage line that lies to the northeast of the application area. As a result, it is unlikely that the proposed clearing will have any significant impacts on the native vegetation near or within the watercourse.

3.2. Assessment of impacts on environmental values

In assessing the application, the Delegated Officer has had regard for the site characteristics (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 Delegated Officer also took into consideration disturbance from previous clearing under expired permit CPS 9345/1, which covered the current application area.

The assessment against the clearing principles identified that the impacts of the proposed clearing may present a risk to biological values (fauna, adjacent flora and vegetation). 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 - Clearing Principles (a)

Assessment

Maia (2017), completed a desktop review, followed by a biological survey which covered both the application area and additional ground to the southeast (referred to as "the survey area"). Within the survey area, five confirmed priority species and one potential priority species were recorded. Among these was *Gunniopsis propinqua, which was* previously listed as a priority three flora species, and has since been relisted as "not threatened" (WAM, 1998). Maia (2017) recommended a targeted survey to be conducted for *Stenanthemum mediale,* a priority one flora species, to better assess potential impacts. However, subsequent

findings confirmed that the specimen initially identified as *Stenanthemum mediale* (P1) was in fact *Stenanthemum petraeum* ("not threatened"), a closely related species. As a result, the targeted survey indicated that *S. mediale* is neither currently, nor historically present within the survey area (Animal Plant Mineral, 2024). The updated list of priority species recorded is listed below:

- *Eremophila obliquisepala* (P3)
- *Indigofera gilesii* (P3) (*I. ?gilesii* – potential priority species)
- *Thryptomene* sp*. Leinster* (B.J. Lepschi & L.A. Craven 4362) (P3)

Eight vegetation types were identified within the survey area by Maia (2017). These vegetation types (described in Appendix A.1) were noted to be locally common, occur in surrounding areas and were rated as having either moderate (*A*SL-2, *A*SL-3, *A*SL-4, *A*SL-5 and MSL-1) or low local significance (*A*SL-1, *A*WL-1 and MSL-2).

Eremophila obliquisepala

Maia (2017) recorded *Eremophila obliquisepala* (P3) at 376 locations (3,306 plants) across the survey area. The number of plants recorded at each location ranged from one through to 100 plants. *E. obliquisepala* was found on stony plains and in seven vegetation types (Maia, 2017) - ASL-1, ASL-2, ASL-3, ASL-4, ASL-5, AWL-1 and MSL-1). Given the widespread distribution of this species across the survey area, the numbers in which it was located, and the number and cover of the vegetation types in which it occurs, this P3 flora species is considered to have a low local significance.

Westgold (2024) noted that approximately 48 percent of *Eremophila obliquisepala* individuals may be affected solely within the application area (Appendix B.2). However, despite this, the overall impact on the species is considered low due to its large local population size and widespread local occurrence across the vegetation types in which it occurs, this includes areas beyond the surveyed region (Westgold, 2024; Maia, 2017). The remaining individuals – estimated to be around 1,722 (Maia, 2017; Westgold, 2024), - are located outside the permit boundary and will not be affected by the clearing. In a local context, the impact on this species is estimated to be less than five percent (Maia, 2017). Furthermore, Maia (2017) suggests that due to the relatively small size of the non-impact areas that were surveyed, more individuals of *E. obliquisepala* are likely present in the local area, which would further reduce the local estimated impact. These findings are consistent with database records, which show a few occurrences of this species both within and beyond the 50 kilometre radius. Additional records have also been documented in WA Herb (1998).

Indigofera gilesii* and *I. ?gilesii

Indigofera gilesii (P3) and *Indigo ?gilesii* (?P3) was recorded at two locations across the survey area, as well as on neighbouring tenements (Maia, 2017). Given the moderate distribution of the plants across the survey area, and the extent of vegetation types in which they occur, the species is rated as having moderate local significance (Maia, 2017). *I. ?gilesii* (?P3) was not included in the overall species counts as it was considered to likely be *Indigofera gilesii* (P3) (Maia, 2017). Although *Indigofera gilesii* is recorded in the application area, this P3 species is situated in a 'non-impact' zone (Westgold, 2024).

***Thryptomene* sp*. Leinster* (B.J. Lepschi & L.A. Craven 4362)**

Thryptomene sp. Leinster (B.J. Lepschi & L.A. Craven 4362) (P3) was recorded at five locations (10 plants in total) in the survey area (Maia, 2017). Given the distribution of this species in the survey area and the cover of the vegetation types in which it occurs, it is rated as having moderate to high local significance (Maia 2016). This priority three species, although present within the application area, does not occur within any of the identified impact zones (Westgold, 2024).

Figure 1 below depicts the extent of *Eremophila obliquisepala, Indigofera gilesii,* and *Thryptomene sp. Leinster* across the survey area*.* No individuals of *Indigofera gilesii,* or *Thryptomene sp. Leinster* will be impacted by the clearing activities, as mitigation measures will be implemented to avoid disturbance (Westgold, 2024). Avoidance and mitigation measures are outlined in Section 3.1 above.

A portion of the application area has experienced significant disturbance due to historic mining and pastoral activities (Westgold, 2024). A pit remains in the northern central part of the application area, where the vegetation is predominately degraded, and the flora and fauna biodiversity values in this area are expected to be low (Maia, 2017). In addition, records from (WAM, 1998) indicate multiple records of each of all these species have been recorded in neighbouring IBRA Regions. Therefore, these priority species do not depend on the vegetation or habitats within the survey area for their continued existence (Maia, 2017). These finding were supported by multiple flora and vegetation surveys that were conducted in the vicinity of the Maia (2017) survey area (Maia, 2017).

The map below indicating the conservation significant flora recorded during the Maia (2017) survey.

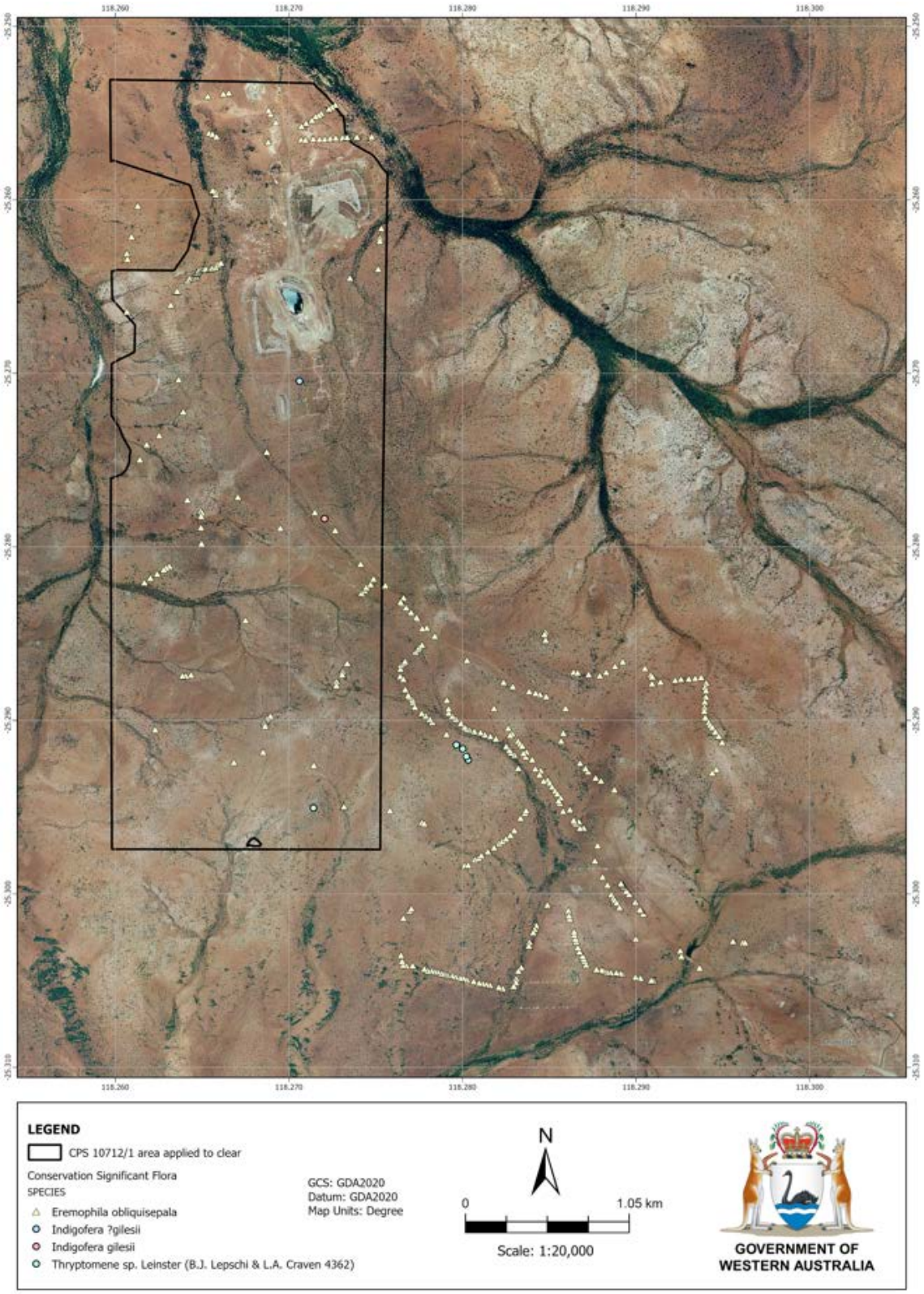

Figure 1. Map Indicating Conservation Significant Flora recorded during the Maia (2017) survey

Three weed species were identified within the survey area: *Bidens bipinnata*, *Cenchrus ciliaris*, and *Rumex vesicarius* (Westgold, 2024). None of these weed species are listed on any national weed registers or declared under Western Australian legislation. *R. vesicarius* was the most common weed species recorded in the survey area (Westgold, 2024).

Conclusion

Based on the above assessment, the proposed clearing will not result in local impact to priority flora. Most of the species listed above are either well represented locally or have a wide distribution range (Maia, 2017). Therefore, the proposed clearing is unlikely to have a significant impact on priority flora. The potential impacts on native vegetation and biodiversity can be effectively managed by taking steps to minimise the risk of the introduction and spread of weeds.

Conditions

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

- implement a 10 metre clearance buffer around identified individuals of *Thryptomene sp. Leinster* and *Indigofera gilesii;*
- avoid, minimise to reduce the impacts and extent of clearing;
- commence construction no later than three months after undertaking clearing to reduce the risk of erosion; and
- take hygiene steps to minimise the risk of the introduction and spread of weeds.

3.3. Relevant planning instruments and other matters

The clearing permit application was advertised on 6 September 2024 by the Department of Mines, Petroleum and Exploration inviting submissions from the public. No submissions were received in relation to this application.

There is one native title claim over the area under application (DPLH, 2025). This claim has been determined by the Federal Court on behalf of the claimant group. The mining tenure has been granted in accordance with the future act regime of the *Native Title Act 1993* and the nature of the act (i.e. the proposed clearing activity) has been provided for in that process, therefore, the granting of a clearing permit is not a future act under the *Native Title Act 1993*.

Other relevant authorisations required for the proposed land use include:

- A Mining Proposal / Mine Closure Plan approved under the *Mining Act 1978*

It is the proponent's responsibility to liaise with the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation and the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, to determine whether a Works Approval, Water Licence, Bed and Banks Permit, or any other licences or approvals are required for the proposed works.

End

Appendix A. Site characteristics

A.1. Site characteristics

<table>
<tr><th>Characteristic</th><th>Details</th></tr>
<tr><td>Local context</td><td>The area proposed to be cleared is located within the Augustus subregion of the Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation for Australia (IBRA) Gascoyne Bioregion (GIS Database).</td></tr>
<tr><td>Ecological linkage</td><td>The application area is not likely to form part of any formal or informal ecological linkages (GIS Database).</td></tr>
<tr><td>Conservation areas</td><td>The application area does not form part of any known or mapped conservation areas (GIS Database).</td></tr>
<tr><td>Vegetation description</td><td>The vegetation of the application area is broadly mapped as the following Beard vegetation associations:

18: Low woodland; mulga (Acacia aneura); and
29: Sparse low woodland; mulga, discontinuous in scattered groups (GIS Database)

A flora and vegetation survey was conducted over the application area by Maia Environmental Consultancy during September 2016. The following vegetation associations were recorded within the application area (Westgold, 2024):

<table>
<tr><th>Code</th><th>Vegetation Description</th><th>Habitat</th></tr>
<tr><td>ASL-1</td><td>Sparse Tall Acacia Shrubland of either Acacia incurvaneura or A. aptaneura with a Sparse mixed Low Shrubland (Eremophila phyllopoda, Ptilotus schwartzii, and Scaevola spinescens) and Isolated Low Trees of Acacia pruinocarpa and/or A. citrinoviridis.</td><td>Stony flat and undulating quartz plains and quartz and ironstone slopes.</td></tr>
<tr><td>ASL-2</td><td>Sparse Tall Shrubland of Acacia incurvaneura and/or A. rhodophloia with a mixed Sparse Low Shrubland (Eremophila jucunda subsp. jucunda, E. obliquisepala (P3), Ptilotus schwartzii) and Isolated Low Trees of either Grevillea berryana, Acacia citrinoviridis or A. pruinocarpa.</td><td>Stony flat and undulating quartz and ironstone plains and ironstone hill slopes.</td></tr>
<tr><td>ASL-3</td><td>Open Tall Shrubland of Acacia incurvaneura or A. aptaneura with a mixed Low Open Shrubland (Eremophila latrobei subsp. Latrobei, E. jucunda subsp. Jucunda and Dodonaea pachyneura) and +/- Scattered Mallee Trees of Corymbia ferriticola.</td><td>Crests and upper slopes of ironstone hills.</td></tr>
<tr><td>ASL-4</td><td>Sparse Tall Shrubland of Acacia aptaneura and/or A. xiphophylla with a Sparse Low Shrubland of Senna artemisioides subsp. oligophylla x helmsii and Solanum lasiophyllum and a Sparse Chenopod Shrubland of Sclerolaena eriacantha, Maireana georgei and Maireana villosa.</td><td>Quartz stony plains.</td></tr>
<tr><td>ASL-5</td><td>Open Tall Shrubland of Acacia cuthbertsonii subsp. cuthbertsonii, +/- A. incurvaneura or A. rhodophloia with a Sparse mixed Low Shrubland (Dodonaea petiolaris, Eremophila glutinosa and E. exilifolia) and Isolated Low Trees of Acacia citrinoviridis and/or Grevillea berryana.</td><td>Minor drainage lines and gullies.</td></tr>
<tr><td>AWL-1</td><td>Low Woodland to Low Open Forest of Acacia incurvaneura, A. aptaneura and A. cyperophylla var. cyperophylla with a mixed tall shrubland (Acacia cuthbertsonii subsp. Cuthbertsonii, A. ramulosa var. linophylla, Eremophila forrestii subsp. forrestii) and a mixed Low Shrubland (Indigofera monophylla, Abutilon cryptopetalum and Enchylaena tomentosa var. tomentosa.</td><td>Low lying areas, depressions and broad drainage lines.</td></tr>
<tr><td>MSL-1</td><td>Sparse mixed Shrubland (Senna glaucifolia, Eremophila phyllopoda and Ptilotus rotundifolius) and a Sparse to Open Tussock Grassland of Aristida contorta.</td><td>Undulating quartz and ironstone stony plains.</td></tr>
</table>
</td></tr>
<tr><td>Vegetation condition</td><td>The vegetation condition ranges from pristine with no signs of obvious disturbance, to completely degraded, no longer intact and completely/ almost completely without native species (Keighery, 1994).
The full Keighery (1994) condition rating scale is provided in Appendix C.</td></tr>
</table>

Characteristic	Details
Climate and landform	The application area has an annual average rainfall (Meekatharra Airport) of 218.4 millimetres (BOM, 2025).
Soil description	The application area lies within the Gascoyne Valley zone which is described as hardpan wash plains (with hills, stony plains and some calcrete plains and floodplains) on alluvial deposits over gneiss and volcanic rocks of the southern parts of Gascoyne Complex and Emund and Collier Basins (Maia, 2016; DPIRD, 2025). The soils are Red-brown hardpan shallow loams with Red deep sands, Red shallow sandy duplexes and Red loamy earths and some Red/brown non-cracking clays and Stony soils (Maia, 2017).
Land degradation risk	The application area falls within the Beasley system and Augustus system. These land systems are described below (Pringle et al., 1994): Beasley System: Low ridges, hills and lateritised residuals above stony footslopes and broad, stony lower plains supporting scattered mulga and snakewood shrublands. The Beasley land system is prone to water and wind erosion. Augustus System: Rugged ranges, hills, ridges and plateaux with skeletal soils supporting mulga and other acacia shrublands in southern parts or hard spinifex grasslands in northern parts.
Waterbodies	The desktop assessment and aerial imagery indicated that there are a number of ephemeral creeks and minor drainage lines that occur across the application area (GIS Database). There are no wetlands in the application area (GIS Database).
Hydrogeography	The application area is not mapped within any Public Drinking Water Source Areas (GIS Database). The mapped groundwater salinity is 500 to 1,000 milligrams per litre total dissolved solids which is described as marginal (GIS Database). The application area is located within the East Murchison Groundwater Area, which is proclaimed area under *section 26B (1) of the RIWI Act 1914*, as well as Gascoyne River and Tributaries under *RIWI Act 1914-1954.*
Flora	No threatened flora species were recorded in the survey area (Maia, 2017); however, three Priority flora species were recorded in the survey area (Maia, 2017). Additionally, three general weed species were found within the survey area (Maia, 2017), two of which were noted for their high ecological impact and rapid invasiveness (Maia, 2017). GIS database records identified no threatened or priority flora species within the application area, however priority species have been recorded within a 50 kilometre radius of the application area. Some of these species were identified by previous biological surveys carried out in close proximity to the application area (Maia, 2016; GIS Database).
Ecological communities	No Threatened or Priority Ecological Communities are found within the application area. The nearest records of Priority Ecological Communities are: • Robinson Range vegetation complexes (banded ironstone formation) (Priority 1) located 3.6 kilometres east to southeast of the application area; • Frederick Land System (Priority 3) located 5 kilometres south of the application area; • Clere land system (Priority 3) located 7.5 kilometres southwest of the application area; and • Milgun south calcrete groundwater assemblage types on Gascoyne palaeodrainage on Milgun Station (Priority 1) located 10 kilometres northwest of the application area.
Fauna	According to Westgold (2024), the most recent Terrestrial Fauna Survey in the area was conducted by Rapallo in 2012, which indicated that previous database searches revealed no records of conservation significant fauna species found within a 20 kilometre radius of the application area. Database records within a 50 kilometre radius have indicated one specially protected, migratory species located 32 kilometres from the application area. Database records also indicate that the application area falls within a 'High Priority Survey Bioregion' for the Night Parrot. A Targeted Survey conducted by Westgold (2025), indicated no presence of the Night Parrot within the proposed application area and surrounding areas (Westgold, 2024).
Fauna habitat	Five habitat types were identified (Westgold, 2024): • Stony flats and undulating quartz/ironstone plains and quartz/ironstone slopes. • Crests and upper slopes of ironstone hills. • Quartz stony plains. • Minor drainage lines and gullies. • Low lying areas, depressions and broad drainage lines. • Undulating quartz and ironstone stony plains. The fauna habitats present within the application area, are well represented in surrounding areas (Maia, 2017; GIS Database).

A.2. Flora analysis table

With consideration for the site characteristics set out above, relevant datasets (Appendix D.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 soil type? [Y/N]	Distance of closest record to application area (km)	Are surveys adequate to identify? [Y, N, N/A]
Eremophila obliquisepala	P3	Y	Y	0	Y
Indigofera gilesii	P3	Y	Y	0	Y
Thryptomene sp. Leinster (B.J. Lepschi & L.A. Craven 4362)	P3	Y	Y	0	Y
Goodenia berringbinensis	P4	Y	Y	10	Y
Homalocalyx echinulatus	P3	Y	Y	20	Y
Indigofera rotula	P3	Y	Y	20	Y
Sauropus sp. Woolgorong (M. Officer s.n. 10/8/94)	P3	Y	Y	10	Y

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

Clearing impact on priority species recorded within the application area.

Species name	Conservation status	Total individuals recorded (survey area)	Total individuals in non-impact areas	Total individuals in impact areas	Percentage of individuals to be impacted within application area
Eremophila obliquisepala	P3	3,306	1,722	1,584	48%
Indigofera gilesii	P3	3	3	0	0%
Thryptomene sp. Leinster (B.J. Lepschi & L.A. Craven 4362)	P3	10	10	0	0%

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

A.3. Fauna analysis table

With consideration for the site characteristics set out above, impacts to the following conservation significant fauna may require further consideration.

Species name	Conservation status	Suitable habitat features? [Y/N]	Suitable vegetation type? [Y/N]	Distance of closest record to application area (km)	Number of known records (total)	Are surveys adequate to identify? [Y, N, N/A]
Actitis hypoleucos (common sandpiper)	OS MI	Y	Y	35	2	Y
Pezoporus occidentalis (night parrot)	CR	N	Y	-	-	Y

T: threatened, CR: critically endangered, EN: endangered, VU: vulnerable, MI: migratory, CD: conservation dependent, OS: other specially protected, P: priority

Appendix B. Assessment against the clearing principles

Assessment against the clearing principles	Variance level	Is further consideration required?
Environmental value: biological values		

Assessment against the clearing principles	Variance level	Is further consideration required?
Principle (a): *"Native vegetation should not be cleared if it comprises a high level of biodiversity."* Assessment: The area proposed to be cleared does contain significant flora (Maia, 2017). No Threatened Ecological Communities (TECs) or Priority Ecological Communities (PECs) were identified in the application area (GIS Database).	May be at variance	Yes *Refer to Section 3.2.1, 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 unlikely to contain foraging, roosting, breeding, critical, significant habitat for conservation significant fauna.	Not likely to be at variance	No
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 flora species listed under the BC Act.	Not likely to be at variance	No
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 does not contain species that can indicate a threatened ecological community (GIS Database). A flora and vegetation survey completed by Maia (2017) did not identify any TECs.	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: The extent of the mapped vegetation type is consistent with the national objectives and targets for biodiversity conservation in Australia. The extent of the mapped vegetation type is over 99% at both a state and bioregional level. The vegetation proposed to be cleared is not considered to be part of a significant ecological linkage in the local area.	Not likely to be 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: Given the distances to the nearest conservation areas are greater than 50 kilometres from the application area, the proposed clearing is not likely to have an impact on the environmental values of these conservation areas.	Not likely to be at variance	No
Environmental value: land and water resources		
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: Given a number of water courses are recorded within the application area, the proposed clearing is likely to impact drainage lines and associated vegetation.	At variance	No
Principle (g): *"Native vegetation should not be cleared if the clearing of the vegetation is likely to cause appreciable land degradation."* Assessment: The mapped soils are susceptible to wind and water erosion (Pringle et al., 1994). Noting the location of the application area and the condition of the vegetation, the proposed clearing is likely to have an impact on land degradation.	May be at variance	No

Assessment against the clearing principles	Variance level	Is further consideration required?
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 no wetlands or Public Drinking Water Sources Areas are recorded within or within close proximity to the application area, and that any water courses occurring within the application area are considered non-perennial and minor, the proposed clearing is unlikely to impact surface or ground water quality. The groundwater within the application area is between 500 to 1,000 milligrams per litre of Total Dissolved Solids (GIS Database), which is classified to be marginal water quality. It would not be expected that the proposed clearing would cause salinity levels within the application or surrounding area to alter the quality of surface or underground water quality.	Not likely to be at variance	No
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 application area contains no permanent waterbodies (GIS Database). While several, temporary, non-perennial, minor watercourses are present, and localised flooding may occur briefly following heavy rainfall events; the proposed clearing is unlikely to increase the frequency or severity of natural 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. Sources of information

D.1. GIS datasets

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

- 10 metre contours (DPIRD-073)
- Cadastre (Polygon) (LGATE-217)
- Clearing Instruments Proposals (Areas Applied to Clear) (DWER-075)

- Clearing Referral Proposal (DWER-116)
- Clearing Regulations - Environmentally Sensitive Areas (DWER-046)
- Clearing Regulations - Schedule One Areas (DWER-057)
- DBCA - Lands of Interest (DBCA-012)
- DBCA - Legislated Lands and Waters (DBCA-011)
- DBCA Fire History (DBCA-060)
- Groundwater Salinity Statewide (DWER-026)
- IBRA Vegetation Statistics
- Local Government Area (LGA) Boundaries (LGATE-233)
- Localities (LGATE-234)
- Mineral Field Boundaries (DMIRS-005)
- Native Title (Determination) (LGATE-066)
- Native Title (Fed Court) (LGATE-005)
- Native Title (NNTT) (LGATE-004)
- Native Vegetation Extent (DPIRD-005)
- Offsets Register - Offsets (DWER-078)
- Offsets Register - Projects (DWER-079)
- Peel Inlet - Harvey Estuary (DWER-066)
- PEOF Project Areas (DWER-125)
- Pre-European Vegetation (DPIRD-006)
- Public Drinking Water Source Areas (DWER-033)
- Ramsar Sites (DBCA-010)
- Referral - Permit Application Not Required (DWER-117)
- Regional Parks (DBCA-026)
- Reserves (LGATE-227)
- RIWI Act, Groundwater Areas (DWER-034)
- RIWI Act, Rivers (DWER-036)
- RIWI Act, Surface Water Areas and Irrigation Districts (DWER-037)
- Soil Landscape Mapping - Best Available (DPIRD-027)
- Townsites (LGATE-248)
- WA Now Aerial Imagery

Restricted GIS Databases used:

- Threatened and Priority Flora (TPFL)
- Threatened and Priority Flora (WAHerb)
- Threatened and Priority Fauna
- Threatened and Priority Ecological Communities
- Threatened and Priority Ecological Communities (Buffers)

D.2. References

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Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) (2020) Technical Guidance – Terrestrial Fauna Surveys. https://www.epa.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/Policies_and_Guidance/2020.09.17%20-%20EPA%20Technical%20Guidance%20-%20Vertebrate%20Fauna%20Surveys%20-%20Final.pdf

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Schoknecht, N., Tille, P. and Purdie, B. (2004) Soil-landscape mapping in South-Western Australia – Overview of Methodology and outputs Resource Management Technical Report No. 280. Department of Agriculture.

Westgold Resources Limited (Westgold) (2024) Aragon Resources Pty Ltd, Fortnum Gold Operations Labouchere – Reagent Project, Native Vegetation Supporting Information M52/5, M52/125

Western Australian Herbarium (WAM) (1998-) FloraBase - the Western Australian Flora. Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, Western Australia. https://florabase.dpaw.wa.gov.au/ (Accessed 19 September 2025).

4. Glossary

Acronyms:

BC Act	*Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016,* Western Australia
BoM	Bureau of Meteorology, Australian Government
DAA	Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Western Australia (now DPLH)
DAFWA	Department of Agriculture and Food, Western Australia (now DPIRD)
DCCEEW	Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, Australian Government
DBCA	Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, Western Australia
DEMIRS	Department of Energy, Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety (now DMPE)
DER	Department of Environment Regulation, Western Australia (now DWER)
DMIRS	Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety, Western Australia (now DMPE)
DMP	Department of Mines and Petroleum, Western Australia (now DMPE)
DMPE	Department of Mines, Petroleum and Exploration
DoEE	Department of the Environment and Energy (now DCCEEW)
DoW	Department of Water, Western Australia (now DWER)
DPaW	Department of Parks and Wildlife, Western Australia (now DBCA)
DPIRD	Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, Western Australia
DPLH	Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage, Western Australia
DRF	Declared Rare Flora (now known as Threatened Flora)
DWER	Department of Water and Environmental Regulation, Western Australia
EP Act	*Environmental Protection Act 1986*, Western Australia
EPA	Environmental Protection Authority, Western Australia
EPBC Act	*Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Commonwealth Act)
GIS	Geographical Information System
ha	Hectare (10,000 square metres)
IBRA	Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation for Australia
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources – commonly known as the World Conservation Union
PEC	Priority Ecological Community, Western Australia
RIWI Act	*Rights in Water and Irrigation Act 1914*, Western Australia
TEC	Threatened Ecological Community

Definitions:

DBCA (2023) Conservation Codes for Western Australian Flora and Fauna. Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, Western Australia:

Threatened species

T Listed by order of the Minister as Threatened in the category of critically endangered, endangered or vulnerable under section 19(1), or is a rediscovered species to be regarded as threatened species under section 26(2) of the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 (BC Act).

Threatened fauna is the species of fauna that are listed as critically endangered, endangered or vulnerable threatened species.

Threatened flora is the species of flora that are listed as critically endangered, endangered or vulnerable threatened species.

The assessment of the conservation status of threatened species is in accordance with the BC Act listing criteria and the requirements of Ministerial Guideline Number 1 and Ministerial Guideline Number 2 that adopts the use of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species Categories and Criteria, and is based on the national distribution of the species.

CR **Critically endangered species**

Threatened species considered to be "*facing an extremely high risk of extinction in the wild in the immediate future, as determined in accordance with criteria set out in the ministerial guidelines*".

Listed as critically endangered under section 19(1)(a) of the BC Act in accordance with the criteria set out in section 20 and the ministerial guidelines.

EN **Endangered species**

Threatened species considered to be "*facing a very high risk of extinction in the wild in the near future, as determined in accordance with criteria set out in the ministerial guidelines*".

Listed as endangered under section 19(1)(b) of the BC Act in accordance with the criteria set out in section 21 and the ministerial guidelines.

VU **Vulnerable species**

Threatened species considered to be "*facing a high risk of extinction in the wild in the medium-term future, as determined in accordance with criteria set out in the ministerial guidelines*".

Listed as vulnerable under section 19(1)(c) of the BC Act in accordance with the criteria set out in section 22 and the ministerial guidelines.

Extinct species

Listed by order of the Minister as extinct under section 23(1) of the BC Act as extinct or extinct in the wild.

EX **Extinct species**

Species where "*there is no reasonable doubt that the last member of the species has died*", and listing is otherwise in accordance with the ministerial guidelines (section 24 of the BC Act).

EW **Extinct in the wild species**

Species that *"is known only to survive in cultivation, in captivity or as a naturalised population well outside its past range; and it has not been recorded in its known habitat or expected habitat, at appropriate seasons, anywhere in its past range, despite surveys over a time frame appropriate to its life cycle and form*", and listing is otherwise in accordance with the ministerial guidelines (section 25 of the BC Act).

Currently there are no threatened fauna or threatened flora species listed as extinct in the wild.

Specially protected species

SP **Specially protected species**

Listed by order of the Minister as specially protected under section 13(1) of the BC Act. Meeting one or more of the following categories: species of special conservation interest; migratory species; cetaceans; species subject to international agreement; or species otherwise in need of special protection.

Species that are listed as threatened species (critically endangered, endangered, or vulnerable) or extinct species under the BC Act cannot also be listed as specially protected species.

MI **Migratory species**

Fauna that periodically or occasionally visit Australia or an external Territory or the exclusive economic zone; or the species is subject of an international agreement that relates to the protection of migratory species and that binds the Commonwealth; and listing is otherwise in accordance with the ministerial guidelines (section 15 of the BC Act).

Migratory species include birds that are subject to an agreement between the government of Australia and the governments of Japan (JAMBA), China (CAMBA) or The Republic of Korea (ROKAMBA), and fauna subject to the *Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals* (Bonn Convention), an environmental treaty under the United Nations Environment Program. Migratory species listed under the BC Act are a subset of the migratory animals, that are known to visit Western Australia, protected under the international agreements or treaties, excluding species that are listed as Threatened species.

CD **Species of special conservation interest (conservation dependent fauna)**

Species of special conservation need that are dependent on ongoing conservation intervention to prevent it becoming eligible for listing as threatened, and listing is otherwise in accordance with the ministerial guidelines (section 14 of the BC Act).

Currently only fauna are listed as species of special conservation interest.

OS **Other specially protected species**

Species otherwise in need of special protection to ensure their conservation, and listing is otherwise in accordance with the ministerial guidelines (section 18 of the BC Act).

Currently only fauna are listed as species otherwise in need of special protection.

Priority species

P **Priority species**

Priority is not a listing category under the BC Act. The Priority Flora and Fauna lists are maintained by the department and are published on the department's website.

All fauna and flora are protected in WA following the provisions in Part 10 of the BC Act. The protection applies even when a species is not listed as threatened or specially protected, and regardless of land tenure (State managed land (Crown land), private land, or Commonwealth land).

Species that may possibly be threatened species that do not meet the criteria for listing under the BC Act because of insufficient survey or are otherwise data deficient, are added to the Priority Fauna or Priority Flora Lists under Priorities 1, 2 or 3. These three categories are ranked in order of prioritisation for survey and evaluation of conservation status so that consideration can be given to potential listing as threatened.

Species that are adequately known, meet criteria for near threatened, or are rare but not threatened, or that have been recently removed from the threatened species list or conservation dependent or other specially protected fauna lists for other than taxonomic reasons, are placed in Priority 4. These species require regular monitoring.

Assessment of priority status is based on the Western Australian distribution of the species, unless the distribution in WA is part of a contiguous population extending into adjacent States, as defined by the known spread of locations.

P1 **Priority One - Poorly-known species – known from few locations, none on conservation lands**

Species that are known from one or a few locations (generally five or less) which are potentially at risk. All occurrences are either: very small; or on lands not managed for conservation, for example, agricultural or pastoral lands, urban areas, road and rail reserves, gravel reserves and active mineral leases; or otherwise under threat of habitat destruction or degradation.

Species may be included if they are comparatively well known from one or more locations but do not meet adequacy of survey requirements for threatened listing and appear to be under immediate threat from known threatening processes. These species are in urgent need of further survey.

P2 **Priority Two - Poorly-known species – known from few locations, some on conservation lands**

Species that are known from one or a few locations (generally five or less), some of which are on lands managed primarily for nature conservation, for example, national parks, conservation parks, nature reserves and other lands with secure tenure being managed for conservation.

Species may be included if they are comparatively well known from one or more locations but do not meet adequacy of survey requirements for threatened listing and appear to be under threat from known threatening processes. These species are in urgent need of further survey.

P3 **Priority Three - Poorly-known species – known from several locations**

Species that are known from several locations and the species does not appear to be under imminent threat or from few but widespread locations with either large population size or significant remaining areas of apparently suitable habitat, much of it not under imminent threat.

Species may be included if they are comparatively well known from several locations but do not meet adequacy of survey requirements and known threatening processes exist that could affect them. These species need further survey.

P4 **Priority Four - Rare, Near Threatened and other species in need of monitoring**

(a) Rare. Species that are considered to have been adequately surveyed, or for which sufficient knowledge is available, and that are considered not currently threatened or in need of special protection but could be if present circumstances change. These species are usually represented on conservation lands.

(b) Near Threatened. Species that are considered to have been adequately surveyed and that are close to qualifying for vulnerable but are not listed as a conservation dependent specially protected species.

(c) Species that have been removed from the list of threatened species or lists of conservation dependent or other specially protected species, during the past five years for reasons other than taxonomy.

(d) Other species in need of monitoring.

Principles for clearing native vegetation:

(a) Native vegetation should not be cleared if it comprises a high level of biological diversity.

(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.

(c) Native vegetation should not be cleared if it includes, or is necessary for the continued existence of, threatened flora.

(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.

(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.

(f) Native vegetation should not be cleared if it is growing in, or in association with, an environment associated with a watercourse or wetland.

(g) Native vegetation should not be cleared if the clearing of the vegetation is likely to cause appreciable land degradation.

(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.

(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.

(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.