Department of Environment
Government of Western Australia

Clearing Permit Decision Report

1. Application details

1.1. Permit application details

Permit application No.: 311/1
Permit type: Area Permit

1.2. Proponent details

Proponent's name: **BHP Billiton Iron Ore Pty Ltd**

1.3. Property details

Property: LOT 2279 ON PLAN 216869
Colloquial name:

1.4. Application

Clearing Area (ha)	No. Trees	Method of Clearing	For the purpose of:
18		Mechanical Removal	Building or Structure

2. Site information

2.1. Existing environment and information

2.1.1. Description of the native vegetation under application

Vegetation Description	Clearing Description	Vegetation Condition	Comment
Vegetation association 18 - low woodland, mulga (Acacia aneura)	The vegetation of the site comprises upper and middle storey native species with the lower storey predominantly the introduced grass Cenchrus setigerus (ecologia Environment, 2004).	Very Good: Vegetation structure altered; obvious signs of disturbance (Keighery 1994)	The current land use of car racing and recreational activities has resulted in significant site disturbance to the current vegetation structure. No flora of conservation significance was recorded by the consultants (ecologia Environment, 2004). The flora found within the project area are generally widespread within the surrounding local area and hold no particular local or regional conservation significance (ecologia Environment, 2004).

3. Assessment of application against Clearing Principles

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

Comments **Proposal is not likely to be at variance to this Principle**

The vegetation of the site retains upper and middle storey native species with the lower storey predominantly comprised of the introduced grass Cenchrus setigerus (ecologia Environment, 2004). It is therefore unlikely to represent an area of outstanding biological diversity.

Methodology ecologia Environment, 2004

(b) Native vegetation should not be cleared if it comprises the whole or a part of, or is necessary for the maintenance of, a significant habitat for fauna indigenous to Western Australia.

Comments **Proposal is not likely to be at variance to this Principle**

Large trees may provide some habitat for fauna species however the level of disturbance within the vegetation is likely to limit the habitat value of the site.

Methodology ecologia Environment 2004

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

Comments **Proposal is not likely to be at variance to this Principle**

No Declared Rare or Priority Flora species were surveyed within the project area, and the vegetation has been substantially degraded limiting its potential conservation value (ecologia Environment, 2004).

Methodology ecologia Environment 2004; GIS Database: Declared Rare and Priority Flora Lists - CALM 13/08/04

(d) Native vegetation should not be cleared if it comprises the whole or a part of, or is necessary for the maintenance of a significant ecological community.

Comments **Proposal is not likely to be at variance to this Principle**

There are no known Threatened Ecological Communities within the area proposed for clearing.

Methodology ecologia Environment, 2004; GIS Database: Threatened Ecoogical Communities - CALM 15/07/03

(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.

Comments **Proposal is not likely to be at variance to this Principle**

The vegetation under application is Beard Vegetation Association 18 (Hopkins et al. 2001) of which there is ~99.9% of the pre-European extent remaining (Shepherd et al. 2001).

Methodology ecologia Environment 2004; GIS Database Pre-European Extent - DA 01/01

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

Comments **Proposal is not likely to be at variance to this Principle**

The vegetation to be cleared is not associated with a wetland or watercourse.

Methodology GIS Database: Hydrography, linear - DOE 1/2/04

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

Comments **Proposal is not likely to be at variance to this Principle**

It is unlikely that the clearing of 18ha within an urban environment will have a significant impact on land degradation.

Methodology

(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.

Comments **Proposal is not likely to be at variance to this Principle**

The project area is not adjacent to any existing or proposed conservation reserves.

Methodology GIS Database: CALM Managed Lands and Waters - CALM 1/06/04

(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.

Comments **Proposal is not likely to be at variance to this Principle**

It is unlikely that the vegetation clearing will have a significant impact on ground or surface water quality. Surface water run-off will be managed in accordance with the town drainage system.

Methodology GIS Database: Hydrography, linear - DOE 1/2/04

(j) Native vegetation should not be cleared if clearing the vegetation is likely to cause, or exacerbate, the incidence of flooding.

Comments **Proposal is not likely to be at variance to this Principle**

The project area is semi-arid (average annual rainfall for the region is ~310mm). Intense rainfall activity drives flooding in creeks and rivers. It is unlikely that the clearing of 18 hectares will have a significant impact on flood regimes in the local area.

Methodology Bureau of Meteorology website: http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/averages/tables/cw_007151.shtml (accessed 24/11/04)

Planning instrument or other matter.

Comments **Proposal is not likely to be at variance to this Principle**

The East Pilbara Town Planning Scheme is still to be gazetted, so the amendment proposed by BHP Billiton Iron Ore is a modification to a draft scheme. As the EPA has previously assessed the scheme they are unlikely to re-assess any modifications unless they are significant (A. O'Connor, pers. comm.).

Methodology A. O'Connor, Senior Environmental Officer, Environmental Protection Authority Service Unit, Planning and Infrastructure Assessment Branch, Environmental Impact Assessment Division, pers. comm. (1/11/2004)

4. Assessor's recommendations

Purpose	Method	Applied area (ha)/ trees	Decision	Comment / recommendation
Building or Structure	Mechanical Removal	18	**Grant**	Recommended that the permit be granted.

5. References

Department of Natural Resources and Environment (2002) Biodiversity Action Planning. Action planning for native biodiversity at multiple scales ; catchment bioregional, landscape, local. Department of Natural Resources and Environment, Victoria.

ecologia Environment (2004) BHP Billiton on-going works, Newman Village rare and priority flora and weed assessment. Prepared for Mine and port developments joint venture/ BHP-Billiton Iron Ore Pty Ltd. Prepared for DoE TRIM ref KTI4108

Hopkins, A.J.M., Beeston, G.R. and Harvey J.M. (2001) A database on the vegetation of Western Australia. Stage 1. CALMScience after J. S. Beard, late 1960's to early 1980's Vegetation Survey of Western Australia, UWA Press.

Keighery, BJ (1994) Bushland Plant Survey: A Guide to Plant Community Survey for the Community. Wildflower Society of WA (Inc). Nedlands, Western Australia.

Shepherd, D.P., Beeston, G.R. and Hopkins, A.J.M. (2001) Native Vegetation in Western Australia, Extent, Type and Status. Resource Management Technical Report 249. Department of Agriculture, Western Australia.