



# Clearing Permit Decision Report

## 1. Application details

### 1.1. Permit application details

Permit application No.: 3182/2  
Permit type: Purpose

### 1.2. Proponent details

Proponent's name: Western Areas Ltd

### 1.3. Property details

Property: Exploration Licence 70/2148  
Local Government Area: Shire of Lake Grace  
Colloquial name: Nickel Hill Project

### 1.4. Application

Clearing Area (ha)	No. Trees	Method of Clearing	For the purpose of:
0.3		Mechanical Removal	Mineral Exploration

### 1.5. Decision on application

Decision on Permit Application: Grant  
Decision Date: 17 December 2015

## 2. Site Information

### 2.1. Existing environment and information

#### 2.1.1. Description of the native vegetation under application

**Vegetation Description** The clearing permit application area has been broadly mapped as the following Beard vegetation associations (GIS Database):

**125:** Bare areas; salt lakes;

**941:** Mosaic: Medium woodland; salmon gum & morrel/shrublands; mallee scrub, redwood.

Flora and vegetation surveys conducted over the application area by Paul Armstrong and Associates identified the following five vegetation communities (Paul Armstrong and Associates, 2010):

**Halosarcia Flats:** Low Heath to Dwarf Scrub dominated by *Tecticornia halocnemoides* subsp. *halocnemoides*. This community covers extensive areas of the regions that are occasionally inundated on the lakebed;

**Low Heath on Lake Fringe:** Patches of Dwarf Scrub dominated by *Tecticornia halocnemoides* subsp. *halocnemoides* over Herbs to Open Herbs of *Hydrocotyle hexaptera* and *Isotoma scapigera*. This community is a transition from the saline soils on the lakebed to the less saline soils of the dune systems;

**Low Heath on Dunes:** Low Heath with patches of Dwarf Scrub dominated by *Atriplex vesicaria* subsp. *appendiculata*, frequently with pasture species *Trifolium sp.*; over Open Low Grass dominated by the weed *Avena barbata*. Also with occasional shrubs of *Pittosporum angustifolium*. This community covers extensive areas on the low dune areas to the east of the lake;

**Low Heath:** Low Heath with patches of Dwarf Scrub dominated by *Atriplex vesicaria* subsp. *appendiculata*, frequently with pasture species; over Open Low Grass dominated by the weed *Avena barbata*. This community occupies extensive areas between the low dunes to the east of the lake and the woodlands; and

**Open Woodlands:** Low Woodland of *Eucalyptus kondininensis* subsp. *kondininensis* over Dwarf Scrub dominated by *Atriplex vesicaria* subsp. *appendiculata*, frequently with pasture species *Trifolium sp.*; Over Open Low Grass dominated by the weed *Avena sp.* This community occupies the flat plains east of the low heath and west of the farmland (Paul Armstrong and Associates, 2010).

**Clearing Description** Nickel Hill Project.  
Western Areas Ltd proposes to clear up to 0.3 hectares of native vegetation within a total boundary of approximately 18.5 hectares, for the purpose of mineral exploration. The project is located approximately 14 kilometres northwest of Lake King, in the Shire of Lake Grace.

**Vegetation Condition** Very Good: Vegetation structure altered; obvious signs of disturbance (Keighery, 1994).  
To

Degraded: Structure severely disturbed; regeneration to good condition requires intensive management (Keighery, 1994).

**Comment**

Vegetation condition was derived from a survey conducted by Paul Armstrong and Associates (2010).

The proposal is for mineral exploration, and is to allow for the mobilisation of an aircore drill rig to enable the effective testing of a number of targets known as the Eastern Shore Prospects.

Clearing permit CPS 3182/1 was granted by the Department of Mines and Petroleum on 10 June 2010, authorising the clearing of up to 0.3 hectares of native vegetation within a boundary of approximately 18.5 hectares.

On 4 December 2015, the permit holder applied to amend CPS 3182/1 to extend the permit expiry date from 31 December 2015 to 31 December 2020, and to change the permit holder from Western Areas NL to Western Areas Ltd, due to a company name change.

### 3. Assessment of application against clearing principles

**Comments** The amendment to extend the permit duration by five years and to change the name of the permit holder is unlikely to result in any significant change to the environmental impacts of the proposed clearing. The size of the area approved to clear (0.3 hectares) and the permit boundaries remain unchanged.

The assessment against the clearing principles remains consistent with the assessment contained in decision report CPS 3182/1.

### Planning instrument, Native Title, Previous EPA decision or other matter.

**Comments:** There are no Native Title Claims over the area under application (DAA 2015). However, 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*.

There are no registered Aboriginal Sites of Significance that intersect with the application area (DAA, 2015). It is the proponent's responsibility to comply with the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972* and ensure that no Aboriginal sites of significance are damaged through the clearing process.

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

**Methodology:** DAA (2015)

### 4. References

- DAA (2015) Aboriginal Heritage Inquiry System, Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Perth, viewed 6 March 2015 < <http://maps.dia.wa.gov.au/AHIS2/>>.
- Keighery, B.J. (1994) Bushland Plant Survey: A Guide to Plant Community Survey for the Community. Wildflower Society of WA (Inc). Nedlands, Western Australia.
- Paul Armstrong and Associates (2010) Botanical Study on Eastern Shores Prospect of Lake King nature reserve. Conducted November 2009. Prepared for Western Areas NL and Swan Oak Holdings March 2010.
- Western Areas NL (2009) Supporting Documentation, Nickel Hill Project, Lake King Exploration Purposes – Clearing Application, Tenement E70/2148. Unpublished report prepared by Western Areas NL.

## 5. Glossary

### Acronyms:

<b>BoM</b>	Bureau of Meteorology, Australian Government
<b>DAA</b>	Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Western Australia
<b>DAFWA</b>	Department of Agriculture and Food, Western Australia
<b>DEC</b>	Department of Environment and Conservation, Western Australia (now DPaW and DER)
<b>DER</b>	Department of Environment Regulation, Western Australia
<b>DMP</b>	Department of Mines and Petroleum, Western Australia
<b>DRF</b>	Declared Rare Flora
<b>DotE</b>	Department of the Environment, Australian Government
<b>DoW</b>	Department of Water, Western Australia
<b>DPaW</b>	Department of Parks and Wildlife, Western Australia
<b>DSEWPaC</b>	Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (now DotE)
<b>EPA</b>	Environmental Protection Authority, Western Australia
<b>EP Act</b>	<i>Environmental Protection Act 1986</i> , Western Australia
<b>EPBC Act</b>	<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> (Federal Act)
<b>GIS</b>	Geographical Information System
<b>ha</b>	Hectare (10,000 square metres)
<b>IBRA</b>	Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation for Australia
<b>IUCN</b>	International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources – commonly known as the World Conservation Union
<b>PEC</b>	Priority Ecological Community, Western Australia
<b>RIWI Act</b>	<i>Rights in Water and Irrigation Act 1914</i> , Western Australia
<b>TEC</b>	Threatened Ecological Community

### Definitions:

{DPaW (2015) Conservation Codes for Western Australian Flora and Fauna. Department of Parks and Wildlife, Western Australia}:-

<b>T</b>	<b>Threatened species:</b> Published as Specially Protected under the <i>Wildlife Conservation Act 1950</i> , listed under Schedules 1 to 4 of the Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice for Threatened Fauna and Wildlife Conservation (Rare Flora) Notice for Threatened Flora (which may also be referred to as Declared Rare Flora).  <b>Threatened fauna</b> is that subset of 'Specially Protected Fauna' declared to be 'likely to become extinct' pursuant to section 14(4) of the Wildlife Conservation Act.  <b>Threatened flora</b> is flora that has been declared to be 'likely to become extinct or is rare, or otherwise in need of special protection', pursuant to section 23F(2) of the Wildlife Conservation Act.  The assessment of the conservation status of these species is based on their national extent and ranked according to their level of threat using IUCN Red List categories and criteria as detailed below.
<b>CR</b>	<b>Critically endangered species</b> Threatened species considered to be facing an extremely high risk of extinction in the wild. Published as Specially Protected under the <i>Wildlife Conservation Act 1950</i> , in Schedule 1 of the Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice for Threatened Fauna and Wildlife Conservation (Rare Flora) Notice for Threatened Flora.
<b>EN</b>	<b>Endangered species</b> Threatened species considered to be facing a very high risk of extinction in the wild. Published as Specially Protected under the <i>Wildlife Conservation Act 1950</i> , in Schedule 2 of the Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice for Threatened Fauna and Wildlife Conservation (Rare Flora) Notice for Threatened Flora.
<b>VU</b>	<b>Vulnerable species</b> Threatened species considered to be facing a high risk of extinction in the wild. Published as Specially Protected under the <i>Wildlife Conservation Act 1950</i> , in Schedule 3 of the Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice for Threatened Fauna and Wildlife Conservation (Rare Flora) Notice for Threatened Flora.
<b>EX</b>	<b>Presumed extinct species</b> Species which have been adequately searched for and there is no reasonable doubt that the last individual has died. Published as Specially Protected under the <i>Wildlife Conservation Act 1950</i> , in Schedule 4 of the Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice for Presumed Extinct Fauna and Wildlife Conservation (Rare Flora) Notice for Presumed Extinct Flora.

- IA Migratory birds protected under an international agreement**  
Birds that are subject to an agreement between the government of Australia and the governments of Japan (JAMBA), China (CAMBA) and The Republic of Korea (ROKAMBA), and the Bonn Convention, relating to the protection of migratory birds. Published as Specially Protected under the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*, in Schedule 5 of the Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice.
- CD Conservation dependent fauna**  
Fauna of special conservation need being species dependent on ongoing conservation intervention to prevent it becoming eligible for listing as threatened. Published as Specially Protected under the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*, in Schedule 6 of the Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice.
- OS Other specially protected fauna**  
Fauna otherwise in need of special protection to ensure their conservation. Published as Specially Protected under the *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950*, in Schedule 7 of the Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice.
- P Priority species**  
Species which are poorly known; or  
Species that are adequately known, are rare but not threatened, and require regular monitoring. Assessment of Priority codes 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:**  
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, e.g. 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 and appear to be under immediate threat from known threatening processes. Such species are in urgent need of further survey.
- P2 Priority Two - Poorly-known species:**  
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, e.g. 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 and appear to be under threat from known threatening processes. Such species are in urgent need of further survey.
- P3 Priority Three - Poorly-known species:**  
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. Such species are in need of 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 Conservation Dependent.  
(c) Species that have been removed from the list of threatened species during the past five years for reasons other than taxonomy.

**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 indigenous to Western Australia.
- (c) Native vegetation should not be cleared if it includes, or is necessary for the continued existence of, rare 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 clearing the vegetation is likely to cause, or exacerbate, the incidence or intensity of flooding.