



Clearing Permit Decision Report

1. Application details

1.1. Permit application details

Permit application No.: 5011/1
Permit type: Purpose Permit

1.2. Proponent details

Proponent's name: Hamersley Iron Pty Ltd

1.3. Property details

Property: Iron Ore (Hamersley Range) Agreement Act 1963, Special Lease for Mining Operations 3116/3469, J761012 EL, Lot 24 on Deposited Plan 241372

Local Government Area: Shire of Roebourne

Colloquial name: Bulk Storage Laydown Area

1.4. Application

Clearing Area (ha)	No. Trees	Method of Clearing	For the purpose of:
0.5		Mechanical Removal	Geological Sample Area

1.5. Decision on application

Decision on Permit Application: Grant
Decision Date: 28 June 2012

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
Beard vegetation associations have been mapped for the whole of Western Australia and are useful to look at vegetation in a regional context. One Beard vegetation association has been mapped within the application area:	Hamersley Iron Pty Ltd is proposing to clear up to 0.5 hectares of native vegetation within a 1.34 hectare application area for the purpose of a geological sample area.	Good: Structure significantly altered by multiple disturbance; retains basic structure/ability to regenerate (Keighery, 1994);	The application area is located in the Roebourne subregion of Western Australia and is situated approximately 15 kilometres north-west of the Karratha town site (GIS Database).
Beard vegetation association 117: Hummock grasslands, grass steppe; soft spinifex (Government of Western Australia, 2011; GIS Database).	The vegetation will be cleared using a dozer, blade down. The vegetation and topsoil will be stockpiled separately for use in rehabilitation.	To: Completely Degraded: No longer intact; completely/almost completely without native species (Keighery, 1994).	The vegetation condition was derived from a vegetation survey conducted by Rio Tinto Iron Ore (2012).
Rio Tinto Iron Ore (2012) surveyed the application area on 30 March 2012, and described two vegetation communities within the application area: ApylcGpTeCcil - Scattered tall shrubs of <i>Acacia pyrifolia</i> over scattered shrubs of <i>Grevillea pyramidalis</i> and <i>Ipomoea costata</i> over open hummock grasslands of <i>Triodia epactia</i> over scattered <i>Cenchrus ciliaris</i> tussock grassland; and Disturbed - cleared of native vegetation and stripped of top soil and colluvial mantle.			

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 application area occurs within the Roebourne (PIL4) Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation of Australia (IBRA) subregion (GIS Database). This subregion is generally described as quaternary alluvial and older colluvial coastal and subcoastal plains with a grass savannah of mixed bunch and hummock grasses, and dwarf shrub steppe of *Acacia stellaticeps* or *A. pyrifolia* and *A. inaequilatera* (CALM, 2002). Uplands are dominated by *Triodia* hummock grasslands. Ephemeral drainage lines support *Eucalyptus victrix* or *Corymbia hamersleyana* woodlands. Samphire, *Sporobolus* and mangal occur on marine alluvial flats and river deltas

(CALM, 2002).

A flora and vegetation survey of the application area was undertaken by Rio Tinto Iron Ore (2012) on 30 March 2012. No vegetation units within the application area were considered to be of high conservation significance and habitat diversity was relatively low within the current study area despite the Burrup Peninsular being known to contain high habitat diversity for native flora (Kendrick & Stanley, 2001; Rio Tinto Iron Ore, 2012). The flora taxa recorded are considered characteristic Pilbara flora species, and are well represented outside the study area. The application area would therefore not be considered to hold a high level of biological diversity (Rio Tinto Iron Ore, 2012). No Threatened Flora, Priority Flora, Threatened Ecological Communities or Priority Ecological Communities were recorded during the botanical survey or have previously been recorded within the application area (Rio Tinto Iron Ore 2012; GIS Database).

Buffel Grass (*Cenchrus ciliaris*) was recorded within the application area and the surrounding region (Rio Tinto Iron Ore, 2012). Care must be taken to ensure that the proposed clearing activities do not spread or introduce weed species to non-infested areas. Potential impacts to biodiversity as a result of the proposed clearing may be minimised by the implementation of a weed management condition.

One faunal habitat type was identified within the application area and is considered to be of low ecological significance and condition (Keighery, 1994; Rio Tinto Iron Ore, 2012; GIS Database). This habitat type is considered to be well represented within the local and regional area (GIS Database). The clearing of 0.5 hectares of native vegetation is unlikely to have a significant impact in a regional and local context.

Based on the above, the proposed clearing is not likely to be at variance to this Principle.

Methodology CALM (2002)
Keighery (1994)
Kendrick & Stanley (2001)
Rio Tinto Iron Ore (2012)
GIS Database:
- Dampier & Extension 50cm Orthomosaic - Landgate 2008
- IBRA WA (Regions - Subregions)
- Pre-European vegetation
- Threatened Ecological Sites Buffered

(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

No targeted fauna surveys have been conducted over the application area. Aerial imagery (GIS Database) suggests that the habitat present within the application areas appears to be abundant within the local area (GIS Database). There were no significant fauna habitats observed within the application area (Rio Tinto Iron Ore, 2012). Fauna habitats within the application area are limited due to the lack of vegetative cover and landforms, and the existing level of disturbance. While highly mobile species may temporarily utilise the survey area, the degraded condition of the native vegetation, and proximity to active mining would most likely cause the application area to be avoided by most fauna. The ecological values of the potential fauna habitats are therefore considered to be low (Rio Tinto Iron Ore, 2012).

The proposed clearing of 0.5 hectares of native vegetation within an application area of 1.34 hectares is not likely to impact critical feeding or breeding habitat for any conservation significant fauna species as the application area does not contain significant faunal habitats.

Based on the above, the proposed clearing is not likely to be at variance to this Principle.

Methodology Rio Tinto Iron Ore (2012)
GIS Database:
- Dampier & Extension 50cm Orthomosaic ? Landgate 2008

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

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

According to available databases, there are no records of Threatened Flora species within the application area (GIS Database). A search of the Department of Environment and Conservation Threatened and Priority Flora databases identified no Threatened Flora species as occurring within a 20 kilometre radius of the application area (DEC, 2012).

Rio Tinto Iron Ore (2012) conducted a vegetation and flora survey of the application area on 30 March 2012 during which No Threatened Flora species were recorded within the survey area.

Based on the above, the proposed clearing is not likely to be at variance to this Principle.

Methodology DEC (2012)
Rio Tinto Iron Ore (2012)
GIS Database:
- Threatened and Priority 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.

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

A search of the available databases shows that there are no Threatened Ecological Communities situated within 40 kilometres of the application area (GIS Database).

Based on the above, the proposed clearing is not likely to be at variance to this Principle.

Methodology GIS Database
- Threatened Ecological Sites Buffered

(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 at variance to this Principle

The application area falls within the Pilbara IBRA bioregion (GIS Database). The vegetation within the application area is recorded as Beard vegetation association 117: Hummock grasslands, grass steppe; soft spinifex (Government of Western Australia, 2011; GIS Database).

According to the Government of Western Australia (2011), Beard vegetation association 117 retains approximately 99% of its pre-European extent. Therefore, the area proposed to be cleared is not a significant remnant of native vegetation in an area that has been extensively cleared.

	Pre-European area (ha)*	Current extent (ha)*	Remaining %*	Conservation Status**	Pre-European % in IUCN Class I-IV Reserves
IBRA Bioregion - Pilbara	17,804,427	17,729,352	~99.58	Least Concern	6.32
Beard vegetation associations - State					
117	919,519	879,979	~95.70	Least Concern	12.69
Beard vegetation associations - Bioregion					
117	76,104	72,036	~94.65	Least Concern	11.34

* Government of Western Australia (2011)

** Department of Natural Resources and Environment (2002)

Based on the above, the proposed clearing is not at variance to this Principle.

Methodology Department of Natural Resources and Environment (2002)
Government of Western Australia (2011)
GIS Database:
- IBRA WA (regions - subregions)
- Pre-European Vegetation

(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 at variance to this Principle

According to available databases, there are no watercourses or wetlands within the application area (GIS Database). The vegetation within the application area is not considered to be growing in association with any watercourse or wetland.

Based on the above, the proposed clearing is not at variance to this Principle.

Methodology GIS Database:
- Geodata, Lakes
- Hydrography, Linear

(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

According to available databases, the application area is comprised of the Granitic land system.

The Granitic land system consists of rugged granitic hills supporting shrubby hard and soft spinifex grasslands (Van Vreeswyk et al., 2004). Much of the system is poorly accessible and the system is subject to fairly frequent burning and is not susceptible to erosion (Van Vreeswyk et al., 2004).

Based on the above, the proposed clearing is not likely to be at variance to this Principle.

Methodology Van Vreeswyk et al. (2004)
GIS Database
- Rangeland Land System Mapping

(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 application area is not located within any conservation area (GIS Database). The nearest conservation area are the islands of the Dampier Archipelago, located approximately 10 kilometres north-west of the application area (GIS Database).

Given the distance of the application area from the islands, the body of water separating the islands from the application area and the low impact nature of the project, the proposed clearing is not likely to provide a significant ecological linkage or fauna movement corridor and is not likely to impact the environmental values of the conservation area.

Based on the above, the proposed clearing is not likely to be at variance to this Principle.

Methodology GIS Database:
- DEC Tenure

(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

The application area is not located within a Public Drinking Water Source Area (PDWSA) (GIS Database). The application area is located within the proclaimed Pilbara groundwater area under the *Rights in Water and Irrigation Act 1914* (GIS Database). Any groundwater extraction and/or taking or diversion of surface water for the purpose other than domestic and/or stock watering is subject to licence by the Department of Water.

The application areas lies within a low rainfall zone and any surface water within the application area is likely to only remain for short periods following significant rainfall events (BoM, 2012). There are no permanent or ephemeral waterbodies located within the application area (GIS Database). Given there is a low average rainfall (266.5 millimetres) and there are no watercourses within the application area, the proposed clearing is not likely to cause sedimentation or deteriorate the quality of surface water in the nearby areas (BoM, 2012; GIS Database).

Based on the above, the proposed clearing is not likely to be at variance to this Principle.

Methodology BoM (2012)
GIS Database:
- Geodata, Lakes
- Hydrography, Linear
- Public Drinking Water Source Areas

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

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

The application area experiences an arid (semi-desert) tropical climate with highly variable rainfall, falling mainly in summer, with an annual average rainfall of approximately 266.5 millimetres per year (CALM, 2002; BoM, 2012). Based on an average annual evaporation rate of 3,200 - 3,600 millimetres (BoM, 2012), any surface water resulting from rainfall events is likely to be relatively short lived.

Given the size of the area to be cleared (0.5 hectares) compared to the size of the Coastal catchment area (744,301 hectares) (GIS Database) it is not likely that the proposed clearing will lead to an appreciable increase in run off, and subsequently cause or exacerbate the incidence or intensity of flooding.

Based on the above, the proposed clearing is not likely to be at variance to this Principle.

Methodology BoM (2012)
CALM (2002)
GIS Database:
- Hydrographic Catchments - Catchments
- Hydrography, Linear

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

Comments

There is one Native Title claim over the area under application (WC99/14). The claim was determined by the Federal Court on 2 May 2005. 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 four registered Aboriginal Site of Significance within the application area (Site IDs: 20373, 22008, 23323 and 28323) (GIS Database). 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 and Conservation and the Department of Water, to determine whether a Works Approval, Water Licence, Bed and Banks Permit, or any other licences or approvals are required for the proposed works.

The clearing permit application was advertised on 28 May 2012 by the Department of Mines and Petroleum inviting submissions from the public. No submissions were received in relation to the proposed clearing.

Methodology GIS Database:
- Aboriginal Sites of Significance
- Native Title Claims - Determined by the Federal Court

4. References

- BoM (2012) Climate Statistics for Australian Locations. A Search for Climate Statistics for Karratha Aero, Australian Government Bureau of Meteorology, viewed 21 June 2012, <http://reg.bom.gov.au/climate/averages/tables/cw_004083.shtml>.
- CALM (2002) A Biodiversity Audit of Western Australia's 53 Biogeographical Subregions. Pilbara 4 (PIL4 ? Roebourne subregion) Department of Conservation and Land Management, Western Australia.
- DEC (2012) NatureMap - Mapping Western Australia Biodiversity, Department of Environment and Conservation, viewed 21 June 2012, <<http://naturemap.dec.wa.gov.au>>.
- 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.
- Government of Western Australia (2011) 2011 Statewide Vegetation Statistics incorporating the CAR Reserve Analysis (Full Report). WA Department of Environment and Conservation, Perth.
- Keighery, B.J. (1994) Bushland Plant Survey: A Guide to Plant Community Survey for the Community. Wildflower Society of WA (Inc). Nedlands, Western Australia.
- Kendrick, P., and Stanley, F (2001) Bioregional Summary of the 2002 Biodiversity Audit for Western Australia ? Pilbara Bioregion: Hamersley Sub-region (PIL3). Department of Conservation and Land Management, Perth.
- Rio Tinto Iron Ore (2012) Statement Addressing the 10 Clearing Principles; Expansion of a Drum Bulk-storage Laydown Area at Dampier. Unpublished Report, March 2012.
- Van Vreeswyk, A.M.E., Payne, A.L., Hennig, P., and Leighton, K.A. (2004) An Inventory and Condition Survey of the Pilbara Region, Western Australia, Department of Agriculture, Western Australia.

5. Glossary

Acronyms:

BoM	Bureau of Meteorology, Australian Government
CALM	Department of Conservation and Land Management (now DEC), Western Australia
DAFWA	Department of Agriculture and Food, Western Australia
DEC	Department of Environment and Conservation, Western Australia
DEH	Department of Environment and Heritage (federal based in Canberra) previously Environment Australia
DEP	Department of Environment Protection (now DEC), Western Australia
DIA	Department of Indigenous Affairs
DLI	Department of Land Information, Western Australia
DMP	Department of Mines and Petroleum, Western Australia
DoE	Department of Environment (now DEC), Western Australia
DoIR	Department of Industry and Resources (now DMP), Western Australia

DOLA	Department of Land Administration, Western Australia
DoW	Department of Water
EP Act	Environmental Protection Act 1986, Western Australia
EPBC Act	Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Federal 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
RIWI Act	Rights in Water and Irrigation Act 1914, Western Australia
s.17	Section 17 of the Environment Protection Act 1986, Western Australia
TEC	Threatened Ecological Community

Definitions:

{Atkins, K (2005). *Declared rare and priority flora list for Western Australia, 22 February 2005*. Department of Conservation and Land Management, Como, Western Australia} :-

- P1** **Priority One - Poorly Known taxa:** taxa which are known from one or a few (generally <5) populations which are under threat, either due to small population size, or being on lands under immediate threat, e.g. road verges, urban areas, farmland, active mineral leases, etc., or the plants are under threat, e.g. from disease, grazing by feral animals, etc. May include taxa with threatened populations on protected lands. Such taxa are under consideration for declaration as 'rare flora', but are in urgent need of further survey.
- P2** **Priority Two - Poorly Known taxa:** taxa which are known from one or a few (generally <5) populations, at least some of which are not believed to be under immediate threat (i.e. not currently endangered). Such taxa are under consideration for declaration as 'rare flora', but are in urgent need of further survey.
- P3** **Priority Three - Poorly Known taxa:** taxa which are known from several populations, at least some of which are not believed to be under immediate threat (i.e. not currently endangered). Such taxa are under consideration for declaration as 'rare flora', but are in need of further survey.
- P4** **Priority Four – Rare taxa:** taxa which are considered to have been adequately surveyed and which, whilst being rare (in Australia), are not currently threatened by any identifiable factors. These taxa require monitoring every 5–10 years.
- R** **Declared Rare Flora – Extant taxa (= Threatened Flora = Endangered + Vulnerable):** taxa which have been adequately searched for, and are deemed to be in the wild either rare, in danger of extinction, or otherwise in need of special protection, and have been gazetted as such, following approval by the Minister for the Environment, after recommendation by the State's Endangered Flora Consultative Committee.
- X** **Declared Rare Flora - Presumed Extinct taxa:** taxa which have not been collected, or otherwise verified, over the past 50 years despite thorough searching, or of which all known wild populations have been destroyed more recently, and have been gazetted as such, following approval by the Minister for the Environment, after recommendation by the State's Endangered Flora Consultative Committee.

{Wildlife Conservation (Specially Protected Fauna) Notice 2005} [Wildlife Conservation Act 1950] :-

- Schedule 1** **Schedule 1 – Fauna that is rare or likely to become extinct:** being fauna that is rare or likely to become extinct, are declared to be fauna that is need of special protection.
- Schedule 2** **Schedule 2 – Fauna that is presumed to be extinct:** being fauna that is presumed to be extinct, are declared to be fauna that is need of special protection.
- Schedule 3** **Schedule 3 – Birds protected under an international agreement:** being birds that are subject to an agreement between the governments of Australia and Japan relating to the protection of migratory birds and birds in danger of extinction, are declared to be fauna that is need of special protection.
- Schedule 4** **Schedule 4 – Other specially protected fauna:** being fauna that is declared to be fauna that is in need of special protection, otherwise than for the reasons mentioned in Schedules 1, 2 or 3.

{CALM (2005). *Priority Codes for Fauna*. Department of Conservation and Land Management, Como, Western Australia} :-

- P1** **Priority One: Taxa with few, poorly known populations on threatened lands:** Taxa which are known from few specimens or sight records from one or a few localities on lands not managed for conservation, e.g. agricultural or pastoral lands, urban areas, active mineral leases. The taxon needs urgent survey and evaluation of conservation status before consideration can be given to declaration as threatened fauna.
- P2** **Priority Two: Taxa with few, poorly known populations on conservation lands:** Taxa which are known from few specimens or sight records from one or a few localities on lands not under immediate threat of habitat destruction or degradation, e.g. national parks, conservation parks, nature reserves, State forest, vacant Crown land, water reserves, etc. The taxon needs urgent survey and evaluation of conservation status before consideration can be given to declaration as threatened fauna.
- P3** **Priority Three: Taxa with several, poorly known populations, some on conservation lands:** Taxa which are known from few specimens or sight records from several localities, some of which are on lands not under immediate threat of habitat destruction or degradation. The taxon needs urgent survey and evaluation of conservation status before consideration can be given to declaration as threatened fauna.
- P4** **Priority Four: Taxa in need of monitoring:** Taxa which are considered to have been adequately surveyed,

or for which sufficient knowledge is available, and which are considered not currently threatened or in need of special protection, but could be if present circumstances change. These taxa are usually represented on conservation lands.

P5 Priority Five: Taxa in need of monitoring: Taxa which are not considered threatened but are subject to a specific conservation program, the cessation of which would result in the species becoming threatened within five years.

Categories of threatened species (*Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*)

- EX Extinct:** A native species for which there is no reasonable doubt that the last member of the species has died.
- EX(W) Extinct in the wild:** A native species which:
(a) is known only to survive in cultivation, in captivity or as a naturalised population well outside its past range; or
(b) has not been recorded in its known and/or expected habitat, at appropriate seasons, anywhere in its past range, despite exhaustive surveys over a time frame appropriate to its life cycle and form.
- CR Critically Endangered:** A native species which is facing an extremely high risk of extinction in the wild in the immediate future, as determined in accordance with the prescribed criteria.
- EN Endangered:** A native species which:
(a) is not critically endangered; and
(b) is facing a very high risk of extinction in the wild in the near future, as determined in accordance with the prescribed criteria.
- VU Vulnerable:** A native species which:
(a) is not critically endangered or endangered; and
(b) is facing a high risk of extinction in the wild in the medium-term future, as determined in accordance with the prescribed criteria.
- CD Conservation Dependent:** A native species which is the focus of a specific conservation program, the cessation of which would result in the species becoming vulnerable, endangered or critically endangered within a period of 5 years.

