

Attachment 3. Desktop Biological Review – Proforma

Pro Forma: Advice for Native Vegetation Clearing Permit amendment pathway

Application to extend 'no clearing after' and expiry date (Administrative amendments)

Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety (DMIRS) requires that amendments to clearing permits, including administrative amendments, be reviewed. The purpose of the review is to clarify whether there have been any substantial changes in conservation values and/or impacts within the application area since the original assessment. Such changes may result in supporting surveys no longer being adequate to support the revised assessment and/or change the outcomes when assessed against the 10 Clearing Principles listed under Schedule 5 of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*.

The purpose of this pro forma is to provide DMIRS with information on:

- changes in conservation values since the original assessment.
- the significance of those changes; and
- the appropriate approval pathway for the area in question.

Where demonstrated through this pro forma, that previous survey information meets current regulator expectations and no substantial changes to known conservation values and/or clearing impacts exist, Rio Tinto Iron Ore (RTIO) would not pursue further survey work to support the administrative amendment.

Where previous supporting surveys are no longer adequate to meet current regulator expectations, or there have been significant changes to the known conservation values since assessment was made, supplementary supporting information will accompany an amendment to the NVCP or new clearing permit application. Rio Tinto will seek confirmation from DMIRS on the appropriate pathway.

Current		Proposed	
CPS#	6127/2	CPS#	6127/3
No clearing after date	31 July 2024	No clearing after date	31 July 2029
Expiry date	31 July 2029	Expiry date	31 July 2034
Clearing approved (ha)	10.0		
Clearing carried out to date (ha)	2.16		
Rehabilitation carried out to date (ha)	0ha		
Justification of extension:	Clearing within CPS 6127/2 to date has been limited, however additional areas are required to be disturbed to access suitable borrow material to support ongoing operational activities. No new areas for clearing are required as part of this permit extension.		

Bio Input/Desktop assessment Assessor: Botanist Bridget Duncan	
Date/s of field surveys:	Reconnaissance flora and vegetation survey, basic fauna survey (Biota, 2014): 2 – 3 April 2014
Survey type/s:	Reconnaissance flora and vegetation survey, basic fauna survey (Biota, 2014)
Constraints / limitations:	Biota (2014): - No qualified zoologists were present during the field survey, however the botanists have experience in fauna habitat assessment and detecting the species of conservation significance typically recorded by surveys of this scale. The assessment of fauna habitats and species were supported by a zoologist, including confirmation of habitat mapping and opportunistic observations made during the field survey. - The survey area was not systematically searched for significant flora.
Have any additional field surveys been undertaken within the Permit area since the original application was submitted?	No additional field surveys have been undertaken since the original application was submitted.
Presence of Threatened flora/fauna?	No Threatened flora species were recorded, and none were considered likely to occur within the survey area (Biota, 2014). No Threatened fauna species were recorded during the survey (Biota, 2014). One Threatened species was considered to have the potential to occur within the survey area: the Pilbara Olive Python, <i>Liasis olivaceus barroni</i> (VU, VU), may occur in the vicinity of rockpiles (Biota, 2014). No rockpiles were recorded within the Permit area, therefore this species is unlikely to occur within the Permit Area.
Presence of Priority flora/fauna?	One Priority flora species was recorded by Biota (2014), <i>Terminalia supranitifolia</i> (P3), however this was located outside the Permit area. This species was recorded on rockpiles, which do not occur within the Permit area. For this reason, it is unlikely that this species would occur within the Permit area. Following the survey, two Priority flora species were considered to have the potential to occur within the survey area: <i>Vigna triodiophila</i> (P3; previously known as <i>Vigna</i> sp. rockpiles (R. Butcher et al. RB 1400)) was considered likely to occur within the survey area (Biota, 2014). As this species occurs on rockpiles, it is considered unlikely to occur within the Permit area. <i>Rhynchosia bungarensis</i> (P4) has been recorded from rockpiles of the Burrup Peninsula (Biota, 2014). This species is unlikely to occur within the Permit area due to lack of suitable habitat. No Priority fauna species were recorded by Biota (2014). One species, the Lined Soil-crevice Skink, <i>Notoscincus butleri</i> (P4), was considered to have the potential to occur within the survey area. The nearest record of this species is 4.0 km west of the Permit area (ALA, 2024). Due to the small amount of clearing proposed within the Permit area, the conservation status of this species would not be affected (Biota, 2014).
Presence of Threatened Ecological Communities?	No Threatened Ecological Communities occur within the Permit area.

Presence of Priority Ecological Communities?	One Priority Ecological Community was recorded by Biota (2014): the 'Burrup Peninsula rock pile communities' Priority 1 PEC was recorded on two rockpiles, however these were outside the Permit area. For this reason, no PECs occur within the Permit area.
Have there been any changes to the conservation rank of species or communities identified in previous surveys?	No changes to the conservation rank of species or communities have occurred.
Have any new species, communities or habitats of elevated environmental value been identified within the boundary of the clearing permit?	No new species, communities or habitats of elevated environmental value have been identified within the boundary of the clearing permit.
Other changes relevant to conservation of significant biological values in the context of the impact assessment (e.g., changes in known species distributions, new threats etc.)?	<i>Vigna triodiophila</i> (P3) was previously known as <i>Vigna</i> sp. rockpiles (R. Butcher et al. RB 1400). This species was described in 2016. Its conservation status remains unchanged. The Australian Bustard, <i>Ardeotis australis</i> , was listed as a P4 species, however it is no longer listed. This species was considered likely to occur within the survey area (Biota, 2014). The Bush Stone-curlew, <i>Burhinus grallarius</i> , was listed as a P4 species, however it is no longer listed. This species was considered to have the potential to occur within the survey area (Biota, 2014).
Is a field survey required to validate desktop assessment? Why / why not?	Additional field surveys are not required to validate the desktop assessment, as the environmental information and assessment remains consistent with the assessment contained in decision report CPS 6127/2.
Is a new survey required? Why / why not?	A new survey is not required. The current survey coverage provides a sufficient level of environmental information for the Permit area.

Based on the above information the risk of significant impacts to ecological values (flora, fauna, and ecological communities) due to extending the 'no clearing' and expiry date, is low.

RTIO proposes an administrative amendment to extend the 'no clearing after' date and the expiry date. DMIRS Native Vegetation Branch to advise if this approach is considered appropriate.

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DMIRS Native Vegetation Branch approves an administrative amendment pathway

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DMIRS Native Vegetation Branch **does not** approve an administrative amendment pathway and will advise RTIO of the preferred approval pathway

Name: _____

Date: _____

References

ALA, Atlas of Living Australia. (2024). *Occurrence Search*

Biota. (2014). *Dampier Salt Eastern Lease Native Vegetation Clearing Permit Report*.