Government of Western Australia
Department of Water and Environmental Regulation

Clearing Permit Decision Report

1. Application details

1.1. Permit application details

Permit application No.: CPS 8244/1
Permit type: Area Permit

1.2. Applicant details

Applicant's name: Free Reformed Church of Southern River
Application received date: 8 November 2018

1.3. Property details

Property: Lot 16 on Plan 8225
Local Government Authority: City of Gosnells
Localities: Southern River

1.4. Application

Clearing Area (ha)	No. Trees	Method of Clearing	Purpose category:
0.25		Mechanical Removal	Landscaping

1.5. Decision on application

Decision on Permit Application: Grant
Decision Date: 14 February 2019
Reasons for Decision: The clearing permit application was received on 8 November 2018 and has been assessed against the clearing principles, planning instruments and other matters in accordance with section 51O of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*, and it has been concluded that the proposed clearing is at variance to principle (f) is not likely to be at variance to any of the remaining clearing principles.

The Delegated Officer determined that the proposed clearing may increase the risk of dieback and weeds being introduced or spread into adjacent native vegetation. Dieback and weed management measures will minimise impacts to adjacent native vegetation.

In determining to grant a clearing permit subject to conditions, the Delegated Officer determined that the proposed clearing is not likely to have any unacceptable impacts to environmental values.

2. Site Information

Clearing Description: The application is for an Area Permit to clear 0.25 hectares within Lot 16 on Plan 8225, Southern River, for the purpose of landscaping. Some trees and *Xanthorrhoea preissii* (grasstree) will be retained (Alita Constructions, 2018). The application area is indicated in Figure 1.

Vegetation Description: The application area is mapped as Southern River Swan Coastal Plain vegetation complex described as:

Open woodland of *Corymbia calophylla* (Marri) - *Eucalyptus marginata* (Jarrah) - Banksia species with fringing woodland of *Eucalyptus rudis* (Flooded Gum) - *Melaleuca rhaphiophylla* (Swamp Paperbark) along creek beds. (Heddle et al, 1980).

Vegetation Condition: The condition of the vegetation within the application area is considered to be:

- Completely Degraded: No longer intact, completely/almost completely without native species (Keighery, 1994): to
- Good: vegetation structure significantly altered by very obvious signs of multiple disturbance; retains basic structure or ability to regenerate (Keighery 1994).

Soil/Landform Type: The application area is mapped within the following land subsystems:

- Pinjarra P1b Phase subsystem (75% of the application area): is described as Flat to very gently undulating plain with deep acidic mottled yellow duplex soils. Moderately deep pale sand to loamy sand over clay: imperfectly drained and moderately susceptible to salinity in limited areas (Schoknecht et al., 2004).
- Bassendean B1 Phase subsystem (25% of the application area): is described as: Extremely low to very low relief dunes, undulating sandplain and discrete sand rises with deep bleached grey sands sometimes with a pale yellow B horizon or a weak iron-organic hardpan at depths generally greater than 2 m; banksia dominant (Schoknecht et al., 2004).

Comments: Vegetation condition was determined by photographs provided by the applicant (Alita Constructions, 2019) The local area considered in the assessment of this application is defined as a 10 kilometre radius around the perimeter of the application area. According to available aerial imagery, the local area retains approximately 10 per cent native vegetation cover.

Figure 9: Application area (cross-hatched blue)

3. Assessment of application against clearing principles

According to available databases, 19 threatened flora species and 62 priority flora species have been recorded within the local area. Based on the mapped soil and vegetation types, two priority flora species could potentially occur within the application area. These are outlined below:

- *Verticordia lindleyi subsp. lindleyi* (Priority 4) is known to occur in winter wet depressions and sand/sandy clay soils (Western Australian Herbarium, 1998-). The nearest record of this species is approximately 600 metres from the application area within the same soil sub-system.
- *Jacksonia gracillima* (Priority 3) is known to occur in flat, well-drained areas adjacent to winter-wet swamps; pale grey sand (Western Australian Herbarium, 1998-). The nearest record of this species is approximately 2,488 metres from the application area.

Priority 3 species are known from several locations, and do not appear to be under imminent threat, and Priority 4 species are considered to have been adequately surveyed, and are considered not currently threatened or in need of special protection, but could be if present circumstances change. The proposed clearing is not likely impact on the conservation status of any Priority 3 or Priority 4 flora species if they were present within the application area.

Noting the extent of the proposed clearing, the condition of vegetation within the application area and the vegetation cover in the vicinity of the application area which is expected to be of similar type and in similar or better condition to that present within the application area, the application area is unlikely to comprise a high level of biological diversity.

According to available databases, 12 threatened fauna species, 17 priority fauna species, three specially protected fauna species, and 19 fauna species protected under international agreement have been recorded within the local area. Given the extent of the surrounding vegetation, the application area is not likely to contain significant fauna habitat and is not likely to be significant as a wildlife corridor.

According to available databases, the application area is mapped as '*Banksia dominated woodlands of the Swan Coastal Plain'* ecological community (Priority 3). Photos provided by the applicant (Alita Constructions, 2019) indicate that vegetation within the application area is dominated by *Melaleuca* sp, and *Allocasuarina* sp. and is therefore not representative of this ecological community.

The national objectives and targets for biodiversity conservation in Australia has a target to prevent clearance of ecological communities with an extent below 30 per cent of that present pre-1750, below which species loss appears to accelerate exponentially at an ecosystem level (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001). Within constrained areas (areas of urban development in cities and major towns) on the Swan Coastal Plain, the threshold for representation of the pre-clearing extent of a particular native vegetation complex is 10 per cent (EPA, 2008). The application area is within a constrained area.

The Swan Coastal Plain Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation of Australia bioregion retains approximately 38.47 per cent of the pre-European extent of native vegetation (Government of Western Australia, 2018). The mapped Southern River vegetation complex (Heddle et al, 1980) retains approximately, 18.42 per cent (approximately 10,828 hectares) of the pre-European extent

(Government of Western Australia, 2018). Noting that the application area represents approximately 0.25 hectares, the application area is not considered to be significant as a remnant of native vegetation in an area that has been extensively cleared.

According to available databases, the application area is within a mapped wetland (Resource Enhancement – Dampland) and part of the application area does contain species that are associated with the wetlands (*Melaleuca* spp). As such the proposed clearing is at variance to this principle, however, the extent of the proposed clearing is unlikely to have a significant impact on the wetland.

According to available databases, the nearest conservation area is the Balannup Lake Nature Reserve, located 1,377 metres from the application area. Noting this, the proposed clearing is unlikely to impact on the environmental values of nearby conservation areas.

Noting the size of the application area, the proposed clearing is not likely to cause appreciable land degradation, or cause deterioration in the quality of surface or underground water, or cause or exacerbate the incidence or intensity of flooding.

The application area is adjacent to remnant vegetation, and the proposed clearing is likely to increase the risk of introduction or spread of weeds and dieback into adjacent vegetation. Weed and dieback management conditions have been imposed on the permit and will assist in managing this risk.

The assessment has found that the proposed clearing is at variance to principle (f) and not likely to be at variance to any of the clearing principles.

Planning instruments and other relevant matters

No Aboriginal sites of significance have been mapped within the application area.

The City of Gosnells noted that the western most portion of the application area is within the original 2003 development approval footprint and is subject to compliance with the Wetland Management Plan developed as a condition of the development approval. The City of Gosnells recommends that should the clearing be approved, the potential impacts of landscape works, introduction of environmental weeds, irrigation and fertiliser use on the adjoining wetland and its vegetation should be addressed by way of a Landscape Management Plan (City of Gosnells, 2019).

The clearing permit application was advertised on the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation website on 21 December 2018 with a 14 day submission period. No public submissions have been received in relation to this application.

4. References

Alita Constructions (2019) Photographs of the application area to support Clearing Permit Application – CPS 8244/1 Free Reformed Church of Southern River

Alita Constructions (2018) Landscape Plan to support Clearing Permit Application – CPS 8244/1 Free Reformed Church of Southern River

City of Gosnells (2019) Direct interest email response (DWER ref: A1754211)

Commonwealth of Australia (2001) National Objectives and Targets for Biodiversity Conservation 2001-2005, Canberra.

Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) (2008) Guidance Statement 33 – Environmental Guidance for Planning and Development

Government of Western Australia. (2018) 2017 Statewide Vegetation Statistics incorporating the CAR Reserve Analysis (Full Report). Current as of December 2017. WA Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions. Available from: https://catalogue.data.wa.gov.au/dataset/dbca-statewide-vegetation-statistics

Heddle, E. M., Loneragan, O. W., and Havel, J. J. (1980) Vegetation Complexes of the Darling System, Western Australia. In Department of Conservation and Environment, Atlas of Natural Resources, Darling System, Western Australia.

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

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.

Western Australian Herbarium (1998–). FloraBase—the Western Australian Flora. Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions. https://florabase.dpaw.wa.gov.au/. Accessed January 2019.

GIS Databases:

- Aboriginal Sites of Significance
- DBCA Managed Estate
- Directory of Important Wetlands
- Geomorphic Wetlands Swan Coastal Plain
- Groundwater salinity
- Hydrography, hierarchy
- Hydrography, linear
- Land Degradation datasets
- SAC Bio Datasets
- Soils, Statewide
- Topographic contours
- Vegetation Complexes Swan Coastal Plain