

Pro Forma: Advice for Native Vegetation Clearing Permit amendment pathway

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

Department of Energy, 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 DEMIRS 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 DEMIRS on the appropriate pathway.

Current		Proposed	
CPS#	8319/1	CPS#	8319/2
No clearing after date	31/12/2024	No clearing after date	31/12/2029
Expiry date	31/12/2029	Expiry date	31/12/2034
Clearing approved (ha)	110		
Clearing carried out to date (ha)	0		
Rehabilitation carried out to date (ha)	0		
Justification of extension:	An extension of the no clearing after date is required to support future exploration and monitoring activities within the permit area.		

Bio Input/Desktop assessment	
Assessor: Botanist Laura Parker	
Date/s of field surveys:	NVCP-level biological assessment, Biota Environmental Sciences (2018) - 19 th – 25 th July 2018.
Survey type/s:	Surveys of the Application Area are detailed below: - Puluru Native Vegetation Clearing Permit Supporting Report (Biota, 2018): NVCP-level biological assessment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reconnaissance flora & vegetation survey ○ Level 1 fauna survey ○ Targeted flora and fauna survey
Constraints / limitations:	Biota (2018): The broader locality has not been surveyed, therefore regional and local level information is a minor limiting factor for this study. Publicly available databases for significant species and ecological communities were accessed prior to the survey.
Have any additional field surveys been undertaken within the Permit area since the original application was submitted?	No additional field surveys have been undertaken.
Presence of Threatened flora/fauna?	No threatened flora species were recorded during the survey, and none were considered to have potential to occur based on the desktop assessment (Biota 2018). The following threatened fauna were either known or considered to have potential to occur within the Application Area when CPS 8319/1 was granted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recorded: Pilbara Leaf-nosed Bat (VU) • Likely to occur: Pilbara Olive Python (VU) • May Occur: Northern Quoll (EN), Ghost Bat (VU), Grey Falcon (VU). The Pilbara Leaf-nosed Bat was recorded from calls only, and no critical habitat (caves supporting roosting and breeding habitat) were identified within the Application Area.
Presence of Priority flora/fauna?	The following species of Priority flora were known to occur within the Application Area when CPS 8319/1 was granted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Sida</i> sp. Hamersley Range (K. Newbey 10692) (P3) - <i>Indigofera rivularis</i> (P3) - <i>Triodia basitricha</i> (P3) - <i>Rhynchosia bungarensis</i> (P4). Only one other priority flora species (<i>Goodenia nuda</i>) was considered likely to occur, however this species was removed from the DBCA priority flora list in August 2022. No priority fauna species were known known to occur within the Application Area when CPS 8319/1 was granted by DEMIRS. The following priority fauna species were considered to have potential to occur: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Long-tailed Dunnart (<i>Sminthopsis longicaudata</i> (P4)) - Western Pebble-mound Mouse (<i>Pseudomys chapmani</i> (P4)) - Peregrine Falcon (<i>Peregrinus falco</i> (OS))
Presence of Threatened Ecological Communities?	No TECs occur within the Application Area. The closest TEC is the <i>Themeda</i> grasslands on cracking clays (Hamersley Station, Pilbara) (VU), which is located ~50.1 km southeast of the Application Area.

Presence of Priority Ecological Communities?	No PECs occur within the Application Area. The closest PEC is Kumina Land System located approximately ~2.5 km north of the Application Area.
Have there been any changes to the conservation rank of species or communities identified in previous surveys?	<p>The following flora species of conservation significance were recorded within the Application Area which have since had conservation changes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Sida</i> sp. Hamersley Range (K. Newbey 10692) (P3): This species was previously listed a Priority 1 at the time of the Biota (2018) survey. <p>A desktop survey completed following the Biota (2018) survey determined the following fauna species of conservation significance (which have since had conservation changes) “may potentially occur”:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Grey Falcon (<i>Falco hypoleucos</i>): this species was listed as Schedule 3 (Vulnerable) at the State level at the time CPS 8319/1 was granted. This species was listed as Vulnerable at the Federal level in July 2020. The report found that the Grey Falcon may periodically occur within the survey area in a transitory nature but are not reliant on the habitats present. The report stated that the proposal and associated activities would not have a significant effect on the species. <p>In March 2023, the Southern Whiteface (<i>Aphelocephala leucopsis</i>) was listed as Vulnerable under the EPBC Act. This species is unlikely to occur as the Application Area occurs outside of the known distribution of the species. Biota (2018) did not record any presence of the Southern Whiteface at the time of the survey.</p>
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 been identified within the Application Area.
Other changes relevant to conservation of significant biotaal values in the context of the impact assessment (e.g., changes in known species distributions, new threats etc.)?	<p>One priority flora species has had a name change:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Indigofera rivularis</i> (P3): this species was previously known as <i>Indigofera</i> sp. Bungaroo Creek (S. van Leeuwen 4301) and formally described in 2021. It was already listed as P3 under its previous name. <i>Indigofera rivularis</i> (P3) was known to occur within the Application Area when CPS 8319/1 was granted by DEMIRS.
Is a field survey required to validate desktop assessment? Why / why not?	Additional field surveys are not required to validate the results. The existing survey work has indicated good overall coverage with few survey limitations. The existing survey is consistent with the requirements stipulated in the relevant EPA technical guidance statements.
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 Application 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.

Desktop Assessment Completed by:

Name: Laura Parker

Title: Botanist, Pilbara Environment and Cultural Knowledge