



## 1. Application details

### 1.1. Permit application details

Permit application No.: 8721/1  
Permit type: Purpose Permit

### 1.2. Applicant details

Applicant's name: Cooperative Bulk Handling Pty Ltd  
Application received date: 04 November 2019

### 1.3. Property details

Property: Knotts Road Reserve (PIN 11464436), Balladong.  
Local Government Authority: Shire of York  
Locality: Balladong

### 1.4. Application

Clearing Area (ha)	No. Trees	Method of Clearing	Purpose category:
0	9	Mechanical removal	Road construction or upgrades

### 1.5. Decision on application

Decision on Permit Application: Granted

Decision Date: 24 February 2020

**Reasons for Decision:** The clearing permit application received on 4 November 2019 has been assessed against the clearing principles, planning instruments and other matters in accordance with section 51O of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*. It has been concluded that the proposed clearing is at variance with principle (e) and is not likely to be at variance with the remaining clearing principles.

Knotts Road Reserve is vested in the Shire of York. The Delegated Officer had regard to an authorisation from the Shire of York to Cooperative Bulk Handling Pty Ltd (CBH) to undertake the vegetation clearing within the Knotts Road Reserve. The clearing required is opposite a recently up-graded CBH York receival point. A specific traffic impact report (Roadwest Engineering Group 2018) justified road widening at this location on safety grounds, with the associated removal of nine trees.

The application area is located within the extensively cleared Avon Wheatbelt Bioregion that. At the local scale, of within a ten kilometre radius, 10.4 per cent of remnant vegetation remains. CBH has committed to planting 18 replacement York Gums (a 2:1 ratio) at the same general location within Knotts Road Reserve to mitigate the loss of nine trees within the local area.

The Delegated Officer determined that given the small area, the condition of the vegetation, and mitigation measures implemented, the proposed clearing is unlikely to have a significant residual impacts and is not likely to lead to an unacceptable risk to the environment. Given the above, the Delegated Officer decided to grant a clearing permit subject to weed and dieback management, revegetation and reporting conditions.

## 2. Site Information

**Clearing Description:** CBH has applied for a Purpose Permit to clear nine trees within Knotts Road Reserve (PIN 11464436) in Balladong (York), Western Australia. CBH is upgrading its York Grain Storage Facility and a Traffic Impact Assessment Report (Roadwest Engineering Group 2018) identified the need for road widening along Knotts Road at the entrance of the upgraded facility. The road widening is required for safety reasons in regards to large vehicles entering and exiting the facility.

**Vegetation Description:** The vegetation over the application area consists of nine York Gums (*Eucalyptus loxophleba*) with an understorey of introduced grasses (Figure 1).

**Vegetation Condition:** Vegetation condition over the application area is Degraded to Completely Degraded based on the condition scale of Keighery (1994) (Figure 1), described as:

- Degraded: Basic vegetation structure severely impacted by disturbance; scope for regeneration but not to a state approaching Good condition without intensive management (Keighery 1994).
- Completely Degraded: The structure of the vegetation is no longer intact and the area is completely or almost completely without native species (Keighery, 1994).

- Soil Description:** The application area is located on alluvial terraces and floodplains of the Avon Flats Subsystem. Soils, particularly in the southern section of the application area are typified by the red soils of the Avon Valley but could also include similar, but greyer and lighter textured soils.
- Comments:** Assessment of the environmental values of the application area was considered at a local scale given the minimal extent of proposed clearing. This included a 10 kilometre radius measured from the perimeter of the application area.



**Figure 1:** York Gums closest to the road centre line to be removed

### 3. Minimisation and mitigation measures

CBH propose to undertake vegetation clearing within the Knotts Road Reserve in order to facilitate road widening to improve safety at the CBH facility, located at 39 Knotts Road, Balladong, Western Australia. CBH is upgrading its York Grain Storage Facility and a Traffic Impact Assessment Report (Roadwest Engineering Group 2018) identified the requirement for road widening along Knotts Road. Roadwest Engineering Group (2018) recommended widening from Avon Terrace to the subject CBH driveways, a distance of approximately 425 metres, such that traffic lanes are a minimum 3.5 metres wide and unsealed shoulders are at a minimum of 1.2 metres.

Within this area CBH has limited clearing to just one side only (north-west) of Knotts Road with the nine trees requiring removal being the closest to the Knotts Road centreline over a length of approximately 130 metres. Clearing will only take place in the vicinity of the entrance to the upgraded CBH York Grain Storage Facility, and only on the north-western side of Knotts Road to facilitate the safe entry and exit of large vehicles.

To avoid impacts CBH have limited the amount of clearing as much as practicable in consideration of the safe use of Knotts Road as prescribed by Roadwest Engineering Group (2018). CBH have undertaken a secondary review of requirements with attention focused on retaining as many York Gums as possible. Accordingly, CBH has reduced the number of trees to be removed from 11 to nine, with the nine trees requiring removal representing a potential safety risk. To minimise impacts CBH have only included trees that are within the road design of Roadwest Engineering Group (2018).

As a mitigation strategy CBH has committed to planting 18 replacement York Gums (that is a 2:1 ratio) at the same general location within Knotts Road reserve, outside of the design road batters, to replace the trees that are to be removed.

### 4. Assessment of application against clearing principles

The clearing application of nine York Gums within the Knotts Road Reserve is located in the Shire of York, within the Avon Wheatbelt Bioregion and the Katanning sub-region of Thackway and Cresswell (1995). A survey (360 Environmental) was undertaken over a larger area of approximately 200 metres (0.23 hectares in area), within which the application area of nine York Gums (*Eucalyptus loxophleba*) are located. This larger area recorded twenty-seven trees, all of which were York Gums, over an understorey of introduced grasses (360 Environmental 2019).

No Threatened or Priority flora taxa have been recorded from within the application area, or the Knotts Road Reserve within the vicinity of the application area. According to available databases, 49 conservation significant flora taxa have been recorded within the local area, including seven threatened, six P1, two P2, twenty-one P3 and thirteen P4 taxa. None of these taxa occur within 1.5 kilometres of the application area, with the closest being *Allocasuarina fibrosa* (T), *Xanthoparmelia hypoleiella* (P3) and *Asterolasia grandiflora* (P4) between 1.9 kilometres and 2.6 kilometres to the north. Given the degraded nature of the application area consisting of York Gums (*Eucalyptus loxophleba*) over an understorey of introduced grasses it is not likely that Threatened or Priority flora taxa occur.

There are no recognised ecological linkages within close proximity to the application area and the closest Environmentally Sensitive Area (ESA) is over 15 kilometres to the west (St Ronans Nature Reserve). Eucalypt woodlands of the Western Australian Wheatbelt is a Critically Endangered Threatened Ecological Community (TEC) listed under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) (Commonwealth), and a Priority Ecological Community (P3) listed by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA). Regional mapping of this community occurs within 75 metres to the west of the application area but not over the application area itself. Given the degraded condition of the application area it is unlikely to be representative of this TEC due to patches that are below Good condition (Keighery 1994) and under 5 metres in width being excluded (Commonwealth of Australia 2016). The Priority 1 PEC, Pools of the Avon and Dale Rivers, has been mapped 700 metres to the north-east, however the application area is not representative of this PEC.

Given the Degraded to Completely Degraded condition of the vegetation over the application area, the small scale of clearing, and the lack of Priority and Threatened flora taxa recorded in the vicinity, it is unlikely that the application area comprises a high level of biodiversity. Vegetation is not likely to be consistent with key diagnostic criteria for any TECs or PEC's. Therefore the proposed clearing is not likely to be at variance with Principles (a), (c) or (d).

No Threatened or Priority fauna species have been recorded from within the application area, or the Knotts Road Reserve within the vicinity of the application area. According to available databases 16 conservation significant fauna species have been recorded within the local area. These species include seven Threatened species, three Specially Protected species, one P3 species, three P4 species and two migratory species. The closest of these records was a Water Rat (*Hydromys chrysogaster*) (P4) record from the year 2000, 480 metres north of the application area. A Carnaby's Cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus latirostris*) (T) roost area has been recorded approximately two kilometres to the north of the application area, and black cockatoo sightings have been recorded approximately one kilometre to the north and 1.1 kilometres to the west. Of the Threatened or Priority fauna species recorded within the local area the vagile black cockatoo species have the potential to utilise the application area.

Of the three black cockatoo species that occur in the south-west of Western Australia two species have been recorded within the vicinity of the application area; Carnaby's Cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus latirostris*) and Baudin's Cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus baudinii*), both listed as Endangered under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* (BC Act) (Western Australia), and the EPBC Act) (Commonwealth). Of these two species Baudin's Cockatoo occurs predominantly in the forested south west, whereas the range of Carnaby's Cockatoo includes wheatbelt areas, and is therefore more likely to occur within the vicinity of the application area. This is reflected in database search results with 34 records of Carnaby's Cockatoo within 10 kilometres of the application area and just three records of Baudin's cockatoo.

Black cockatoo habitat can be considered in terms of breeding habitat, night roosting habitat, and foraging habitat. Black cockatoos will generally forage up to 12 kilometres from an active breeding site and, following breeding, will flock in search of food, usually within six kilometres of a night roost (DSEWPac 2012a). A black cockatoo habitat assessment was undertaken over a larger survey area of approximately 200 metres of the Knotts Road Reserve that included the application area (360 Environmental 2019).

The area surveyed consisted entirely of York Gums (*Eucalyptus loxophleba*); with twenty-seven York Gums assessed in total. Nine York Gums occur within the application area, with three recording a Diameter at Breast Height (DBH) greater than 500 millimetres. Of these three, just one recorded a hollow, however, this was a narrow hollow at the base of the tree unsuitable for black cockatoo breeding and currently occupied by feral bees. Apart from this small hollow no other hollows were recorded in the remaining nine trees (360 Environmental 2019). No confirmed black cockatoo breeding areas or black cockatoo breeding records occur within ten kilometres of the application area, and no trees suitable for breeding are present.

A confirmed Carnaby's Cockatoo roost site occurs approximately two kilometres to the north of the application area. Roosts are generally the tallest trees within an area and although the York Gums recorded within the application area have the potential to be used for roosting they are unlikely to be used due to insufficient height, and no evidence of roosting was observed by 360 Environmental (2019).

The application area is within six kilometres of a known Carnaby's Cockatoo's night roost and therefore native vegetation occurring over the application area could be utilised as foraging habitat by this species. Carnaby's Cockatoo's can forage on York Gum blossoms, however, York Gum is not considered a high-value foraging species (360 Environmental 2019). Baudin's Cockatoo and the Forest Red-tailed Black Cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus banksii naso*) do not have a preference for York Gum (DoEE 2020a; DoEE 2020b), and no evidence of any black cockatoo foraging was recorded by 360 Environmental (2019). Due to the Degraded to Completely Degraded condition of the application area and the lack of breeding, roosting, or quality foraging habitat for black cockatoos (360 Environmental 2019) proposed clearing is not likely to be at variance to Principle (b).

National Objectives and Targets for Biodiversity Conservation (2001-2005) include a target to have clearing controls in place that prevent clearance of ecological communities with an extent below 30 per cent of that present prior to the year 1750 (Commonwealth of Australia 2001). The application area is located within the Avon Wheatbelt Bioregion that has been extensively cleared, with 18.5 per cent remaining and just 1.4 per cent represented in DBCA managed lands (Government of Western Australia 2018). The represented vegetation association over the application area: Beard association 352 - Medium woodland; York Gum (Shepherd, *et al.* 2001) has 19.61 per cent remaining in total, and 17.27 per cent remaining within the Avon Wheatbelt Bioregion (Government of Western Australia 2018). Within the local area, 10.4 per cent of remnant vegetation remains. The Avon Wheatbelt is extensively cleared and a low percentage of remnant vegetation remains in the local area. Despite vegetation being in a Degraded to

Completely Degraded condition, due to the proposed clearing area containing black cockatoo foraging within an extensively cleared landscape, the proposed clearing is at variance with Principle (e). To mitigate the loss of black cockatoo foraging and vegetation located within an extensively cleared landscape, CBH will be planting 18 York Gums within the adjacent road reserve.

No wetlands or watercourses occur over the application area. The Avon River (a recognised Wheatbelt Wetland) occurs approximately 650 metres to the north-east, and a significant stream (Bland Brook) occurs approximately 65 metres to the west of the application area. Five additional wetlands have been mapped within 10 kilometres of the application area (IDs 23083, 21836, 25285, 26736 and 27748), the closest of which is located 4.3 kilometres to the west. There are no recognised ecological linkages within close proximity to the application area. Riparian vegetation 40 metres to the west of the application area, associated with Bland Brook, provides a linear ecological connection to the Avon River to the north-east, however, the application area is disjunct from this riparian system. There is just one conservation reserve managed by DBCA for conservation purposes within 10 kilometres of the application area: a 16.4 hectare unnamed reserve (ID 450202) located approximately 8.3 kilometres to the east. Due to the lack of watercourses, wetlands or riparian habitat and the distances to any conservation reserves, the proposed clearing is not at variance with Principles (f) or (h).

York has an annual average rainfall of approximately 406 millimetres, with the wettest month being July (70.5 millimetres), and the driest month February (12.4 millimetres) (BOM 2020). The application area is located within the Northern Zone of Rejuvenated Drainage hydrological zone, on the alluvial terraces and floodplains that occur adjacent to the Avon River (on the Avon Flats Subsystem). Ten to 30 per cent of the mapped M1 unit, within which the application area is located, has a moderate to high salinity risk (or is presently saline), and a high to extreme wind erosion risk. Soils are formed in colluvium or in-situ weathered rock, and mainly from Jimperding Metamorphic Rocks. Soils, particularly in the southern section of the application area are typified by the red soils of the Avon Valley, but could also include similar, but greyer and lighter textured soils.

The application area is located within the proclaimed Avon River Catchment Area (surface water area) under the *Rights in Water and Irrigation Act 1914* (RIWI Act), but well outside of any *Country Areas Water Supply Act 1947* reserves, or Public Drinking Water Source Areas. The area is relatively flat, and located within a mapped H2 unit whereby 70 per cent of the mapped area has a moderate to high hazard rating for flooding, primarily due to the proximity of Bland Brook 65 metres to the west, and the Avon River approximately 650 metres to the north-east. Given the location and the small scale of clearing, it is unlikely that proposed clearing of nine trees would contribute to or cause appreciable land degradation, deteriorate the quality of groundwater or surface water, nor exacerbate flooding and is therefore not likely to be at variance with Principles (g), (i) or (j).

### Planning instruments and other relevant matters

The application was advertised on the DWER website for a 14 day public comment period on 03 December 2019. No public submissions were received in relation to this application.

Knotts Road Reserve (Road Reserve 11464436) is vested in the Shire of York. The Shire of York has granted CBH authority to undertake vegetation clearing within the Knotts Road Reserve, opposite the CBH York receipt point, subject to obtaining a native vegetation clearing permit from DWER (Shire of York 2019a).

Knotts Road Reserve (Road Reserve 11464436) is vested in the Shire of York. The Shire of York has granted CBH authority to plant 18 York Gums subject to the trees being planted a minimum of five metres from the edge of seal (this complies to road run off clear zone safety) (Shire of York 2019b).

A specific traffic impact report has been prepared to justify the widening of Knotts Road on safety grounds (Roadwest Engineering Group 2018).

The relevant Local Government Area (LGA), the Shire of York, was contacted as a direct interest party. No objections relating to the proposed clearing were received.

The application area is located within the boundaries of the Ballardong People Indigenous Land Use Agreement and within 50 metres of a registered heritage site. The 'Swan River' registered site includes Bland Brook, with its mapped boundary approximately 45 metres to the west of the application area. The river, and the areas surrounding it, is an Aboriginal site of significance and it is the applicant's responsibility to ensure compliance with any obligations under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972*.

## 5. References

- 360 Environmental (2019) York Black Cockatoo Habitat Assessment. Unpublished report by 360 Environmental for CBH Pty Ltd. 10<sup>th</sup> September 2019 (REF\_A1847388).
- Bureau of Meteorology (BOM) (2020) Climate Data Online. Available at <http://www.bom.gov.au/>.
- Commonwealth of Australia (2001) National Objectives and Targets for Biodiversity Conservation 2001-2005, Canberra.
- Commonwealth of Australia (2016) Eucalypt Woodlands of the Western Australian Wheatbelt: a nationally protected ecological community. Commonwealth of Australia 2016.
- Department of Environment and Energy (DoEE) (2020a) Species Profile and Threats Database: *Calyptorhynchus baudinii* — Baudin's Cockatoo, Baudin's Black-Cockatoo, Long-billed Black-Cockatoo. Department of Environment and Energy. <http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/sprat/public/publicspecies.pl>.
- Department of Environment and Energy (DoEE) (2020b) Species Profile and Threats Database: *Calyptorhynchus banksii naso* — Forest Red-tailed Black-Cockatoo, Karrak. Department of Environment and Energy. <http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/sprat/public/publicspecies.pl>.
- Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (DSEWPaC) (2012) EPBC Act referral guidelines for three threatened black cockatoo species: Carnaby's cockatoo (endangered) *Calyptorhynchus latirostris*,

Baudin's cockatoo (vulnerable) *Calyptorhynchus baudinii*, Forest red-tailed black cockatoo (vulnerable) *Calyptorhynchus banksii naso*. Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (now the Department of Environment and Energy), Canberra.

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.  
<https://catalogue.data.wa.gov.au/dataset/dbca-statewide-vegetation-statistics>.

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

Roadwest Engineering Group (2018) Traffic Management Assessment Report CBH York. Grain Storage Upgrade. Unpublished report produced by Roadwest Engineering Group W.A. Pty. Ltd. on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2018 (REF\_A1847386).

Shepherd, D.P., Beeston, G.R. and Hopkins, A.J.M. (2001) Native Vegetation in Western Australia, Extent, Type and Status. Resource Management Technical Report 249. Department of Agriculture, Western Australia.

Shire of York (2019a) Letter from the Shire of York (Executive Manager Infrastructure and Development Services) to CBH Group (Planning and Approvals Coordinator) (REF\_A1863991).

Shire of York (2019b) Email from the Shire of York (Executive Manager Infrastructure and Development Services) to CBH Group (Planning and Approvals Coordinator) (REF\_A1868232).

Thackway, R and Cresswell, I.D. (eds) (1995) An interim biogeographical regionalisation of Australia. Australian Nature Conservation Agency (now Department of Environment and Energy), Canberra.

GIS Databases:

- Aboriginal Sites of Significance
- Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, Managed Tenure
- Geomorphic Wetlands Management Category
- Hydrography Linear – Linear
- Hydrography WA 250K – Surface Water Lines
- IBRA Australia
- Land Degradation Hazards
- SAC bio datasets
- Threatened and Priority Fauna Data November 2019
- TPFL Data November 2019
- WA Herb Data November 2019
- WA TEC-PEC Boundaries