

# Attachment 1: Desktop assessment and site inspection, Warner Glen Road upgrade



**File reference:** RDS/0030

## **Background**

It is proposed to reconstruct and slightly widen a section of Warner Glen Road, as shown in the accompanying maps. The road is currently failing with deformations causing safety hazards. It is also currently 5-6 metres wide, which is insufficient given the large volumes of general and heavy traffic. It is proposed to reconstruct and widen the sealed road to 6.5 metres, with 1 metre unsealed edges on either side, and associated drainage works.

The road works will result in the remove a total of 15 roadside native trees, three of which involve the removal of dead trees or stems. There will be no clearing of native understorey.

A desktop assessment, followed by site inspections by environment and landcare officers, has been undertaken of the road reserve. The vegetation in the road reserve is in completely degraded condition. In most sections of the road reserve from Brockman Highway north to the Blackwood River bridge, there is a loss of native understorey, and weeds are dominant throughout the site. Roadside trees predominantly comprise stands of introduced species including *Eucalyptus grandis*, and other non-local Eucalyptus species interspersed with isolated marri (*Corymbia calophylla*), and blackbutt (*Eucalyptus patens*). Photographs taken of the proposed clearing areas are included as a shapefile, and a list of photos and descriptions are included at Attachment 2.

Road widening works along Warner Glen Road will involve some removal of roadside trees, most of which are introduced species. Fifteen native trees are proposed for removal where they occur within the road widening footprint and cannot be avoided, and/or pose a safety risk. These are predominantly marri and blackbutt trees. Three of these trees involve the removal of dead individuals or branches. The crowns of the trees were inspected and do not indicate potential breeding habitat for black cockatoos, due to the absence of branches large enough to contain significant hollows. There was no evidence of western ringtail possum activity in the area.

The road reserve is surrounded by cleared, rural land, and the roadside vegetation provides minimal linkages to other areas of remnant vegetation in the region. Two small Shire-vested reserves are located close to the northern clearing area for the purpose of 'Recreation' and 'Rubbish Dump'. The next closes reserve is the Alexandra Bridge campground, which is about 2 kilometres from the southern clearing area. Removal of the roadside trees will not have any impacts on existing reserves or areas or remnant vegetation.

The Blackwood River runs about 2 kilometres to the west of road. The northern clearing area occurs along a minor drainage channel, which crosses the Warner Glen Road. Road works in this area will improve surface drainage, and reduce the occurrence of flooding, sediment build up, and erosion.

There are no known occurrences of threatened flora, fauna or threatened ecological communities within the road reserve. There are previous records of Carnaby's Cockatoo, Baudin's Cockatoo, and south western brush tailed phascogale in reserves to the south. It is unlikely that the proposed clearing will impact on any significant habitat for these species.

### **Conclusion and management actions**

The proposed removal of 15 trees within the Warner Glen road reserve to allow for road widening and drainage works unlikely to be at variance with the 10 clearing principles. The Shire of Augusta Margaret River will implement the following measures to ensure that impacts are minimised wherever possible.

- Clearing of native vegetation will be minimised wherever possible. The road reconstruction has been designed to avoid native tree removal where possible, and there will be no clearing of native understorey species.
- Retrenchment pruning of large branches will be undertaken as an alternative to tree removal where branches pose a safety hazard.
- Road works will be designed to improve surface drainage, and reduce the occurrence of flooding, sediment build up, and erosion
- Dieback and weed control measures will be implemented during operations.

### **Comments on the proposed clearing against the clearing principles**

*Principle (a) – Native vegetation should not be cleared if it comprises a high level of biological diversity*

It is not anticipated that the proposed clearing will have an impact on vegetation that is of a high level of biodiversity. The roadside vegetation is in completely degraded condition, with stands of trees occurring along the roadside in a narrow corridor, dominated by introduced species including *Eucalyptus grandis*, interspersed with isolated marri (*Corymbia calophylla*) and blackbutt (*Eucalyptus patens*). The roadside is otherwise parkland cleared, and dominated by weeds and pasture species. Native understorey will not be impacted by the road works.

The road reserve is surrounded by cleared, rural land. There are no known occurrences of threatened flora, fauna or threatened ecological communities in or adjacent to the road reserve.

*Principle (b) – Native vegetation should not be cleared if it comprises the whole or part of, or is necessary for the maintenance of, a significant habitat for fauna indigenous to Western Australia*

Roadside trees have the potential to provide habitat for native fauna. Stands of blackbutt and marri and a number of introduced eucalypt species occur in narrow bands along the road. However given the degraded nature of the vegetation, and its lack of connectivity with existing areas of remnant vegetation, it is unlikely that the road reserve provides significant habitat for native fauna.

There are no known occurrences of threatened fauna within the road reserve. There are records of Carnaby's Cockatoo, Baudin's Cockatoo, and South-western brush tailed phascogale in remnant vegetation to the south of the clearing area. It is unlikely that the trees proposed for removal provide significant habitat for these species. The crowns of the trees were inspected and do not indicate potential breeding habitat for black cockatoos, due to the absence of branches large enough to contain significant hollows. There was no evidence of western ringtail possum activity in the clearing area.

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

There are no known occurrences of rare flora within the road reserve. There are records of priority flora in freehold and reserve land near the southern clearing area. These locations will not be impacted by the proposed clearing.

*Principle (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*

There are no known priority or threatened ecological communities within the road reserve, or within the local vicinity of the road reserve.

*Principle (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.*

The native vegetation in the road reserve is unlikely to be significant as a remnant of native vegetation. The vegetation that is remaining is completely degraded condition, with parkland cleared trees and weeds throughout the reserve. Both sides of the road are surrounded by cleared, rural land.

*Principle (f) – Native vegetation should not be cleared if it is growing in, or in association with, an environment associated with a watercourse or wetland*

The section of the Warner Glen road reserve is not associated a watercourse or wetland. The Blackwood River runs about 2 kilometres to the west of the road, and they are separated by cleared, rural land. The northern clearing area occurs along a minor drainage channel, which crosses Warner Glen Road. Road works in this area will improve surface drainage, and reduce the occurrence of flooding, sediment build up, and erosion.

*Principle (g) – Native vegetation should not be cleared if the clearing of the vegetation is likely to cause appreciable land degradation*

The proposed clearing is unlikely to cause appreciable land degradation. The road widening and associated drainage will be designed to ensure there is no erosion or runoff of sediment into the environment.

*Principle (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*

There are no conservation areas or reserves that will be impacted by this project.

*Principle (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*

The proposed clearing is not likely to cause deterioration in the quality of surface or underground water. Road works in this area will improve surface drainage, and reduce the occurrence of flooding, sediment build up, and erosion. Underground water is unlikely to be intercepted.

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

The proposed clearing is not likely to cause, or exacerbate, the incidence of flooding. The road works are designed to ensure that there is no flooding of water within the road reserve or surrounding environment.