



CLEARING PERMIT

Granted under section 51E of the Environmental Protection Act 1986

Purpose Permit number:	CPS 9004/1
Permit Holder:	Indian Ocean Oil Company Pty Ltd
Duration of Permit:	27 October 2020 to 27 October 2025

The Permit Holder is authorised to clear native vegetation subject to the following conditions of this Permit.

PART I – CLEARING AUTHORISED

1. Purpose for which clearing may be done

Clearing for the purpose of pipeline safety and maintenance.

2. Land on which clearing is to be done

Lot 473 on Deposited Plan 219656, Christmas Island

3. Area of Clearing

The Permit Holder must not clear more than 0.2 hectares of native vegetation within the area hatched yellow on attached Plan 9004/1.

4. Application

This Permit allows the Permit Holder to authorise persons, including employees, contractors and agents of the Permit Holder, to clear native vegetation for the purposes of this Permit subject to compliance with the conditions of this Permit and approval from the Permit Holder.

PART II – MANAGEMENT CONDITIONS

5. Avoid, minimise and reduce the impacts and extent of clearing

In determining the amount of native vegetation to be cleared authorised under this Permit, the Permit Holder must have regard to the following principles, set out in order of preference:

- avoid the clearing of native vegetation;
- minimise the amount of native vegetation to be cleared; and
- reduce the impact of clearing on any environmental value.

6. Weed control

When undertaking any clearing or other activity authorised under this Permit, the Permit Holder must take the following steps to minimise the risk of the introduction and spread of weeds and dieback:

- clean earth-moving machinery of soil and vegetation prior to entering and leaving the area to be cleared;
- ensure that no *weed*-affected soil, *mulch*, *fill* or other material is brought into the area to be cleared; and
- restrict the movement of machines and other vehicles to the limits of the areas to be cleared.

PART III - RECORD KEEPING AND REPORTING

7. Records must be kept

The Permit Holder must maintain the following records for activities done pursuant to this Permit:

- (a) In relation to the clearing of native vegetation authorised under this Permit:
 - (i) the species composition, structure and density of the cleared area;
 - (ii) the location where the clearing occurred, recorded using a Global Positioning System (GPS) unit set to Geocentric Datum Australia 1994 (GDA94), expressing the geographical coordinates in Eastings and Northings;
 - (iii) the date that the area was cleared; and
 - (iv) the size of the area cleared (in hectares).
 - (v) actions taken to avoid, minimise and reduce the impacts and extent of clearing in accordance with condition 5 of this Permit;
 - (vi) actions taken to minimise the risk of the introduction and spread of *weeds* in accordance with condition 6 of this Permit;

8. Reporting

The Permit Holder must produce the records required under condition 7 of this Permit when required by the *CEO*.

DEFINITIONS

The following meanings are given to terms used in this Permit:

CEO means the Chief Executive Officer of the Department responsible for the administration of the clearing provisions under the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*;

fill means material used to increase the ground level, or fill a hollow;

mulch means the use of organic matter, wood chips or rocks to slow the movement of water across the soil surface and to reduce evaporation;

weed/s means any plant -

- (a) that is a declared pest under section 22 of the *Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007*;
or
- (b) published in a Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions species-led ecological impact and invasiveness ranking summary, regardless of ranking; or
- (c) not indigenous to the area concerned



Meenu Vitarana
A/MANAGER
NATIVE VEGETATION REGULATION

*Officer delegated under Section 20
of the Environmental Protection Act 1986*

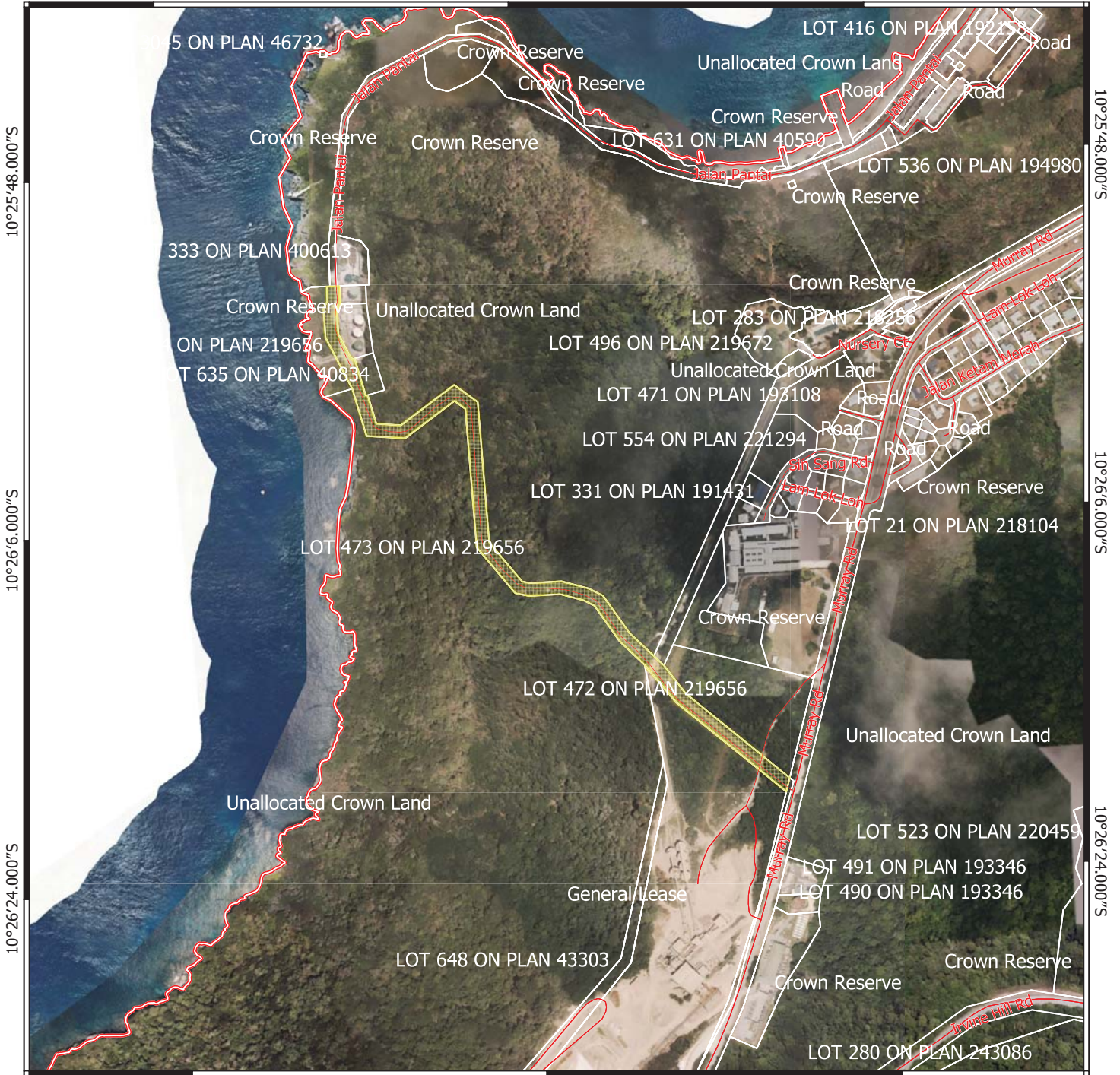
24 September 2020

Plan 9004/1

105°39'36.000"E

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105°40'12.000"E



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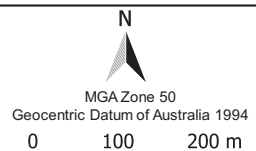
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CPS layers

-  CPS areas approved to clear
-  Road Centrelines
-  Cadastre - LGATE 218
-  Local Government Authority (LGA) Boundaries (LGATE-233)



Meenu Vitarana
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Officer delegated under section 20 of the
Environmental Protection Act 1986



GOVERNMENT OF
WESTERN AUSTRALIA



Clearing Permit Decision Report

1. Application details

1.1. Permit application details

Permit application No.: 9004/1
Permit type: Purpose Permit

1.2. Applicant details

Applicant's name: Indian Ocean Oil Company Pty Ltd
Application received date: 10 August 2020

1.3. Property details

Property: Lot 473 on Deposited Plan 219656, Christmas Island
Local Government Authority: Shire of Christmas Island
Localities: Christmas Island

1.4. Application

Clearing Area (ha)	No. Trees	Method of Clearing	Purpose category:
0.2	0	Mechanical Removal	Building or Structure

1.5. Decision on application

Decision on Permit Application: Grant

Decision Date: 24 September 2020

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

It has been determined that the proposed clearing may impact the environmental values of adjacent vegetation through the introduction or spread of weeds. A weed management condition on the Permit will mitigate this risk.

The Delegated Officer determined that the clearing is unlikely to have any significant environmental impacts and had regard to the purpose of clearing being to maintain and improve the safety of a fuel pipeline.

2. Site Information

Clearing Description

The applicant proposes to clear 0.2 hectares of native vegetation within Lot 473 on Deposited Plan 219656 (reserve 47490) for the purpose of maintaining the cross-country pipeline corridor that runs from Smith Point to Murray Road and contains two fuel lines. The corridor requires regular maintenance to ensure it is clear of vegetation to allow access for maintenance, inspections and to remove hazardous trees that pose a risk to the integrity of the pipeline. The pipeline corridor is 20 metres wide and 1.25 kilometres long and covers an area of 2.52 hectares. The pipeline corridor can be broken in to three sections, upper, middle and lower.

Vegetation Description

Table 2: Vegetation within the 2.52 hectare pipeline corridor as mapped by Geoscience Australia (2014):

Vegetation Type	Area (hectares)
Bare ground	0.16
Closed canopy evergreen forest (moderate)	0.07
Coastal herbland	<0.01
Coastal pinnacles/sand	<0.01
Coastal shrubland	0.01
Infrastructure	0.12
Mixed weed and pioneer species	0.16
Regrowth	0.98
Semi-deciduous forest	0.70
Semi-deciduous scrub	0.32
Total	2.52

Upper Section

This area of the corridor has been previously cleared and contains regrowth vegetation, mixed weeds and pioneer species and grassland. This area is maintained as grassland through mowing to protect overhead powerlines (Range to Reef Environmental, 2020).

Vegetation within the application area is described as weed dominated vegetation & pioneer regrowth (Geoscience Australia, 2014).

Middle section

This area has only partially been cleared previously to enable the original installation of the pipeline. Forest has regrown in the corridor with some trees growing immediately adjacent to the pipeline and consists of regrowth and semi-deciduous forest (Range to Reef Environmental, 2020).

Lower section

This area occurs on a steep and rocky limestone terrace and consists of semi-deciduous scrub and forest (Range to Reef Environmental, 2020).

Vegetation Condition

Degraded; Structure severely disturbed; regeneration to good condition requires intensive management (Keighery, 1994).

To

Excellent; Vegetation structure intact, disturbance affecting individual species and weeds are non-aggressive species (Keighery, 1994).

The vegetation condition of the application area was determined based on applicants' photographs and available aerial imagery.



Figure 1: Application area cross hatched yellow (a larger footprint of 2.52 hectares with 0.2 hectares of proposed clearing)



Upper Section



Middle section



Lower Section

Figure 2 – Photographs of the application area (Range to Reef Environmental, 2020).

3. Minimisation and mitigation measures

The applicant has advised that the upper sections of the services corridor have been essentially cleared of trees, however the lower sections (which are rocky and steep) have limited clearing and the pipeline lies under the tree canopy. Subsequently there is an ongoing need for vigilance to ensure trees that die or become unstable are removed before they can fall and potentially damage the pipeline.

The applicant has minimised the clearing of native vegetation by removing native trees on a 'as required' basis. Currently 10 trees (0.1 hectares) have been identified as requiring removal and the further 0.1 hectares is proposed to allow maintenance removal of future trees that may pose a safety risk to the pipeline over the next five years.

It is expected for any gaps in the canopy created by the proposed tree clearing will regenerate quickly given the tropical environment and the characterised rapid forest growth of the surrounding vegetation.

Trees will be removed in a manner to minimise damage to the surrounding forest and may involve tree lopping contractors to sensitively remove the trees (Range to Reef Environmental, 2020).

4. Assessment of application against clearing principles

The applicant proposes to clear 0.2 hectares of native vegetation within Lot 473 on Deposited Plan 219656 for the purpose of maintaining the cross-country pipeline corridor that runs from Smith Point to Murray Road and contains two fuel lines. The corridor requires regular maintenance to ensure it is clear of vegetation to allow access for maintenance, inspections and to remove hazardous trees that pose a risk to the integrity of the pipeline. The corridor of 20 metres wide and 1.25 kilometres long and covers an area of 2.52 hectares.

Ten trees have been currently identified as at risk of falling on the pipeline and consist of Tahitian Chestnut (*Inocarpus fagifer*) and *Syzygium nervosum* (Range to Reef Environmental, 2020).

Christmas Island provides habitat for several species of fauna indigenous to the island including fourteen native bird species and nine species of seabird which use the island for breeding. Four seabird taxa and nine land bird taxa are endemic to the island. A further 108 migratory or vagrant bird species have been recorded on the island. Six of the island's endemic birds are listed as threatened under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act). One endemic native mammal, the Christmas Island Flying fox and five endemic reptiles, also occur on Christmas Island. Christmas Island also supports three conservation significant crab species, red crab, robber crab and the blue crab. Blue crabs have a restricted range and do not occur within the application area.

Red crabs are most common in the moist environment of the rainforest and occurs in a variety of other habitats. Current estimates of population size are about 50-60 million. At the beginning of the wet season (around October to December) every year, adult red crabs migrate from the forest to the coast, to breed and spawn. Red crab habitat is likely to occur within the application area. The application areas are not located within important migration pathways for the red crab. The proposed clearing is also not expected to cause any fragmentation of habitats due to the small extent of the proposed clearing. Therefore, the proposed clearing of regrowth and scattered individual trees is not likely to impact significant habitat for this species.

Christmas Island supports the world's largest population of the Robber crab. Robber crabs have a wide distribution across many Indian and Pacific oceanic islands. Although abundant on Christmas Island their exact conservation status is unknown. Low numbers of Robber crabs were observed within the application area (Range to Reef Environmental, 2020). Noting their abundance on Christmas Island and noting that the proposed clearing is of individual trees, the proposed clearing is not likely to significantly impact this species.

The Abbott's Boody (*Papasula abbotti*) is a long-lived seabird with the only known extant nesting colony on Christmas Island. This species is listed as Endangered under the EPBC Act. On Christmas Island most nests are situated on the central and western areas, in the tall plateau forest, but they are also found along the north coast, in the upper terrace forest. Nest sites are largely restricted to areas above 150 metres, mostly on the sides of northwest facing slopes (Department of the Environment and Heritage 2005). According to available databases, the closest record of this species to the application area is 500 meters. There are no Abbott's nest trees found within the application area (Range to Reef Environmental, 2020) and the proposed tree removal is not considered to impact on current or future nesting habitat for this species.

Christmas Island is home to three threatened flora species being; *Asplenium listeri* (Christmas Island Spleenwort), *Tectaria devexa* var. *minor* and *Pneumatopteris truncata*. *Tectaria devexa* var. *minor* is described as growing in shaded positions in the primary rainforest on the plateau, usually in areas of deep soil, where it may be the only forest floor species (Butz, 2004a). *Asplenium listeri* (Christmas Island Spleenwort) is a fern endemic to Christmas Island, where it is known from a very small number of localities growing among rocks and on cliffs of exposed limestone outcrops (Butz, 2004b). *Pneumatopteris truncata* grows colonially on permanently moist sites, in marginal rainforest and in shaded areas, between 50 and 140 metres above sea-level (DAWE, 2020).

There are no records of these species with the vicinity of the pipeline corridor. The proposed clearing is unlikely to pose a serious risk to these species given that they are low ground-cover species and ground disturbance of the proposed clearing is likely to be minimal.

No priority flora or threatened ecological communities have been recorded on Christmas Island.

Given the above, the proposed clearing is not likely to have a significant impact on threatened flora or conservation significant fauna habitat.

Christmas Island retains approximately 75 per cent native vegetation, of which 84 per cent (63 per cent of total island area) is protected as National Park. The proposed clearing is relatively small (0.2 hectares) and is surrounded by intact forest and therefore is not considered to be an important remnant of vegetation in a highly cleared landscape.

Perennial surface water features on Christmas Island are limited to spring fed streams on coastal or sloping areas of the Island. No watercourses are located within the application area.

Given that proposed clearing is for individual trees and is relatively small, the proposed clearing is not likely to lead to appreciable land degradation. Any gaps created are likely to be recolonised quickly.

The application area is not adjacent to Christmas Island National Park, which occurs 690 metres to the south. The proposed clearing is not considered to impact conservation areas on the Island. However, the proposed clearing is adjacent to native vegetation in excellent condition and therefore the disturbance caused by the proposed clearing may increase the risk of weeds being spread into adjacent vegetation. Weed management practices will assist in minimising this risk.

The assessment has found that the proposed clearing is not likely to be at variance with any of the clearing principles.

Planning instruments and other relevant matters

The applicant is the sole supplier of fuel on Christmas Island, supplying fuel to the islands' power station, the mining operation, residents and shipping.

The applicant's operation is currently registered as per schedule 1 Part 2 of the *Environmental Protection Regulations 1987* (WA) (CI) under category 73 (Bulk Chemical Storage).

Under Local Planning Scheme No. 2 (LPS 2), the pipeline corridor is zoned for "public purposes".

The clearing permit application was advertised on the DWER website on 25 August 2020 with a 21 day submission period. The application was also advertised in *The Islander* on 4 September 2020. No public submissions have been received in relation to this application.

There are no Aboriginal Sites of significance or Native Title Claims on the Island.

5. References

Butz M. 2004a. National Recovery Plan for the Christmas Island Spleenwort *Asplenium listeri*. Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, ACT.

Butz M. 2004b. National Recovery Plan for *Tectaria devexa*. Department of the Environment and Heritage, Canberra.

Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (DAWE) (2019a) *Pneumatopteris truncata*, in Species Profile and Threats Database, Department of the Environment, Canberra. Available from: <http://www.environment.gov.au/sprat>. Accessed September 2020

Department of the Environment and Heritage (2005) National Recovery Plan for the Abbott's Boody (*Papasula abbotti*). Commonwealth of Australia.

Geoscience Australia (2014). Christmas Island Vegetation and Clearing Map. Compiled May 2014. Prepared By Geoscience Australia in Collaboration with Christmas Island Phosphates and The Commonwealth Department of Environment.

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

Range to Reef Environmental (2020) Supporting documentation for clearing permit application CPS 9004/1 (DWER Ref: DWERT6281).