



24 September 2021

Native Vegetation Clearing Branch
Department of Water and Environmental Regulation
Locked Bag 10
JOONDALUP WA 6919

Dear Sir / Madam,

METRONET Thornlie-Cockburn Link Service Relocation – Amendment to Native Vegetation Clearing Permit CPS 9024/1

1. Background

The Public Transport Authority of Western Australia (PTA) is proposing to clear native vegetation, required to relocate services/utilities within proximity to the METRONET Thornlie-Cockburn Link (TCL) project. The TCL project includes the connection of the existing Thornlie Station (located on a spur from the Armadale line), to the Cockburn Central Station on the Mandurah line.

The TCL project includes construction of 14.5 kilometre (km) of new dual railway track within existing railway and road reserves, to extend the existing Thornlie passenger line to Cockburn Central Station as well as the duplication of 3 km of railway track between Beckenham Junction and Thornlie station. To enable the construction of the dual passenger line, approximately 11 km of existing freight line will be relocated to the north within the railway reserve. The project also includes:

- Construction of two new stations: Ranford Road Station and Nicholson Road Station;
- Modification of two existing stations: Thornlie Station and Cockburn Central Station; and
- Modifications to one rail bridge, two road bridges and the grade separation of a pedestrian crossing.

The PTA received approval for a Native Vegetation Clearing Permit (NVCP) application (CPS 9024/1) on the 24 November 2020. The scope of works within this Native Vegetation Clearing Permit (NVCP) application, and the proposed amendment, is to allow for clearing of vegetation associated with the temporary or permanent relocation of services from within the rail corridor to outside of the rail corridor or TCL development envelope. This scope is separate to, and does not involve the implementation of the TCL project. As the utilities design and stakeholder engagement has progressed, it has been identified that new services are required to be relocated outside of the current CPS 9024/1 boundary and therefore the PTA is requesting an amendment to CPS 9024/1.

At the time of the NVCP application, the PTA did not have a complete survey dataset available from Level 1 flora and fauna studies. On this basis, in the application the PTA assumed worst case that all proposed clearing areas contained native vegetation, totalling a clearing requirements of 3.33 ha of native vegetation. Following submission of the application, the PTA engaged GHD to undertake the Biological Assessment of Native Vegetation Clearing Permit Areas (GHD, 2020b) which included Level 1 flora and fauna assessment of the NVCP areas, conducted in Spring 2020.

The NVCP amendment boundary for these service relocation works covers a total area of approximately 0.082 hectares (ha) (**Figure 1**) across six (6) new locations. Due to the accelerated timeframes required for the relocation of the services, Level 1 flora and fauna surveys were not able to be undertaken for all proposed clearing areas. Where survey data was not available (approximately 0.009 ha), the PTA's Contractor responsible for delivering the TCL project (NEWest Alliance) engaged Natural Area Consulting Management Services (NACMS) to conduct a limited flora and fauna survey, with the letter report provided in **Attachment 4**. NACMS also surveyed areas that had been previously surveyed, for ground truthing purposes.

Although vegetation clearing as part of this scope of works has been, and will continue to be minimised where possible, native vegetation, generally in a degraded condition, is required to be mechanically cleared. It is also to be noted that whilst designs for some services have progressed, they are not yet finalised and therefore the PTA will be continuing assessments with the aim to minimise the clearing extents, including the investigation of alternate construction methods ie. directional drilling, where practicable.

The PTA propose to commence these clearing activities in December 2021 with the closing date as is approved in CPS 9024/1 (17 December 2025) remaining applicable for this amendment.

This letter provides a summary of the relevant information associated with the attached application (**Attachment 5**) for the NVCP amendment. The original CPS 9024/1 with proposed changes has been provided in **Attachment 1**.

2. Native Vegetation

The relocation of the additional services will require a revised total disturbance area of 4.39 ha (**Figure 1**). Within the new areas where there is available survey data (Areas 23, 24, 25 (half), 26 and 27), there is 0.07 ha of native vegetation. Within Areas 22 and 25 (half) comprising 0.009 ha there is limited survey available therefore a conservative approach has been adopted for this NVCP, and it is assumed that both Area 22 and Area 25 (half) contain native vegetation (0.009 ha).

As mentioned above, the PTA adopted a worst-case scenario when designating native vegetation in the NVCP application (3.33 ha). As the PTA now has confirmed flora data available (GHD, 2020b), PTA can advise that CPS 9024/1 should have only allowed for the clearing of 1.48 ha of native vegetation.

It is therefore proposed to amend condition 3 of CPS 9024/1, to allow for the clearing of 1.56 ha of native vegetation. This will result in an overall reduction of native vegetation clearing from 3.33 ha to 1.56 ha (1.77 ha reduction).

The six (6) additional clearing areas described within this permit amendment have been identified using the number referencing as listed in **Table 1** below and as shown in **Figure 1**.

Table 1: Proposed Clearing Locations

Area Reference No.	Size (in ha)	Location
22	0.004	Grey Street, Cannington
23	0.003	North Clifton Road Reserve
24	0.006	South Clifton Road, within Ken Hurst Park
25	0.010	North Ken Hurst Park
26	0.041	Leeming Road reserve
27	0.018	End of Training Place / Kwinana Freeway reserve
Total	0.082	

Flora and Fauna surveys have been undertaken for service relocation Areas 23, 24, 25 (half), 26 and 27 in 2019 and 2020, as part of the TCL project. The following reports are relevant to this amendment. Only the GHD (2020b) survey report has been attached to this amendment as the other two reports were supplied with the initial application.

- Thornlie-Cockburn Link Project Flora and fauna survey (GHD 2019);
- Thornlie-Cockburn Link Biological Assessment of Additional Areas (GHD 2020a);
- Thornlie-Cockburn Link, Biological Assessment of Native Vegetation Clearing Permit Areas (GHD, 2020b).

The digital survey information has been provided in accordance with the EPA's *Instructions for the preparation of data packages for the Index of Biodiversity Surveys for Assessments (IBSA)*.

Proposed clearing areas not covered by the historical flora and fauna surveys (as well as some that did have survey data available) were assessed by NACMS during a site visit undertaken on 13 September 2021. The letter report from this site visit is provided in **Attachment 4**.

The surveyed vegetation (GHD, 2019, 2020a, 2020b) in Areas 23, 24, 25 (half), 26 and 27 proposed to be cleared was recorded to range from Good to Completely Degraded condition (**Figure 3**). The vegetation type ranged from Cleared and Scattered natives amongst weeds with one area identified as *Adenanthos cygnorum* shrubland and another area *Regelia inops Hypocalymma angustifolia* shrubland. Two areas (approximately 0.005 ha) west of Clifton Road (Area 23) and west of Training Place (Area 27) were described as *Banksia menziesii* and *B. attenuata* woodland in Good condition. These areas are likely to represent the 'Low lying *Banksia attenuata* woodlands or shrublands' Priority Ecological Community (PEC) (floristic community type 21c) (**Figure 5**), however the area is isolated from other similar vegetation areas by extensive clearing and is in poorer condition than other local *Banksia menziesii* and *B. attenuata* areas. The proposed clearing areas have evidence of disturbance and edge effects being in close proximity to both the existing rail line including access tracks, and industrial development, which have also increased fragmentation of the proposed clearing areas.

Vegetation recorded during the NAMS site inspections (Areas 22 and 25 (half)) was assessed by NAMS Ecologists John Wei and Taryn Brebner. The basic flora survey involved a low intensity survey of the flora and vegetation to describe the general vegetation characteristics and conditions of the site. The basic flora and vegetation survey was conducted in accordance with *Technical Guidance – Flora and Vegetation Surveys for Environmental Impact Assessment* (EPA, 2016).

The vegetation was noted to be in a Completely Degraded condition in both locations and in Area 22 consisted of almost all flora species (84.6%) being non-native introduced species. Within Area 25,

the remanent vegetation type was recorded as Open Banksia Woodland with ten (50%) of the flora species being non-native introduced flora species. Area 25 also showed signs of historical clearing.

There is one vegetation community that has been mapped as likely to represent a Threatened Ecological Community (TEC) within the proposed clearing areas. The TEC is the Banksia Woodlands of the Swan Coastal Plain TEC and occurs within the Area 23 and Area 25. It should be noted however that Area 25 appears to have been broadly mapped as the TEC mapping does not show the clearing area.

3. Threatened Fauna and Fauna Habitats

A desktop study undertaken by GHD (2019) identified forty five (45) conservation significant fauna species (excluding exclusively marine or migratory/marine species) likely to occur within the larger survey boundary. The presence of two species was recorded within the survey area, namely Carnaby's Black Cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus latirostris*) (listed as Endangered under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC Act)* and *Biodiversity Conservation Act (BC Act)* and Southern Brown Bandicoot (*Isoodon obesulus*) (Priority 4, BC Act). The surveyed proposed cleared areas were found to generally have poor connectivity due to fragmentation from urban developments and the existing rail corridor; clearing of the proposed areas is not expected to alter the current movement of ground-dwelling species (GHD, 2019).

Fauna habitat within the surveyed, proposed clearing areas (GHD 2019, 2020a, 2020b) was noted as Mixed tall woodland/clumped trees or Scattered, isolated shrubs with a small area of Banksia woodland. Southern bandicoot digs were noted in Area 23. The areas surveyed by NACMS were identified to be generally consistent with adjacent survey data, suggesting the areas would be considered Mixed tall woodland/clumped trees or cleared.

The GHD surveys (GHD 2019, 2020a and 2020b) recorded 0.01 ha of vegetation within the proposed clearing areas as suitable for Black Cockatoo foraging habitat and 0.01 ha as suitable for Forest Redtailed and Baudin's Cockatoo foraging. However, evidence of foraging was limited to the remnant *Banksia menziesii* and *B. attenuata* habitat within proposed clearing Area 23 (**Figure 4**) and neighbouring scattered shrublands during the surveys.

Within Area 25, scat and diggings from the European Rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) were observed within the survey area. European rabbits are classed as Declared Pests under the *Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007*, which requires management and control from landholders. Given the extensive prior disturbance within the vicinity of the proposed clearing areas, limited fauna habitats exist for fauna species within these areas. The remaining fauna habitats consist of small linear patches along the edge of the highly disturbed and modified freight rail reserve and/or urban development. The quality and value of this habitat is not considered to be suitable for conservation significant fauna due to historic clearing, impacts from rail infrastructure and surrounding urban development.

4. Environmental Management

Early decision making and associated planning design has enabled the PTA to avoid the clearing of high quality native vegetation, minimise the amount of vegetation to be cleared and reduce the impact

of clearing on environmental values. Several strategies have been developed to manage the environmental impacts associated with the proposal. Further methods to avoid, minimise and reduce the impacts of clearing will be determined, where practicable, during the ongoing detailed design phase.

The PTA will ensure the following management measures are implemented to minimise impacts to environmental values during the ground disturbance and clearing works:

- Survey personnel will flag/demarcate clearing areas prior to clearing works commencing.
- The PTA (or its Contractor) will issue internal ground disturbance permits prior to any clearing works which includes requirements for pre- and post- clearing inspections.
- Pre-start meeting to be held with contractors to highlight the requirements to stay within approved clearing areas only and minimise impacts to vegetation. All clearing and survey works will be supervised by environmental personnel.

Environmental management measures will be employed by the PTA to reduce the impacts on environmental values including flora, vegetation, ecological communities, fauna, fauna habitat and biological diversity. Dieback and weed management protocols will also be implemented to minimise impacts on these environmental values. These are detailed in the following sections.

4.1 Flora, Vegetation and Ecological Communities

To manage the impacts to clearing on flora, vegetation and ecological communities several strategies have been developed and these are provided below:

To avoid native vegetation clearing:

• During the initial planning phase, high quality vegetation areas were requested to be avoided and alternatives sought.

To minimise native vegetation clearing:

- Existing cleared or highly degraded areas will be utilised for temporary construction areas, where practicable, and;
- The PTA (and its Contractor) will aim to minimise the native vegetation clearing footprint further during the detailed design phase, where practicable, to minimise the overall clearing impacts associated with the proposal.

4.2 Fauna

To manage the impacts to clearing on fauna and fauna habitat, several strategies have been developed and these are provided below:

To minimise native vegetation clearing:

- Existing cleared or highly degraded areas will be used for laydown and temporary construction to avoid additional clearing.
- The clearing footprint has been minimised so that only a small amount of native vegetation clearing (total 1.56 ha) will be required to implement the scope of works.

- The native vegetation clearing footprint will be further evaluated and if practicable minimised during the detailed design phase, to reduce potential impacts on fauna and fauna habitats and:
- The PTA will minimise the clearing of Black Cockatoo foraging habitat and potential breeding habitat, where practicable.

4.3 Dieback (Phytophthora Dieback)

Area 22 and Area 27 are likely to be described as "Uninterpretable" for *Phytophthora Dieback*, due to the historic ground disturbance within the area. Areas 25 and 26 were confirmed as uninfested whilst Area 23 and Area 24 has been classified as dieback infested. Dieback may be present within the proposed clearing areas, even if it is not detectable through dieback mapping due to the highly modified nature of the vegetation and lack of indicator species or protectable vegetation.

Although two mapped occurrences have been determined within the development envelope, a precautionary approach will be used to evaluate the risk of spreading dieback to adjacent areas of vegetation. Appropriate hygiene protocols will be implemented to ensure the risk of spreading dieback is carefully managed and minimised.

4.4 Weeds

The proposed clearing areas have been heavily disturbed by urban development and rail construction. There is the potential for Declared Pest plants to be present within the proposed clearing areas due to the proximity to heavily modified areas. Weed management protocols will be implemented to control weed species within the proposed clearing areas during construction.

4.5 Rehabilitation and Offsets

As this proposal is for the construction of permanent below ground services, there are limited opportunities and/or flora species restrictions for rehabilitation. However, revegetation opportunities for the areas will be investigated. The revegetation opportunities will be confirmed in discussion with the relevant local government authority, land and asset owners, and will be in accordance with the relevant specifications. The PTA (or its Contractor) will implement revegetation / landscaping activities where these opportunities are practical and meet operational safety and maintenance requirements.

In understanding the highly disturbed landscape, degraded and fragmented condition of the native vegetation and application of the proposed mitigation measures, the minor amount of ground disturbance of 4.39 ha required for this amendment proposal will not result in significant impacts to flora, vegetation, ecological communities, fauna and fauna habitats.

The PTA submitted an Offsets Strategy as part of the original application, referred to as the *Thornlie-Cockburn Link Service Relocation, Native Vegetation Clearing Permit CPS 9024/1 Offset Proposal*) (PTA, 2020). The PTA propose to revise this Offsets Strategy to account for the revised environmental impact, following approval of the proposed amendment to CPS 9024/1.

5. Planning and other Relevant Matters

The proposed clearing areas are located within the Perth proclaimed groundwater area. Under the Rights in Water and Irrigation Act 1914 (RIWI Act), it is illegal to take water in a proclaimed

groundwater aquifer without a licence. The PTA's Contractor will seek a dewatering licence prior to commencing abstraction and dewatering activities, if required.

Acid Sulfate Soils (ASS) are generally recorded as moderate to low risk over most of the development envelope. The potential disturbance to ASS is not considered likely to have a significant impact on environmental values due to mitigation strategies and the highly modified urban landscape within and adjacent to the proposed clearing areas. The scope of works have been developed to avoid excavation and large-scale dewatering in high risk areas.

6. EPBC Referral

The proposal was not referred to the Commonwealth Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (DAWE) as the action was deemed not to have a significant impact on a matter/s protected under the EPBC Act.

This application will not be requested to be assessed under the bilateral agreement or an accredited assessment.

7. Native Vegetation Clearing Permit

The PTA is applying to clear up to a maximum of 1.56 ha of native vegetation within a 4.39 ha disturbance footprint over a total of twenty seven (27) clearing areas (**Figure 1**). As described in the above, the proposed clearing areas contain vegetation that have been urbanised and highly disturbed. Extensive areas within the development envelope have already been cleared for the rail corridor including maintenance, urban development and related infrastructure.

Whilst non-native vegetation will also be cleared for the service relocation works, these planted and revegetation areas are not included in the NVCP application, as the PTA does not consider this vegetation to meet the definition of native vegetation under Section 51A of the Environmental Protection Act 1986 (EP Act). For the purpose of this NVCP application the vegetation proposed to be cleared relates to areas of native vegetation only.

In accordance with the attached Amendment to a Clearing Permit Application (Form C4), the PTA applies to amend CPS 9024/1 to clear approximately 1.56 ha of native vegetation within the ground disturbance footprint for service relocation works (**Figure 1**).

A limited assessment of the native vegetation within the six (6) proposed additional clearing areas has been completed against the ten clearing principles using the DWER guideline 'A Guide to the Assessment of Applications to Clear Native Vegetation, Under Part V Division 2 of the Environmental Protection Act 1986' (DWER, 2014). This has been provided in **Attachment 2**.

8. Certificates of Title and Landowners Authority

The following Certificate of Titles are included (**Attachment 6**):

- · City of Canning
 - o Lot 802 on Plan 195493
- City of Melville
 - o Lot 789 on Plan 195512

- City of Cockburn
 - o Road on Polygon 11824306
- Main Roads of Western Australia
 - o Lot 9 on Plan 016075
- Western Power
 - o Lot 12, Plan 040949, 2676/195

The relevant landowners have provided written authorisation for PTA to undertake clearing within whole or portions of the above noted land areas as per the below:

- City of Canning (Attachment 7)
- City of Melville (Attachment 8)
- City of Cockburn (Attachment 9)
- Main Roads of Western Australia (Attachment 10)
- Western Power (Attachment 11)

This Application for an amendment to a clearing permit Form C4 is enclosed (Attachment 5) for your										
consideration.	Please	contact		Senior	Environment	Advisor	on	C	r	
		sho	ould you have ar	ny querie	es.					

Yours sincerely

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGER
Office of Major Transport Infrastructure Delivery

Figures

Figure 1: Service Relocation – Proposed Clearing Areas

Figure 2: Proposed Clearing Areas - Surveyed and Non Surveyed Areas

Figure 3: Surveyed Areas – Vegetation Condition

Figure 4: Surveyed Areas - Black Cockatoo Foraging Habitat

Figure 5: Surveyed Areas – Priority Ecological Community

Attachments

Attachment 1: CPS 9024/1 with highlighted amendments Attachment 2: Limited 10 Clearing Principles Assessment

Attachment 3: Biological Assessment of Native Vegetation Clearing Permit Areas (GHD, 2020b). Attachment 4: Basic Flora and Fauna Survey at Additional Areas to Inform Native Vegetation

Clearing Permit Application, Natural Area Consulting Management Services (NACMS, 2021)

Attachment 5: Amendment to a Clearing Permit Application (Form C4)

Attachment 6: Certificate of Titles

Attachment 7: Letter of Authority – City of Canning Attachment 8: Letter of Authority – City of Melville Attachment 9: Letter of Authority – City of Cockburn

Attachment 10: Letter of Authority - Main Roads of Western Australia

Attachment 11: Letter of Authority - Western Power

































