

1. Application details and outcomes

1.1. Permit application details

Permit number:	9228/2
Permit type:	Purpose permit
Applicant name:	Big Bell Gold Operations Pty Ltd
Application received:	1 July 2025
Application area:	363 hectares
Purpose of clearing:	Mineral production and associated activities
Method of clearing:	Mechanical removal
Tenure:	Mining Leases 20/98 and 20/197
Location (LGA area):	Shire of Cue
Colloquial name:	Accelerator and Indicator Mining Areas

1.2. Description of clearing activities

Big Bell Gold Operations Pty Ltd proposes to clear up to 363 hectares of native vegetation within a boundary of approximately 363.5 hectares, for the purpose of mineral production and associated activities (Big Bell, 2025). The project is located approximately 30 kilometres northwest of Cue, within the Shire of Cue (GIS Database).

The application is to allow for an extension of the permit to 24 May 2031. No other changes are proposed to the permit

Clearing permit CPS 9882/1 was granted by the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety (now the Department of Mines, Petroleum and Exploration) on 30 April 2021 and was valid from 25 May 2021 to 24 May 2026. The permit authorised the clearing of up to 363 hectares of native vegetation within a boundary of approximately 363.5 hectares, for the purpose of mineral production and associated activities.

On 1 July 2025, the permit holder applied to amend CPS 9882/1 to extend the permit duration to 24 May 2031. There has been no clearing undertaken as of the 2024/2025 annual clearing report submitted by Big Bell Gold Operations Pty Ltd, and clearing was planned to commence late 2025/early 2026.

1.3. Decision on application and key considerations

Decision:	Grant
Decision date:	20 February 2026
Decision area:	363 hectares of native vegetation

1.4. Reasons for decision

This clearing permit application was submitted, accepted, assessed, and determined in accordance with sections 51KA(1) and 51O of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986* (EP Act). The Department of Mines, Petroleum and Exploration (DMPE) advertised the application for a public comment for a period of 7 days, and no submissions were received.

In making this decision, the Delegated Officer had regard for the site characteristics (Appendix A), relevant datasets (Appendix D), supporting information provided by the applicant (Westgold, 2021) including the results of a flora and vegetation survey (Western Ecological, 2021), the clearing principles set out in Schedule 5 of the EP Act (Appendix B), proposed avoidance and minimisation measures (Section 3.1), relevant planning instruments and any other matters considered relevant to the assessment (Section 3.3). The Delegated Officer also took into consideration the purpose of the clearing for mineral production and associated activities.

After consideration of the available information, as well as the applicant's minimisation and mitigation measures (Section 3.1), the Delegated Officer determined the proposed clearing is unlikely to lead to appreciable land degradation or have long-term adverse impacts on environmental values.

The Delegated Officer decided to grant a clearing permit subject to conditions to:

- avoid, minimise to reduce the impacts and extent of clearing;
- take hygiene steps to minimise the risk of the introduction and spread of weeds;

- undertake slow, progressive one-directional clearing to allow terrestrial fauna to move into adjacent habitat ahead of the clearing activity;
- commence the purpose for which clearing is authorised no later than six months after undertaking clearing to reduce the risk of erosion;
- flora management condition to avoid clearing of identified priority flora species and avoid clearing within 10 metres of identified priority flora.

The assessment has not changed since the assessment for CPS 9228/1. The Delegated Officer determined that the proposed extension of the permit duration to 24 May 2031 is not likely to lead to an unacceptable risk to environmental values.

1.5. Site map

A site map of proposed clearing is provided in Figure 1 below.

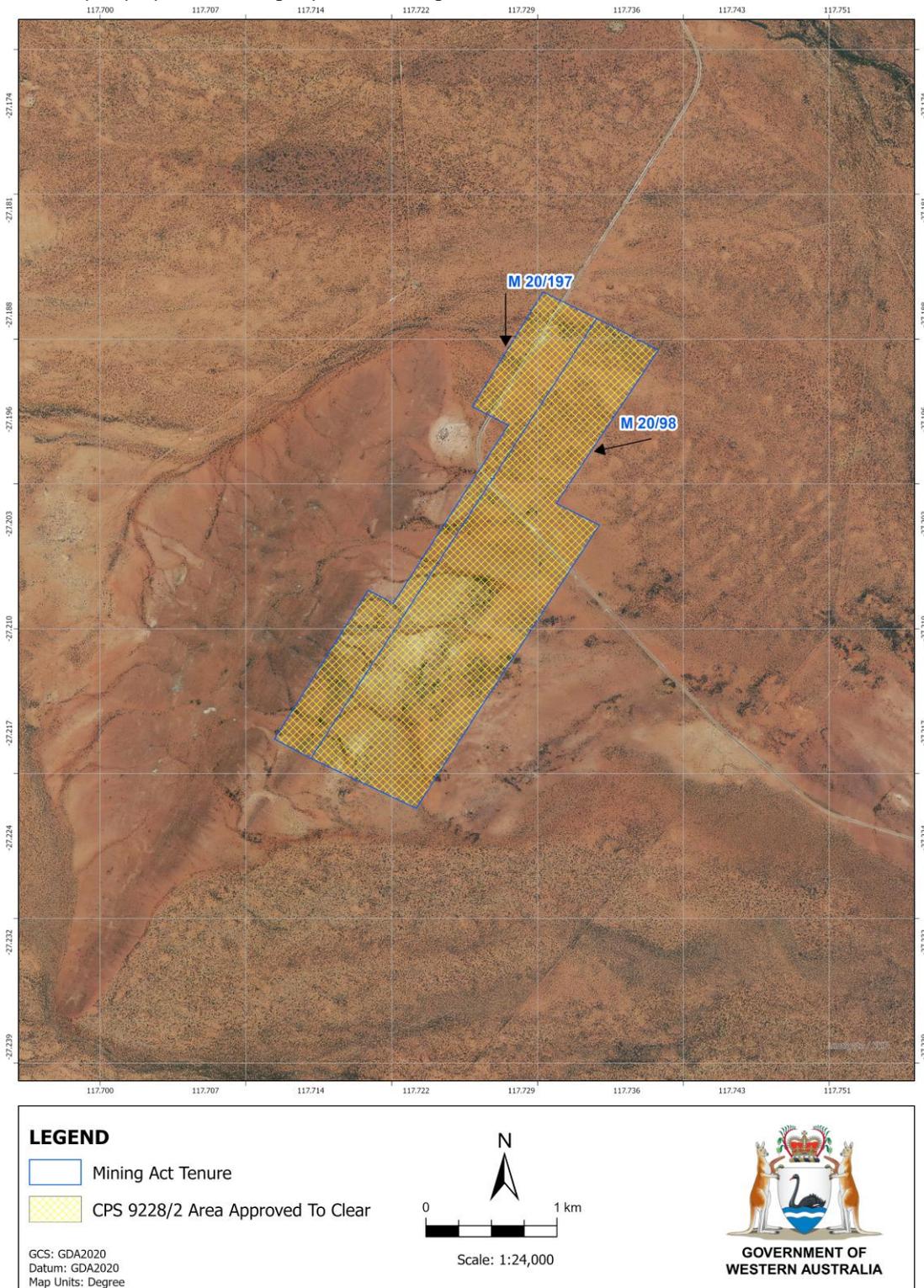


Figure 1. Map of the application area. The yellow area indicates the area within which conditional authorised clearing can occur under the granted clearing permit.

2. Legislative context

The clearing of native vegetation in Western Australia is regulated under the EP Act and the Environmental Protection (Clearing of Native Vegetation) Regulations 2004 (Clearing Regulations).

In addition to the matters considered in accordance with section 51O of the EP Act (Section 1.4), the Delegated Officer has also had regard to the objects and principles under section 4A of the EP Act, particularly:

- the precautionary principle
- the principle of intergenerational equity
- the principle of the conservation of biological diversity and ecological integrity

Other legislation of relevance for this assessment include:

- *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* (WA) (BC Act)
- *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984* (WA) (CALM Act)
- *Mining Act 1978* (WA)
- *Rights in Water and Irrigation Act 1914* (RIWI Act)

The key guidance documents which inform this assessment are:

- *A guide to the assessment of applications to clear native vegetation* (DER, December 2014)
- *Procedure: Native vegetation clearing permits* (DWER, October 2021)
- Technical guidance – *Flora and Vegetation Surveys for Environmental Impact Assessment* (EPA, 2016b)
- Technical guidance – *Terrestrial Fauna Surveys for Environmental Impact Assessment* (EPA, 2016a)

3. Detailed assessment of application

3.1. Avoidance and mitigation measures

Westgold (2021) provided advice confirming that mine site infrastructure will be positioned to avoid all the surveyed locations of the Priority species within the application area. Hence, potential impacts of the proposed clearing to the three Priority flora species may be minimised through the continued implementation of the flora management condition.

The Delegated Officer was satisfied that the applicant has made a reasonable effort to avoid and minimise potential impacts of the proposed clearing on environmental values.

3.2. Assessment of impacts on environmental values

A review of current environmental information (Appendix A) reveals that the assessment against the clearing principles has not changed from clearing permit decision report CPS 9228/1.

There are unlikely to have been any major changes in the flora assemblages of the application area since the initial surveys were conducted in 2020, and the area has been impacted by grazing and historical mining activities (Western Ecological, 2021). Furthermore, the vegetation within the application area is well represented in the surrounding areas (Western Ecological, 2021; GIS Database). Therefore, the proposed clearing is unlikely to have a significant impact on vegetation associations in the region.

Conservation significant fauna species may utilise the area for foraging, however the application area does not provide suitable nesting or breeding habitat for any of the conservation significant species recorded within 50 kilometres. As the area does not represent a significant variation from the surrounding vegetation, potential impacts to any conservation significant fauna present within the application area can be mitigated by the addition of a directional clearing condition to the permit.

The amendment application has been assessed against the clearing principles, planning instruments and other matters in accordance with s.51O of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*. Environmental information has been reviewed, and the assessment of the proposed clearing against the clearing principles remains consistent with the assessment contained in decision report CPS 9228/1; the proposed clearing is not at variance with Principle (e); not likely to be at variance with Principles (a), (b), (c), (d), (h), (i), (j); may be at variance to Principle (g) and is at variance to principle (f).

3.3. Relevant planning instruments and other matters

The amendment application was advertised on 9 September 2025 by the Department of Mines, Petroleum and Exploration inviting submissions from the public. No submissions were received in relation to this application.

There is one native title claim (WCD2017/007) over the area under application (DPLH, 2026). This claim has been registered with the National Native Title Tribunal / determined by the Federal Court on behalf of the claimant group. The mining tenure has been granted in accordance with the future act regime of the *Native Title Act 1993* and the nature of the act (i.e. the proposed clearing activity) has been provided for in that process, therefore, the granting of a clearing permit is not a future act under the *Native Title Act 1993*.

There are no registered Aboriginal Sites of Significance within the application area (DPLH, 2026). It is the proponent's responsibility to comply with the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972* and ensure that no Aboriginal Sites of Significance are damaged through the clearing process.

Other relevant authorisations required for the proposed land use include:

- A Mining Development and Closure Proposal approved under the *Mining Act 1978*

It is the proponent's responsibility to liaise with the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation and the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, to determine whether a Works Approval, Water Licence, Bed and Banks Permit, or any other licences or approvals are required for the proposed works.

End

Appendix A. Site characteristics

A.1. Site characteristics

Characteristic	Details
Local context	<p>The area proposed to be cleared is located approximately 30 kilometres northwest of Cue on crown land within the Shire of Cue in the extensive land use zone of Western Australia (GIS Database). The area proposed to be cleared is situated in a tract of native vegetation surrounded by pastoral leases and mining operations. The application area is located in the Murchison IBRA bioregion, and the eastern Murchison IBRA subregion. This subregion has been heavily disturbed by over a century of pastoral grazing and mining activities, with additional erosional impacts due to loss of vegetation structure (GIS Database).</p> <p>The predominant land uses in the region are grazing, Unallocated Crown Land (UCL) and Crown Reserves, mining, and conservation (CALM, 2002).</p>
Ecological linkage	Based on aerial imagery, the application area does not form part of any formal or informal ecological linkages (GIS Database).
Conservation areas	The application area does not form part of any known or mapped conservation areas. The closest record is a National Park on Crown Land approximately 25 kilometres southwest of the application area (GIS Database).
Vegetation description	<p>The vegetation of the application area is broadly mapped as the following Beard vegetation association:</p> <p>18: Low woodland, open low woodland or sparse woodland. Mulga <i>Acacia aneura</i> and associated species (GIS Database).</p> <p>A flora and vegetation survey was conducted over the application area by Western Ecological during November 2020. The following vegetation associations were recorded within the application area (Western Ecological, 2021):</p> <p>VT1: <i>Acacia aptaneura</i>, <i>A. pruinocarpa</i> isolated low trees over <i>Eremophila galeata</i>, <i>E. forrestii</i> subsp. <i>forrestii</i>, <i>Acacia craspedocarpa</i>, <i>Ptilotus obovatus</i> low isolated to sparse shrubland;</p> <p>VT2: <i>Acacia pruinocarpa</i> emergent trees over <i>Acacia fuscaneura</i>, <i>A. caesaneura</i> open woodland/ tall open shrubland over <i>Eremophila forrestii</i> subsp. <i>forrestii</i>, <i>Acacia tetragonophylla</i>, <i>A. ramulosa</i> var. <i>ramulosa</i>, <i>A. craspedocarpa</i>, <i>A. fuscaneura</i> open shrubland over <i>Ptilotus obovatus</i> low sparse shrubland;</p> <p>VT3: <i>Acacia aptaneura</i> or <i>A. pteraneura</i> very isolated tall shrubs over <i>Ptilotus rotundifolius</i>, <i>Eremophila galeata</i>, <i>Ptilotus rotundifolius</i>, <i>Eremophila macmillaniana</i> sparse to isolated shrubs over <i>Ptilotus obovatus</i>, <i>Maireana triptera</i> low sparse shrubland;</p> <p>VT4: <i>Acacia aptaneura</i> or <i>A. pteraneura</i> low open woodland over <i>Eremophila macmillaniana</i>, <i>E. galeata</i>, <i>Senna</i> sp. <i>Meekatharra</i> isolated shrubs over <i>Maireana triptera</i>, <i>Ptilotus obovatus</i> low isolated shrubs over grass tussocks (grazed/ recent resprout) low isolated shrubs over grass tussocks (grazed/ recent resprout) low isolated;</p> <p>VT5: <i>Acacia aptaneura</i>, <i>Acacia synchronicia</i> tall shrubs over <i>Eremophila macmillaniana</i>, <i>A. tetragonophylla</i>, <i>E. glutinosa</i>, <i>Ptilotus rotundifolius</i>, <i>Acacia speckii</i>, <i>A. ramulosa</i> var. <i>ramulosa</i> open shrubland over <i>Dodonaea amplisemina</i>, <i>Maireana triptera</i> low open shrubland;</p> <p>VT6: <i>Acacia aptaneura</i> or <i>A. fuscaneura</i> low trees/ tall shrubs over <i>Eremophila macmillaniana</i>, <i>Acacia tetragonophylla</i> open shrubland over <i>Ptilotus rotundifolius</i> or <i>P. obovatus</i> low open to low sparse shrubland;</p> <p>VT7: <i>Acacia caesaneura</i>, <i>Acacia fuscaneura</i> open woodland to woodland over <i>Acacia aptaneura</i> tall sparse shrubland/ low open woodland over <i>Eremophila galeata</i>, <i>E. macmillaniana</i>, <i>Acacia tetragonophylla</i>, <i>A. aptaneura</i>, <i>Senna artemisioides</i> subsp. <i>xartemisioides</i> open shrubland over <i>Cymbopogon ambiguus</i> and <i>Ptilotus obovatus</i> sparse grass tussocks and low shrubs;</p> <p>VT8: <i>Acacia craspedocarpa</i>, <i>A. aptaneura</i>, <i>A. synchronicia</i> tall open shrubland over <i>Eremophila galeata</i>, <i>Ptilotus obovatus</i> low open shrubland <i>Acacia synchronicia</i>, <i>Hakea preissii</i> tall open shrubland over <i>Eremophila youngii</i> subsp. <i>youngii</i>, <i>Senna artemisioides</i> subsp. <i>oligophylla</i> open shrubland over <i>Ptilotus obovatus</i>, <i>Senna</i> sp. Billabong, <i>Atriplex vesicaria</i> low open shrubland; and</p> <p>VT9: <i>Pittosporum angustifolium</i>, <i>Hakea preissii</i>, <i>Eremophila longifolia</i>, <i>Acacia synchronicia</i> low woodland over <i>Ptilotus divaricatus</i>, <i>P. obovatus</i>, <i>Enchylaena tomentosa</i>, <i>Rhagodia drummondii</i>, shrubland over <i>Dissocarpus paradoxus</i>, <i>Sclerolaena cuneata</i>, <i>Atriplex codonocarpa</i>, <i>Maireana pyramidata</i>, resprouting grasses low open shrubland.</p>

Characteristic	Details
Vegetation condition	The vegetation survey (Western Ecological, 2021) and aerial imagery (GIS Database) indicate the vegetation within the proposed clearing area is in 'degraded' to 'very good' (Trudgen, 1991) condition. The full Trudgen (1991) condition rating scale is provided in Appendix C.
Climate and landform	The climate for the East Murchison area is semi-arid with a mean annual rainfall of 235.8 millimetres recorded at the Mount Magnet Aero weather station approximately 100 kilometres south of the application area (BoM, 2026). The application area is mapped within elevation areas of 440 to 480 metres Australian height datum (GIS Database).
Soil description and land degradation risk	The soil is mapped as a part of the following land systems and soil descriptions (DPIRD, 2026a; GIS Database). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gabaintha Land System (273Ga) Ridges, hills, and foot slopes of various metamorphosed volcanic rocks (greenstones), supporting sparse acacia and other mainly non-halophytic shrublands. Soils associated with this land system are stony lithosols over greenstone, dark red fine sandy loams or clays, and dark red soft surfaced duplexes. This land system is generally not susceptible to erosion but has been scarred by past mining activity (Curry et al., 1994). • Violet Land System (9890) Gently undulating gravelly plains on greenstone, laterite, and hardpan, with low stony rises and minor saline plains; supports mulga and bowgada-dominated shrublands, with dense mulga groves and patchy halophytic shrublands. Soils associated with this land system are dark red gravelly loamy sands, dark red gravelly clayey sands or fine sandy loams, shallow red earths, clay loams or fine sandy loams, and deep red fine sandy loams over light to medium clays. This land system is susceptible to erosion where vegetation is degraded (Curry et al., 1994). • Yanganoo Land System (273Yg) Almost flat hardpan wash plains, with or without small wanderrie banks and showing variable development of weak growing; supports mulga shrublands. Soils associated with this land system are dark red earthy sands, red hardpan clay loams over red-brown hardpan, red earths or hardpan clay loams, and red hardpan loams. This land system is susceptible to erosions where vegetation is degraded (Curry et al., 1994).
Waterbodies	The application area is intersected by two minor non-perennial watercourses (GIS Database).
Hydrogeography	The area proposed to be cleared is located within the East Murchison Groundwater Area proclaimed under the <i>Rights in Water and Irrigation Act 1914</i> (GIS Database). The application area occurs within the Murchison River Catchment (GIS Database). The mapped groundwater salinity is of 1000 - 3000 milligrams per total dissolved solids which is described as marginal to brackish (GIS Database).
Flora	There are records of seven priority flora species within 20 kilometres of the application area (GIS Database). Previous surveys have identified three conservation significant flora species within the application area (Western Ecological, 2021): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Acacia speckii</i> (Priority 4) • <i>Dodonaea amplisemina</i> (Priority 4) • <i>Sauropus</i> sp. Woolgorong (Priority 3)
Ecological communities	There are no Priority Ecological Communities or Threatened Ecological Communities (PECs/TECs) intersecting the application area. The closest recorded PEC is the Austin Land System (Priority 3) less than 10 kilometres from the application area (GIS Database).
Fauna	There are records of 30 priority fauna species within 50 kilometres of the application area (DPIRD, 2026b; GIS Database).
Fauna habitat	Four fauna habitat types were identified within the application area in addition to habitat already cleared for road construction (Western Ecological, 2021): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stony Plains and Rises: 161 hectares; • Acacia Shrubland: 84 hectares; • Drainage Area: 78 hectares; and • Drainage Line: 37 hectares.

A.2. Vegetation extent

	Pre-European area (ha)	Current extent (ha)	Extent remaining (%)	Current extent in all DBCA managed land (ha)	Current extent in all DBCA Managed Land (proportion of pre-European extent) (%)
IBRA Bioregion - Murchison	28,120,586.77	28,044,823.42	99.73	2,185,987.96	7.77
Beard vegetation associations - State					

Veg Assoc No.18	19,892,306.46	19,843,148.07	99.75	1,317,179.00	6.62
Beard vegetation associations - Bioregion					
Veg Assoc No.18	12,403,172.30	12,363,252.47	99.68	614,964.13	4.96

Government of Western Australia (2019)

A.3. Flora analysis table

With consideration for the site characteristics set out above and relevant datasets (Appendix D.1), impacts to the following conservation significant flora required further consideration (Western Ecological, 2021; GIS Database).

Species name	Suitable habitat features? [Y/N]	Distance of closest record to application area (km)	Number of known records (total)
Priority 1			
<i>Anacampteros sp. Eremaean (F. Hort, J. Hort & J. Shanks 3248)</i>	N	<10	8
<i>Dicrastylis sp. Cue (A.A. Mitchell 764)</i>	Y	<10	2
<i>Isotropis petrensis</i>	N	<15	12
Priority 3			
<i>Hemigenia tysonii</i>	Y	<10	25
<i>Hibiscus sp. Belele (D.W. Goodall 3417)</i>	Y	<10	7
<i>Ptilotus beardii</i>	Y	<5	39
<i>Sauropus sp. Woolgorong</i>	Y	0	36
Priority 4			
<i>Acacia speckii</i>	Y	0	40
<i>Dodonaea amplisemina</i>	Y	0	40

T: threatened, CR: critically endangered, EN: endangered, VU: vulnerable, P: priority

A.4. Fauna analysis table

With consideration for the site characteristics set out above and relevant datasets (Appendix D.1), impacts to the following conservation significant fauna required further consideration (Western Ecological, 2021; GIS Database).

Species name	Conservation status	Suitable habitat features? [Y/N]	Distance of closest record to application area (km)
Birds			
<i>Actitis hypoleucos</i> (common sandpiper)	MI	N	<30
<i>Apus pacificus</i> (fork-tailed swift)	MI	N	<35
<i>Calidris acuminata</i> (sharp-tailed sandpiper)	MI	N	<30
<i>Calidris ferruginea</i> (curlew sandpiper)	CR	N	<45
<i>Calidris ruficollis</i> (red-necked stint)	MI	N	<25
<i>Charadrius cucullatus</i> (hooded plover, hooded dotterel)	P4	N	<25
<i>Chlidonias leucopterus</i> (white-winged black tern)	MI	N	<30
<i>Falco peregrinus</i> (peregrine falcon)	OS	N	<15
<i>Gelochelidon nilotica</i> (gull-billed tern)	MI	N	<20
<i>Hydroprogne caspia</i> (Caspian tern)	MI	N	<30
<i>Leipoa ocellata</i> (Malleefowl)	VU	N	<30
<i>Limosa lapponica</i> (bar-tailed godwit)	MI	N	<25
<i>Oxyura australis</i> (blue-billed duck)	P4	N	<30

<i>Plegadis falcinellus</i> (glossy ibis)	MI	N	<25
<i>Tringa glareola</i> (wood sandpiper)	MI	N	<30
<i>Tringa nebularia</i> (common greenshank)	MI	N	<25
<i>Tringa stagnatilis</i> (marsh sandpiper)	MI	N	<30
Invertebrates			
<i>Idiosoma clypeatum</i> (northern shield-backed trapdoor spider)	P3	N	<30
Mammals			
<i>Chaeropus ecaudatus</i> (pig-footed bandicoot, kantjilpa)	EX	N/A*	<35
<i>Dasycercus blythi</i> (brush-tailed mulgara)	P4	Y	<35
<i>Lagorchestes hirsutus subsp. (Central Australia)</i> (rufous hare-wallaby (Central Australia), mala)	EN	N	<35
<i>Leporillus apicalis</i> (lesser stick-nest rat)	EX	N/A*	<35
<i>Leporillus conditor</i> (greater stick-nest rat, wopilkara)	CD	N	<35
<i>Macroderma gigas</i> (ghost bat)	VU	N	<35
<i>Macrotis lagotis</i> (bilby, dalgyte, ninu)	VU	Y	<40
<i>Notomys longicaudatus</i> (long-tailed hopping-mouse, koolawa)	EX	N/A*	<35
<i>Petrogale lateralis lateralis</i> (black-flanked rock-wallaby, black-footed rock-wallaby, moorong)	EN	Y	<35
<i>Pseudomys fieldi</i> (Shark Bay mouse, djoongari)	VU	N	<35
Reptiles			
<i>Egernia stokesii badia</i> (western spiny-tailed skink)	VU	Y	<35
<i>Lerista eupoda</i> (West Coast mulga slider)	P1	Y	<15

T: threatened, CR: critically endangered, EN: endangered, VU: vulnerable, MI: migratory, CD: conservation dependent, OS: other specially protected, P: priority

*Species listed as extinct are not considered for the purpose of this report

Appendix B. Assessment against the clearing principles

Assessment against the clearing principles	Variance level	Is further consideration required?
Environmental value: biological values		
<p><u>Principle (a):</u> "Native vegetation should not be cleared if it comprises a high level of biodiversity."</p> <p><u>Assessment:</u></p> <p>The area proposed to be cleared contains the following locally significant flora:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Acacia speckii</i> (P4); • <i>Dodonaea amplisemina</i> (P4); and • <i>Sauropus</i> sp. Woolgorong (P3). <p>There are 10 or less individuals of each species within the application area, with <i>Acacia speckii</i> and <i>Dodonaea amplisemina</i> individuals being restricted to the south west boundary of the application area (Western Ecological, 2021). <i>Sauropus</i> sp. Woolgorong individuals are restricted to the drainage lines within the application area. All three priority flora species are widespread through several bioregions (Western Australian Herbarium, 1998). Mine infrastructure will be positioned to avoid all known locations of Priority flora species within the application area (Westgold, 2021).</p>	<p>Not likely to be at variance</p> <p>As per CPS 9228/1</p>	<p>No</p>
<p><u>Principle (b):</u> "Native vegetation should not be cleared if it comprises the whole or a part of, or is necessary for the maintenance of, a significant habitat for fauna."</p> <p><u>Assessment:</u></p> <p>The area proposed to be cleared contains potentially suitable habitat for the following conservation significant fauna that have been identified within 50 kilometres of the application area:</p>	<p>Not likely to be at variance</p> <p>As per CPS 9228/1</p>	<p>No</p>

Assessment against the clearing principles	Variance level	Is further consideration required?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Dasyercus bilythi</i> (brush-tailed mulgara, P4); • <i>Macrotis lagotis</i> (bilby, dalgyte, ninu; VU); • <i>Petrogale lateralis lateralis</i> (black-flanked rock-wallaby, EN); • <i>Egernia stokesii badia</i> (western spiny-tailed skink, VU); and • <i>Lerista eupoda</i> (West Coast mulga slider, P1). <p>While the application area may provide suitable foraging habitat for these species, it does not represent suitable nesting or breeding habitat for them. The four fauna habitats identified by Western Ecological (2021) are well represented and widespread locally, with vegetation identified in the application area unlikely to provide significant habitat for local fauna species beyond minor foraging (Western Ecological, 2021; GIS Database).</p> <p>Any potential impacts to local fauna can be minimised through implementation of a directional clearing condition.</p>		
<p><u>Principle (c):</u> <i>“Native vegetation should not be cleared if it includes, or is necessary for the continued existence of, threatened flora.”</i></p> <p><u>Assessment:</u></p> <p>No threatened flora species have been identified within the application area or its surrounds (Star Minerals 2025b; GIS Database).</p>	<p>Not likely to be at variance</p> <p>As per CPS 9228/1</p>	<p>No</p>
<p><u>Principle (d):</u> <i>“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.”</i></p> <p><u>Assessment:</u></p> <p>There are no known Threatened Ecological Communities (TECs) located within or in close proximity to the application area (GIS Database).</p> <p>A flora and vegetation survey of the application area did not identify any TECs (Western Ecological, 2021).</p>	<p>Not likely to be at variance</p> <p>As per CPS 9228/1</p>	<p>No</p>
Environmental value: significant remnant vegetation and conservation areas		
<p><u>Principle (e):</u> <i>“Native vegetation should not be cleared if it is significant as a remnant of native vegetation in an area that has been extensively cleared.”</i></p> <p><u>Assessment:</u></p> <p>The extent of the mapped vegetation type in the local area is consistent with the national objectives and targets for biodiversity conservation in Australia (Commonwealth of Australia, 2001).</p> <p>The vegetation proposed to be cleared is not considered to be part of a significant ecological linkage in the local area.</p>	<p>Not at variance</p> <p>As per CPS 9228/1</p>	<p>No</p>
<p><u>Principle (h):</u> <i>“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.”</i></p> <p><u>Assessment:</u></p> <p>Given the distance to the nearest conservation area is 25 kilometres (GIS Database), the proposed clearing is not likely to have an impact on the environmental values of nearby conservation areas.</p>	<p>Not likely to be at variance</p> <p>As per CPS 9228/1</p>	<p>No</p>
Environmental value: land and water resources		
<p><u>Principle (f):</u> <i>“Native vegetation should not be cleared if it is growing in, or in association with, an environment associated with a watercourse or wetland.”</i></p> <p><u>Assessment:</u></p> <p>There are no permanent water courses or wetlands recorded within the application area (GIS Database). There are two minor non-perennial watercourses intersecting the application area (GIS Database). Creek lines in the area are dry for most of the year, only flowing briefly immediately following significant rainfall (CALM, 2002).</p> <p>Further drainage lines have been identified by the Western Ecological (2021) survey, however no riparian vegetation was identified. As such, impacts from the proposed</p>	<p>At variance</p> <p>As per CPS 9228/1</p>	<p>No</p>

Assessment against the clearing principles	Variance level	Is further consideration required?
clearing to vegetation growing in association with watercourses is likely to be minimal. Nevertheless, potential impacts to vegetation growing in association with the watercourses may be minimised by the continued implementation of the vegetation management condition.		
<u>Principle (g):</u> "Native vegetation should not be cleared if the clearing of the vegetation is likely to cause appreciable land degradation." <u>Assessment:</u> The three land systems that compose the application area (Gabanintha, Violet, and Yanganoo) are not generally susceptible to erosion, with the following exceptions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gabanintha: land system widely scarred by past mining activities (Curry et al., 1994). Violet: removal of vegetation on drainage tracts can lead to increased erosion by rainfall events (Curry et al., 1994). Yanganoo: land system susceptible to accelerated erosion when severely degraded (Curry et al., 1994). Potential impacts of erosion may be minimised by the continued implementation of a staged clearing condition	May be at variance As per CPS 9228/1	No
<u>Principle (i):</u> "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." <u>Assessment:</u> There are no Public Drinking Water Source Areas within or near the application area (GIS Database). There are no permanent watercourses or wetlands within the area proposed to clear (GIS Database). Creek lines in the region are dry for most of the year, only flowing briefly immediately following significant rainfall. The proposed clearing is unlikely to result in significant changes to surface water flows. The groundwater in the application area is brackish, ranging from 1,000 to 3,000 milligrams/litre total dissolved solids (GIS Database). The proposed clearing is unlikely to cause deterioration in the quality of underground water.	Not likely to be at variance As per CPS 9228/1	No
<u>Principle (j):</u> "Native vegetation should not be cleared if the clearing of the vegetation is likely to cause, or exacerbate, the incidence or intensity of flooding." <u>Assessment:</u> The climate of the region is semi-arid, with a low average rainfall of approximately 233 millimetres per year (BoM, 2026). Drainage lines in the area are dry for most of the year, only flowing briefly immediately following significant rainfall (CALM, 2002). There are no permanent water courses or waterbodies within the application area (GIS Database). Seasonal drainage lines are common in the region and temporary localised flooding may occur briefly following heavy rainfall events. However, the proposed clearing is unlikely to increase the incidence or intensity of natural flooding events.	Not likely to be at variance As per CPS 9228/1	No

Appendix C. Vegetation condition rating scale

Vegetation condition is a rating given to a defined area of vegetation to categorise and rank disturbance related to human activities. The rating refers to the degree of change in the vegetation structure, density and species present in relation to undisturbed vegetation of the same type. The degree of disturbance impacts upon the vegetation's ability to regenerate. Disturbance at a site can be a cumulative effect from a number of interacting disturbance types.

Considering its location, the scale below was used to measure the condition of the vegetation proposed to be cleared. This scale has been extracted from Trudgen, M.E. (1991) *Vegetation condition scale* in National Trust (WA) 1993 Urban Bushland Policy. National Trust of Australia (WA), Wildflower Society of WA (Inc.), and the Tree Society (Inc.), Perth.

Measuring vegetation condition for the Eremaean and Northern Botanical Provinces (Trudgen, 1991)

Condition	Description
Excellent	Pristine or nearly so, no obvious signs of damage caused by human activities since European settlement.
Very good	Some relatively slight signs of damage caused by human activities since European settlement. For example, some signs of damage to tree trunks caused by repeated fire, the presence of some relatively non-aggressive weeds, or occasional vehicle tracks.

Condition	Description
Good	More obvious signs of damage caused by human activity since European settlement, including some obvious impact on the vegetation structure such as that caused by low levels of grazing or slightly aggressive weeds.
Poor	Still retains basic vegetation structure or ability to regenerate it after very obvious impacts of human activities since European settlement, such as grazing, partial clearing, frequent fires or aggressive weeds.
Very poor	Severely impacted by grazing, very frequent fires, clearing or a combination of these activities. Scope for some regeneration but not to a state approaching good condition without intensive management. Usually with a number of weed species present including very aggressive species.
Completely degraded	Areas that are completely or almost completely without native species in the structure of their vegetation; i.e. areas that are cleared or 'parkland cleared' with their flora comprising weed or crop species with isolated native trees or shrubs.

Appendix D. Sources of information

D.1. GIS datasets

Publicly available GIS datasets used (sourced from www.data.wa.gov.au):

- Cadastre (Polygon) (LGATE-217)
- Clearing Instruments Activities (Areas Approved to Clear) (DWER-076)
- Clearing Regulations - Environmentally Sensitive Areas (DWER-046)
- Clearing Regulations - Schedule One Areas (DWER-057)
- DBCA - Lands of Interest (DBCA-012)
- DBCA - Legislated Lands and Waters (DBCA-011)
- DBCA Fire History (DBCA-060)
- Groundwater Salinity Statewide (DWER-026)
- Hydrographic Catchments - Catchments (DWER-028)
- IBRA Vegetation Statistics
- Local Government Area (LGA) Boundaries (LGATE-233)
- Localities (LGATE-234)
- Medium Scale Topo Contour (Line) (LGATE-015)
- Native Title (Determination) (LGATE-066)
- Native Vegetation Extent (DPIRD-005)
- Pre-European Vegetation (DPIRD-006)
- Public Drinking Water Source Areas (DWER-033)
- RIWI Act, Groundwater Areas (DWER-034)
- RIWI Act, Rivers (DWER-036)
- RIWI Act, Surface Water Areas and Irrigation Districts (DWER-037)
- Soil Landscape Mapping - Best Available (DPIRD-027)
- Townsites (LGATE-248)

Restricted GIS Databases used:

- Threatened and Priority Flora (TPFL)
- Threatened and Priority Flora (WAHerb)
- Threatened and Priority Fauna
- Threatened and Priority Ecological Communities
- Threatened and Priority Ecological Communities (Buffers)

D.2. References

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- Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage (DPLH) (2026) Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Inquiry System. Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage. <https://espatial.dplh.wa.gov.au/ACHIS/index.html?viewer=ACHIS> (Accessed 9 January 2026).
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- Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) (2021) Procedure: Native vegetation clearing permits. Joondalup. <https://www.wa.gov.au/system/files/2024-11/procedure-native-vegetation-clearing-permits.pdf>
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- Environmental Protection Authority (EPA) (2020) Technical Guidance – Terrestrial Fauna Surveys. https://www.epa.wa.gov.au/sites/default/files/Policies_and_Guidance/2020.09.17%20-%20EPA%20Technical%20Guidance%20-%20Vertebrate%20Fauna%20Surveys%20-%20Final.pdf
- Government of Western Australia (2019) 2018 Statewide Vegetation Statistics incorporating the CAR Reserve Analysis (Full Report). Current as of March 2019. WA Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions. <https://catalogue.data.wa.gov.au/dataset/dbca-statewide-vegetation-statistics>
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- Western Australian Herbarium (WAH) (1998-) FloraBase - the Western Australian Flora. Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, Western Australia. <https://florabase.dbca.wa.gov.au/> (Accessed 9 January 2025).
- Western Ecological (2021) Accelerator and Indicator Mining Areas, Reconnaissance Flora and Vegetation Survey and Basic Terrestrial Fauna Survey – Final Report. Prepared for Westgold Resources Limited by Western Ecological Pty Ltd, January 2021.
- Westgold (2021) Supporting additional information received in relation to Big Bell Operations Clearing Permit Application CPS 9228/1. Westgold Resources Limited, Western Australia.

Glossary

Acronyms:

BC Act	<i>Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016</i> , Western Australia
BoM	Bureau of Meteorology, Australian Government
DAA	Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Western Australia (now DPLH)
DAFWA	Department of Agriculture and Food, Western Australia (now DPIRD)
DCCEEW	Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, Australian Government
DBCA	Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, Western Australia
DEMIRS	Department of Energy, Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety (now DMPE)
DER	Department of Environment Regulation, Western Australia (now DWER)
DMIRS	Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety, Western Australia (now DMPE)
DMP	Department of Mines and Petroleum, Western Australia (now DMPE)
DMPE	Department of Mines, Petroleum and Exploration
DoEE	Department of the Environment and Energy (now DCCEEW)
DoW	Department of Water, Western Australia (now DWER)
DPaW	Department of Parks and Wildlife, Western Australia (now DBCA)
DPIRD	Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, Western Australia
DPLH	Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage, Western Australia
DRF	Declared Rare Flora (now known as Threatened Flora)
DWER	Department of Water and Environmental Regulation, Western Australia
EP Act	<i>Environmental Protection Act 1986</i> , Western Australia
EPA	Environmental Protection Authority, Western Australia

EPBC Act	<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i> (Commonwealth Act)
GIS	Geographical Information System
ha	Hectare (10,000 square metres)
IBRA	Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation for Australia
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources – commonly known as the World Conservation Union
PEC	Priority Ecological Community, Western Australia
RIWI Act	<i>Rights in Water and Irrigation Act 1914</i> , Western Australia
TEC	Threatened Ecological Community

Definitions:

DBCA (2023) Conservation Codes for Western Australian Flora and Fauna. Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, Western Australia:

Threatened species

T Listed by order of the Minister as Threatened in the category of critically endangered, endangered or vulnerable under section 19(1), or is a rediscovered species to be regarded as threatened species under section 26(2) of the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 (BC Act).

Threatened fauna is the species of fauna that are listed as critically endangered, endangered or vulnerable threatened species.

Threatened flora is the species of flora that are listed as critically endangered, endangered or vulnerable threatened species.

The assessment of the conservation status of threatened species is in accordance with the BC Act listing criteria and the requirements of [Ministerial Guideline Number 1](#) and [Ministerial Guideline Number 2](#) that adopts the use of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) [Red List of Threatened Species Categories and Criteria](#), and is based on the national distribution of the species.

CR Critically endangered species

Threatened species considered to be “*facing an extremely high risk of extinction in the wild in the immediate future, as determined in accordance with criteria set out in the ministerial guidelines*”.

Listed as critically endangered under section 19(1)(a) of the BC Act in accordance with the criteria set out in section 20 and the ministerial guidelines.

EN Endangered species

Threatened species considered to be “*facing a very high risk of extinction in the wild in the near future, as determined in accordance with criteria set out in the ministerial guidelines*”.

Listed as endangered under section 19(1)(b) of the BC Act in accordance with the criteria set out in section 21 and the ministerial guidelines.

VU Vulnerable species

Threatened species considered to be “*facing a high risk of extinction in the wild in the medium-term future, as determined in accordance with criteria set out in the ministerial guidelines*”.

Listed as vulnerable under section 19(1)(c) of the BC Act in accordance with the criteria set out in section 22 and the ministerial guidelines.

Extinct species

Listed by order of the Minister as extinct under section 23(1) of the BC Act as extinct or extinct in the wild.

EX Extinct species

Species where “*there is no reasonable doubt that the last member of the species has died*”, and listing is otherwise in accordance with the ministerial guidelines (section 24 of the BC Act).

EW Extinct in the wild species

Species that “*is known only to survive in cultivation, in captivity or as a naturalised population well outside its past range; and it has not been recorded in its known habitat or expected habitat, at appropriate seasons, anywhere in its past range, despite surveys over a time frame appropriate to its life cycle and form*”, and listing is otherwise in accordance with the ministerial guidelines (section 25 of the BC Act).

Currently there are no threatened fauna or threatened flora species listed as extinct in the wild.

Specially protected species

SP Specially protected species

Listed by order of the Minister as specially protected under section 13(1) of the BC Act. Meeting one or more of the following categories: species of special conservation interest; migratory species; cetaceans; species subject to international agreement; or species otherwise in need of special protection.

Species that are listed as threatened species (critically endangered, endangered, or vulnerable) or extinct species under the BC Act cannot also be listed as specially protected species.

MI Migratory species

Fauna that periodically or occasionally visit Australia or an external Territory or the exclusive economic zone; or the species is subject of an international agreement that relates to the protection of migratory species and that binds the Commonwealth; and listing is otherwise in accordance with the ministerial guidelines (section 15 of the BC Act).

Migratory species include birds that are subject to an agreement between the government of Australia and the governments of Japan (JAMBA), China (CAMBA) or The Republic of Korea (ROKAMBA), and fauna subject to the *Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals* (Bonn Convention), an environmental treaty under the United Nations Environment Program. Migratory species listed under the BC Act are a subset of the migratory animals, that are known to visit Western Australia, protected under the international agreements or treaties, excluding species that are listed as Threatened species.

CD Species of special conservation interest (conservation dependent fauna)

Species of special conservation need that are dependent on ongoing conservation intervention to prevent it becoming eligible for listing as threatened, and listing is otherwise in accordance with the ministerial guidelines (section 14 of the BC Act).

Currently only fauna are listed as species of special conservation interest.

OS Other specially protected species

Species otherwise in need of special protection to ensure their conservation, and listing is otherwise in accordance with the ministerial guidelines (section 18 of the BC Act).

Currently only fauna are listed as species otherwise in need of special protection.

Priority species

P Priority species

Priority is not a listing category under the BC Act. The Priority Flora and Fauna lists are maintained by the department and are published on the department's website.

All fauna and flora are protected in WA following the provisions in Part 10 of the BC Act. The protection applies even when a species is not listed as threatened or specially protected, and regardless of land tenure (State managed land (Crown land), private land, or Commonwealth land).

Species that may possibly be threatened species that do not meet the criteria for listing under the BC Act because of insufficient survey or are otherwise data deficient, are added to the Priority Fauna or Priority Flora Lists under Priorities 1, 2 or 3. These three categories are ranked in order of prioritisation for survey and evaluation of conservation status so that consideration can be given to potential listing as threatened.

Species that are adequately known, meet criteria for near threatened, or are rare but not threatened, or that have been recently removed from the threatened species list or conservation dependent or other specially protected fauna lists for other than taxonomic reasons, are placed in Priority 4. These species require regular monitoring.

Assessment of priority status is based on the Western Australian distribution of the species, unless the distribution in WA is part of a contiguous population extending into adjacent States, as defined by the known spread of locations.

P1 Priority One - Poorly-known species – known from few locations, none on conservation lands

Species that are known from one or a few locations (generally five or less) which are potentially at risk. All occurrences are either: very small; or on lands not managed for conservation, for example, agricultural or pastoral lands, urban areas, road and rail reserves, gravel reserves and active mineral leases; or otherwise under threat of habitat destruction or degradation.

Species may be included if they are comparatively well known from one or more locations but do not meet adequacy of survey requirements for threatened listing and appear to be under immediate threat from known threatening processes. These species are in urgent need of further survey.

P2 Priority Two - Poorly-known species – known from few locations, some on conservation lands

Species that are known from one or a few locations (generally five or less), some of which are on lands managed primarily for nature conservation, for example, national parks, conservation parks, nature reserves and other lands with secure tenure being managed for conservation.

Species may be included if they are comparatively well known from one or more locations but do not meet adequacy of survey requirements for threatened listing and appear to be under threat from known threatening processes. These species are in urgent need of further survey.

P3 Priority Three - Poorly-known species – known from several locations

Species that are known from several locations and the species does not appear to be under imminent threat or from few but widespread locations with either large population size or significant remaining areas of apparently suitable habitat, much of it not under imminent threat.

Species may be included if they are comparatively well known from several locations but do not meet adequacy of survey requirements and known threatening processes exist that could affect them. These species need further survey.

P4 Priority Four - Rare, Near Threatened and other species in need of monitoring

- (a) Rare. Species that are considered to have been adequately surveyed, or for which sufficient knowledge is available, and that are considered not currently threatened or in need of special protection but could be if present circumstances change. These species are usually represented on conservation lands.
- (b) Near Threatened. Species that are considered to have been adequately surveyed and that are close to qualifying for vulnerable but are not listed as a conservation dependent specially protected species.
- (c) Species that have been removed from the list of threatened species or lists of conservation dependent or other specially protected species, during the past five years for reasons other than taxonomy.
- (d) Other species in need of monitoring.

Principles for clearing native vegetation:

- (a) Native vegetation should not be cleared if it comprises a high level of biological diversity.
- (b) Native vegetation should not be cleared if it comprises the whole or a part of, or is necessary for the maintenance of, a significant habitat for fauna.
- (c) Native vegetation should not be cleared if it includes, or is necessary for the continued existence of, threatened flora.
- (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.
- (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.
- (f) Native vegetation should not be cleared if it is growing in, or in association with, an environment associated with a watercourse or wetland.
- (g) Native vegetation should not be cleared if the clearing of the vegetation is likely to cause appreciable land degradation.
- (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.
- (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.
- (j) Native vegetation should not be cleared if the clearing of the vegetation is likely to cause, or exacerbate, the incidence or intensity of flooding.