Application for referral to clear native vegetation:
Access Track to Field 4 Vegetation Assessment February 2026

PRL, operating as Christmas Island Phosphates (CIP), proposes to widen an existing track and install an additional access into Field 4 to improve traffic safety and management. A review was completed and found some portions of the proposed clearing is not covered by a clearing permit or current referral; thus, CIP wish to submit a referral application for these areas.

The proposed access track locations under MCI 70/1A were assessed to support a referral application under section 51DA of the *Environment Protection Act 1986* (Figure 1).

A field vegetation assessment was undertaken by Ms Khaliesha Mohamed Amin, assisted by Ms Zigourney Nielsen, of Christmas Island Phosphates' Environment team on 3rd February 2026. Ms Amin has extensive experience in botanical surveying, and having grown up on the island, has considerable local knowledge of the flora and fauna.

The vegetation assessments were conducted by ranking the vegetation condition of each site based on the Keighery Condition Scale (Keighery, B.J. 1994), with some allowances and modifications made to accommodate the unique tropical environment on Christmas Island (Table 1). No conservation significant fauna was noted in the ground truthing.

Irvine Hill Road access is an existing track; CIP are requesting to widen the existing access track on either side. The proposed clearing of vegetation is expected to be approximately 0.0115 ha within the wider footprint requested for this track (0.0401 ha). The proposed access from Phosphate Hill Road totals 0.0489 ha. The vegetation at both locations is secondary regrowth, primarily weed dominated and of low environmental value. Vegetation is ranked between 'degraded' (5) 'completely degraded' (6) (see vegetation assessment below). No large native trees are within the referral areas.

The following should be noted:

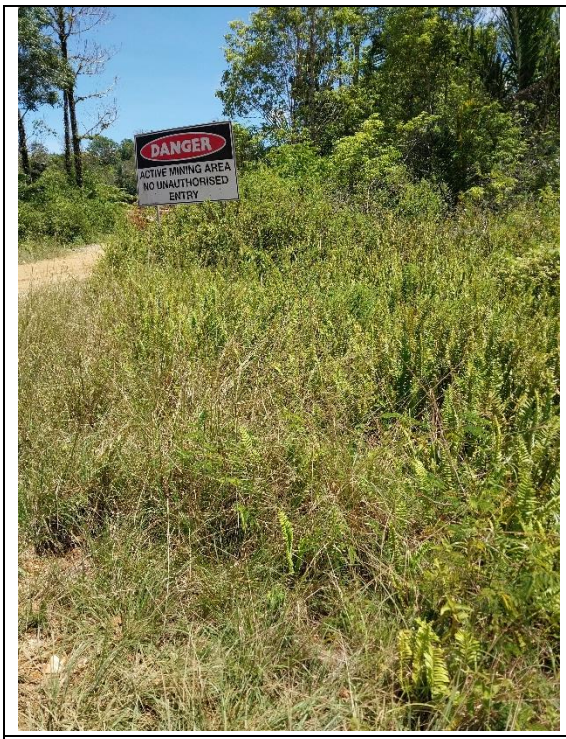
- The areas will not impact upon Abbott's Booby Nest, the nearest nest is ~392m away from the Referral Boundary
- Clearing will not occur during red crab migration.
- Robber crabs will be relocated out of the clearing areas (unlikely to be present).
- Prior to clearing, an internal clearing permit (Mine Works Permit) will be implemented which requires an assessment for the area to be cleared; conditions are required whereby they mitigate specific risks i.e. spotter present.
- Clearing areas will be kept at a minimum, weed dominated areas will be preferenced for clearing and the current Environmental Management Plan will be followed to mitigate impact to the environment including fauna management.

Table 1: Modified Vegetation Condition Score (Keighery, B.J. 1994)

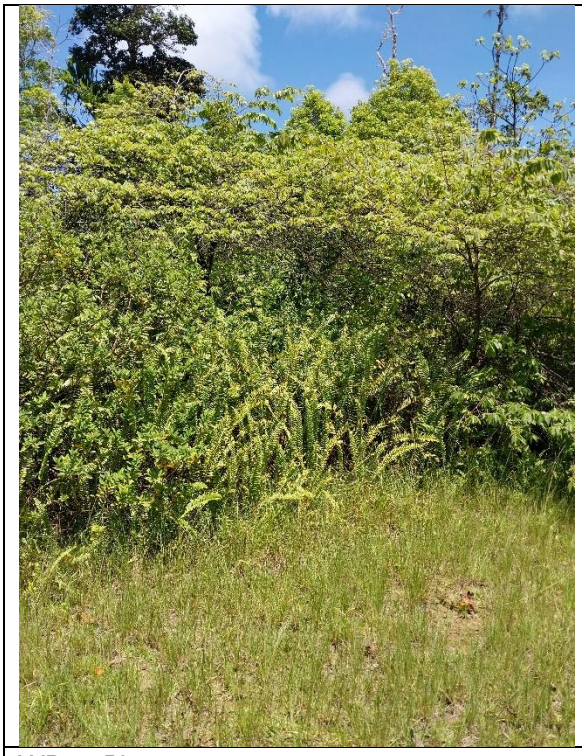
Condition Rating	Keighery Definition	Christmas Island Definition
Pristine (1)	Pristine or nearly so, no obvious signs of disturbance	Mature, undisturbed rainforest or very advanced secondary regrowth. Disturbance is limited to cyclone damage. Climax species dominate and full structural complexity is present with epiphytic orchids and ferns, terrestrial orchids and ferns, §*Pandanus*, pals, buttressing and woody lianes
Excellent (2)	Vegetation structure intact, disturbance affecting individual species and weeds are non-aggressive species	Little to no weed species and a largely intact landform with few signs of disturbance. The vegetation structure is beginning to develop the full complexity and diversity expected in rainforest, with climax species present and a range of features included such as buttressing, palms, ferns, epiphytes and orchids, but the canopy is likely to be more open than in undisturbed rainforest
Very Good (3)	Vegetation structure altered, obvious signs of disturbance. For example, disturbance to vegetation structure caused by repeated fires, the presence of some more aggressive weeds, dieback, logging and grazing	Low diversity vegetation with few signs of disturbance or moderately diverse vegetation on a disturbed landform, a canopy dominated by pioneer species through recruitment of climax species may be evident, an open canopy or poor structural complexity. Few weeds present or weeds are limited to less aggressive species.
Good (4)	Vegetation structure significantly altered by very obvious signs of multiple disturbance. Retains basic vegetation structure or ability to regenerate it. For example, disturbance to vegetation structure caused by very frequent fires, the presence of some very aggressive weeds at high density, partial clearing, dieback and grazing	Multiple signs of disturbance or with low diversity and no structural complexity. Typically displays little to no recruitment of climax tree species. Numerous weeds present or a dense understory dominated by one or two native fern species
Degraded (5)	Basic vegetation structure severely impacted by disturbance. Scope for regeneration but not to a state approaching good condition without intensive management. For example, disturbance to vegetation structure caused by very frequent fires, the presence of very aggressive weeds, partial clearing, dieback and grazing	Vegetation at very early successional stages with a canopy of one to two species and an understory dominated by ferns or weeds, typically adjacent to completely degraded land. May have the potential to develop into better quality vegetation as the canopy develops if weeds are managed
Completely degraded (6)	The structure of the vegetation is no longer intact, and the area is completely or almost completely without native species. These areas are often described as 'parkland cleared' with the flora comprising weed or crop species with isolated native trees or shrubs	The structures of primary rainforest are no longer present and native species are limited to only a few species, for example weed dominated shrubland with sparse emergent *Macaranga* or a near monoculture *Nephrolepis biserrata* fernland. The landscape may be highly disturbed, often with significantly reduced soil and pinnacles exposed. Predominantly lacking a native canopy and with little to no potential to develop one due to dense groundcover of shallow soil
Cleared of Vegetation (7)	-	Areas that are not vegetated either of bare ground or covered by infrastructure. Some weeds may be present.

Figure 1: Field 4 Referral Boundary with Vegetation Mapping (2011, last updated 31/12/2025)

Vegetation Assessment

	
WP 1 – Photo	WP 2 - Photo

Waypoint Reference	WP 1, WP 2
Site	Field 4 – Irvine Hill Road Access
Tenement	MCI 70/1A
GPS Coordinates	WP 1 - N 8845124.5620, E 574396.5336 WP 2 – N 8845133.1880, E 574380.0399
Photo Direction	WP 1 – 25° NNE WP 2 – 45° NE
Native Vegetation	*Tristiropsis acutangula* *Arenga listeri* *Nephrolepis biserrata* *Microsorum scolopendria* *Pittosporum ferrugineum*
Weed Species	*Leucaena leucocephala* *Muntingia calbura* Other weed species
Vegetation Rating (1=Pristine, 7=Cleared)	5/6
ESA	Outside ESA
Notes	Vegetation along road. Extending the current access track from Irvine Hill Road Access to Field 4. Regrowth and weed dominated vegetation.

	
WP3 – Photo	WP4 - Photo
	
WP5 - Photo	

Waypoint Reference	WP 3, WP4, WP 5
Site	Field 4 – Phosphate Hill Road Access
Tenement	MCI 70/1A
GPS Coordinates	WP3 - N 8845136.9180, E 574568.6397 WP4 – N 8845162.6500, E 574594.3129 WP5 – N 8845149.2190, E 574572.3525
Photo Direction	WP3 – 338 ° NNW WP4 – 250 ° WSW WP5 – 280 ° WNW
Native Vegetation	*Macaranga tanarius* *Tristiropsis acutangula* *Arenga listeri* *Nephrolepis biserrata* *Pittosporum ferrugineum*
Weed Species	*Leucaena leucocephala* *Muntingia calbura* Other weed species
Vegetation Rating (1=Pristine, 7=Cleared)	5
ESA	Outside ESA
Notes	Vegetation along road. Road access into Field 4 from Phosphate Hill Road. Regrowth and weed dominated vegetation.