

# Vegetation Clearing Procedure

Rum Jungle Rehabilitation

RJ3-4-Pr-007

<b>Document title</b>	Vegetation Clearing Procedure
<b>Contact details</b>	Rum Jungle Rehabilitation Project
<b>Approved by</b>	Jackie Hartnett
<b>Date approved</b>	28 January 2022
<b>Document review</b>	Annually
<b>Document number</b>	RJ3-4-Pr-007
<b>TRM number</b>	To be allocated

Version	Date	Author	Changes made
0.1	15 December 2021	EcOz	Draft Document
0.2	11 January 2021	A. Wilkins	Review
0.3	21 January 2022	EcOz	Review and edits
0.4	28 January 2022	Jackie Hartnett	Review and edit for approval

Acronyms	Full form
AAPA	Aboriginal Australians Protection Authority
CCGC	Coomalie Community Government Council
CEMP	Construction Environment Management Plan
DITT	Department of Industry, Tourism and Trade (NT)
EPBC Act	Environment Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth)
ESCP	Erosion and Sediment Control Plan
FRALT	Finniss River Aboriginal Land Trust
FSC	Fauna Spotter Catcher
HSE	Health Safety Environment
JSEA	Job Safety Environment Analysis
NT	Northern Territory
NT EPA	Northern Territory Environmental Protection Authority
NTG	Northern Territory Government
NTPS	Northern Territory Planning Scheme
PMP	Project Management Plan
WHS	Work Health and Safety

WSF	Waste Storage Facility
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# 1. Introduction

This Vegetation Clearing Procedure has been developed to guide vegetation clearing within the Rum Jungle Project domain and approved satellite and borrow areas for Stage 3 of the Project. This document falls under the Rum Jungle Rehabilitation Stage 3 Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) RJ3-3-MP-003, a sub-plan of the Project Management Plan RJ3-2-MP-002.

This procedure is in place to ensure that:

- Only required and pre-approved areas of vegetation are cleared
- Impacts to flora, fauna, cultural heritage and surrounding areas are avoided or minimised
- Topsoil and other rehabilitation media salvaging requirements are followed to enable reuse of rehabilitation media onsite
- Weed management procedures are implemented
- Works are in line with site environment and Work, Health and Safety (WHS) standards and the Project's objectives and approvals

Implementation of this procedure will be supported by the project Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). Details of implementation requirements are provided below.

The procedure has been prepared in accordance with the Northern Territory Planning Scheme (NTPS) [Land Clearing Guidelines](#). The NT Land Clearing Guidelines are focused on minimising the impacts of environmental degradation as a result of clearing native.

## 1.1. Related Documents

**Ground/Vegetation Disturbance Request Form RJ3-4-F-004** – this form must be completed, and approved by the Superintendent or Project Director prior to any ground disturbance or vegetation clearing activities.

This procedure should be read in conjunction with:

- Rum Jungle Stage 3 Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) RJ3-3-MP-003 and sub-plans:
  - Weed Management Plan (WMP) RJ3-4-MP-011
  - Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP) RJ3-4-MP-013
  - Erosion and Sediment Control Plan (ESCP) RJ3-4-P-019
  - Cycad Salvaging Procedure RJ3-4-Pr-008
  - Fire Management Plan (FMP) RJ3-4-MP-027
  - Rehabilitation Media Stripping and Stockpiling Procedure RJ3-4-Pr-009

## 2. Legislation

Any work or change within the Project area that may potentially impact the environment requires approval from the Health, Safety and Environment team to ensure that legal requirements are complied with. Breaches of conditions of the Environmental Approval may expose the Project, or any person who contravenes conditions to being liable to a fine or imprisonment.

Legislation	Relevance to activities
<i>Aboriginal Sacred Sites Act</i>	The project contains several sacred sites and an AAPA Authority Certificate (C2019/082) has been issued for the Rehabilitation Project.
<i>Bushfire Management Act (NT)</i>	Provides the protection of life, property and the environment through the mitigation, management, and suppression of bushfires, and for related purposes. The project sites are located in the Northern Fire Protection Zone and the Vernon Arafura Fire Management Zone. Fire breaks will need to be established and maintained and permits obtained prior to undertaking any prescribed burning of excess vegetation.
<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act) (Cwth)</i>	<p>The project requires assessment under the <i>NT Environmental Assessment Act 1982</i> and is a 'controlled action' under the <i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i>. The project is being assessed at the level of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) under the bilateral agreement between the NT and Australian Governments.</p> <p>The relevant controlling provisions are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• listed threatened species and communities (sections 18 and 18A)</li> <li>• protection of the environment from nuclear actions (sections 21 and 22A).</li> </ul>
<i>Heritage Act (NT)</i>	<p>Addresses conservation of the NT's culture and natural heritage. All declared heritage places or archaeological sites, Aboriginal and Macassan sites or objects are protected under the Act. Archaeological heritage sites must not be disturbed or destroyed without a permit.</p> <p>There are no sites on the NT Heritage Register within the project area. There are several sacred sites and two historical sites within the Rum Jungle. If previously unrecorded sites are uncovered by the project activities a Works Approval may be required from the NT Heritage Branch.</p>
<i>Planning Act (NT)</i>	A Land Clearing Permit may be required for unzoned land such as the proposed borrow pit locations on the properties belonging to the Finnis River Aboriginal Land Trust (FRALT) and Coomalie Community Government Council (CCGC) as described in this document.
<i>Soil Conservation and Land Utilisation Act (NT)</i>	This Act provides for the prevention of soil erosion, and for the conservation and reclamation of soil, and requires Erosion and Sediment Control Plans (ESCPs) for development projects. An ESCP is included as part of the CEMP.
<i>Territory Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act (TPWC Act) (NT)</i>	Provision for protection, conservation, and sustainable utilisation of wildlife. Land clearing activities are to be undertaken in a manner to reduce harm to wildlife.
<i>Water Act (NT)</i>	<p>Provisions for protection, management, allocation, use, control and administration of NT water resources. A permit to interfere with a waterway is required if a waterway is to be interfered with of flow obstructed.</p> <p>It is an offence to interfere with a waterway or to obstruct the flow of water in a waterway unless there is an exemption in place (published in a Gazette notice) or there is an authority to do so under the <i>Water Act 1992</i>.</p> <p>New or upgraded river crossings: several diversion channel, creek line and river crossings are required to facilitate site access during wetter months of the year. The location of river crossings has been selected to both avoid areas of importance (cultural, historical and environmental)</p>
<i>Weeds Management Act (NT)</i>	Landholders and occupiers have statutory obligations to manage declared under the <i>Weeds Management Act 2001</i> . A baseline weed survey has been undertaken across the project area and weed management is addressed in the WMP. A further weed survey will be undertaken on the areas to be cleared prior to clearing to reduce the risk of spread. All machinery will be weed/seed free and inspected prior to use on site.

Table 1 Applicable Legislation

## 2.1. Roles and Responsibilities

**All personnel** – particularly Managers and Supervisors: fill out and submit the Ground Disturbance Request Form RJ3-4-F-004 prior to carrying out any activity that may cause environmental harm. Such activities are listed below.

**Project Director** – review, assess and if agree, approve and sign off Ground Disturbance Request Form RJ3-4-F-004 for disturbances more than 0.5 ha and for ALL disturbances of any area size that are outside of the Rum Jungle NT Crown Land boundary; engaging contractors to undertake works; managing the project budget and making sure ground disturbance is undertaken as agreed.

**Superintendent** – review, assess and if agree, approve and sign off Ground Disturbance Request Form RJ3-4-F-004 for disturbances less than 0.5 ha; ensure that ground disturbance occurs in only the approved areas and complies with no-works zones; and manage the project work schedule.

**Health, Safety and Environment (HSE) Team** – determine significance of the proposed work by gaining a full understanding of the proposed change, inspecting the work site/equipment; carrying out flora surveys if necessary; make recommendations to minimise environmental impact; supervise dozing work if required; inspect clearing and sign off Ground Disturbance Request Form RJ3-4-F-004 at completion. The HSE team is also responsible for records management for this process. The HSE Manager or authorized HSE Officer will conduct pre-clearing inspection and be on-site to oversee the clearing activities.

**Contract Manager** – engage contractors to undertake works onsite.

**Machine Operators** – comply with an approved Ground Disturbance Request Form RJ3-4-F-004; maintain their equipment; work safely to meet required works schedule; is made aware of, and avoids, the location of significant habitat features; attend pre-clearing meeting (for all contractors) to ensure that the clearing plan is understood by all relevant personnel.

Unless otherwise specified, the provisions within this procedure are the responsibility of the HSE Manager. Responsibility for implementation may be delegated to contractors undertaking the work; however, NTG will maintain overarching accountability for compliance.

## 2.2. Safety

Refer to the WHS Management Plan RJ3-3-MP-007, Project Risk Register RJ3-3-R-001 and related sub-plans for further information regarding safety.

The following safety measures must be followed:

- A Take 5 must be performed prior to start and all personnel must be familiar with the **JSEA**.
- Appropriate PPE must be worn for each work area.
- Communication must be maintained on the Site radio **channel XX**.
- Work is not to be carried out by any person, or using any equipment/machinery which have not met all Project safety, authorisation and competency requirements.

## 3. Ground Disturbance

### 3.1. Applicable Areas

This procedure applies to all Rum Jungle Project areas, satellite sites, borrow areas and the supporting infrastructures. See figures 1 to 5 below.

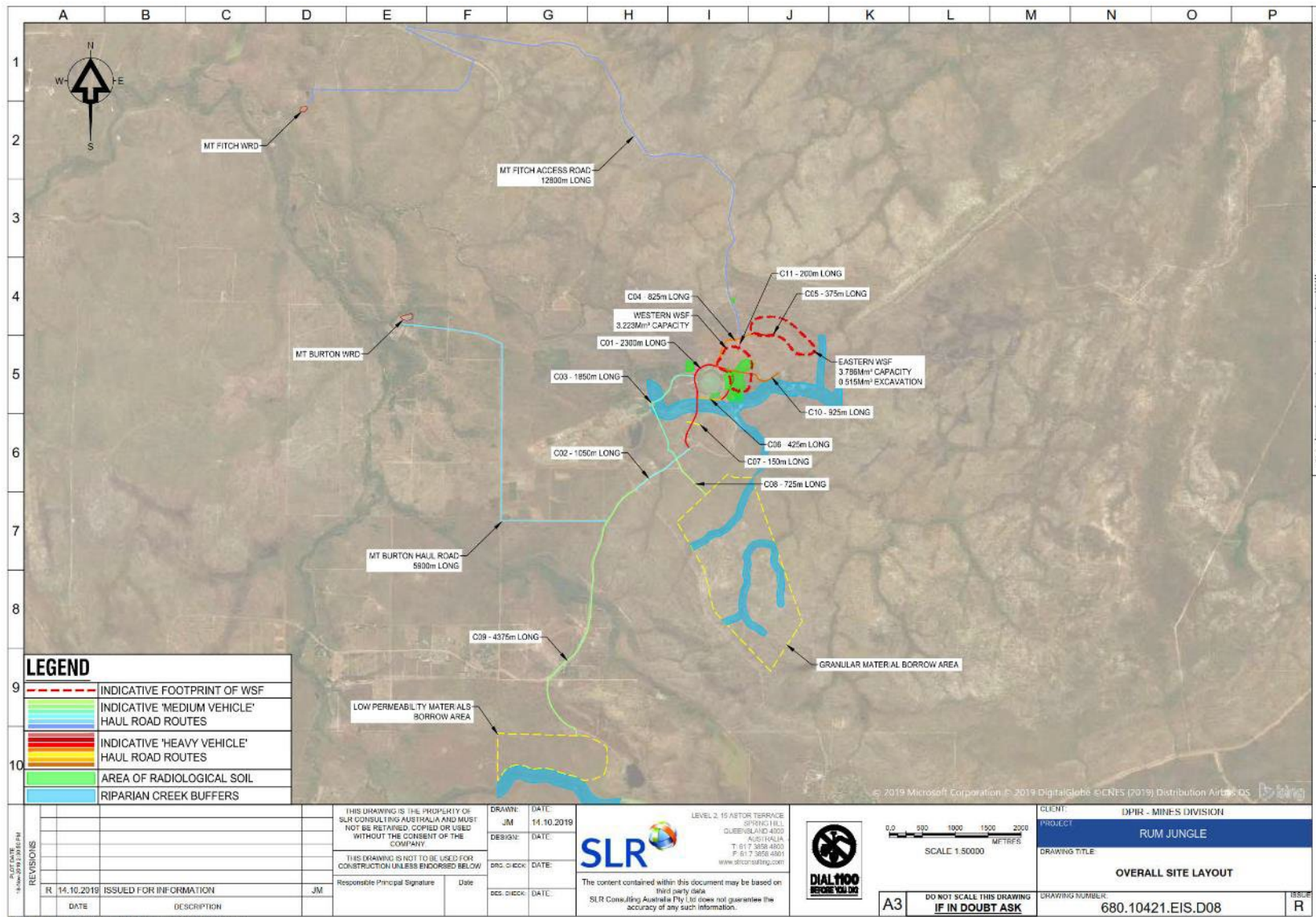


Figure 1 Overall Site Layout



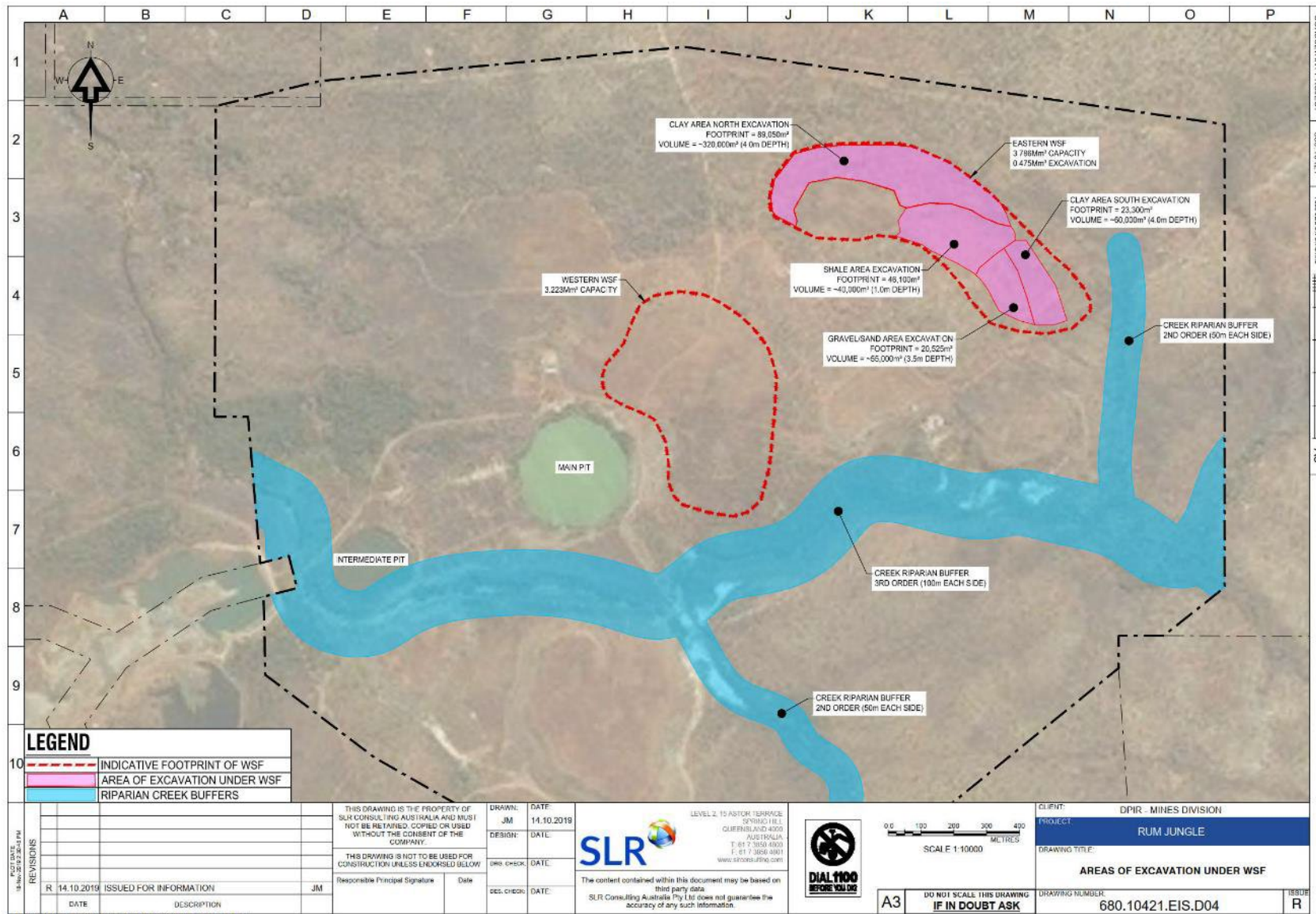


Figure 2 Areas of Excavation Under Waste Storage Facility (WSF)

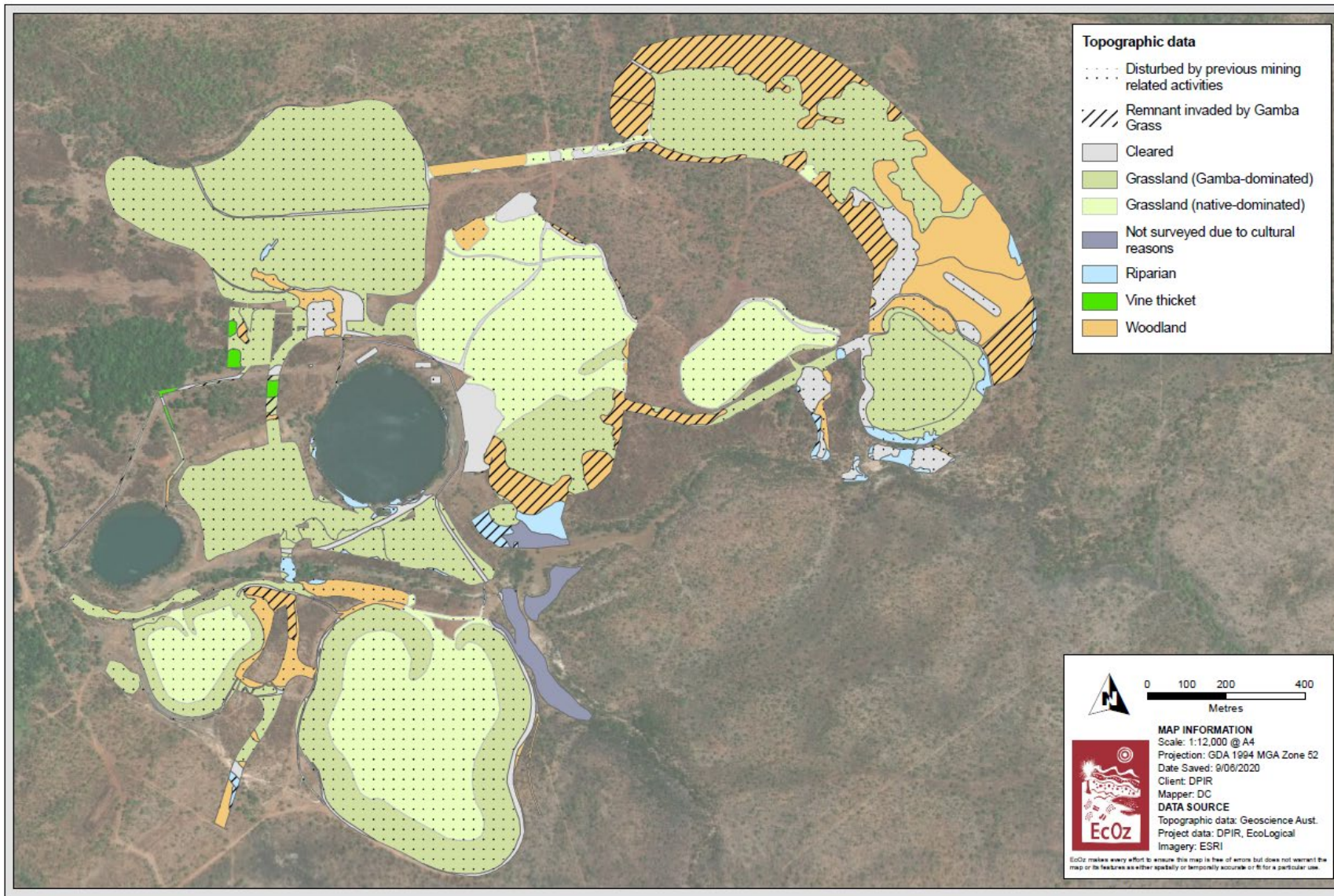


Figure 3 Map showing vegetation condition and disturbance within Rum Jungle mine site

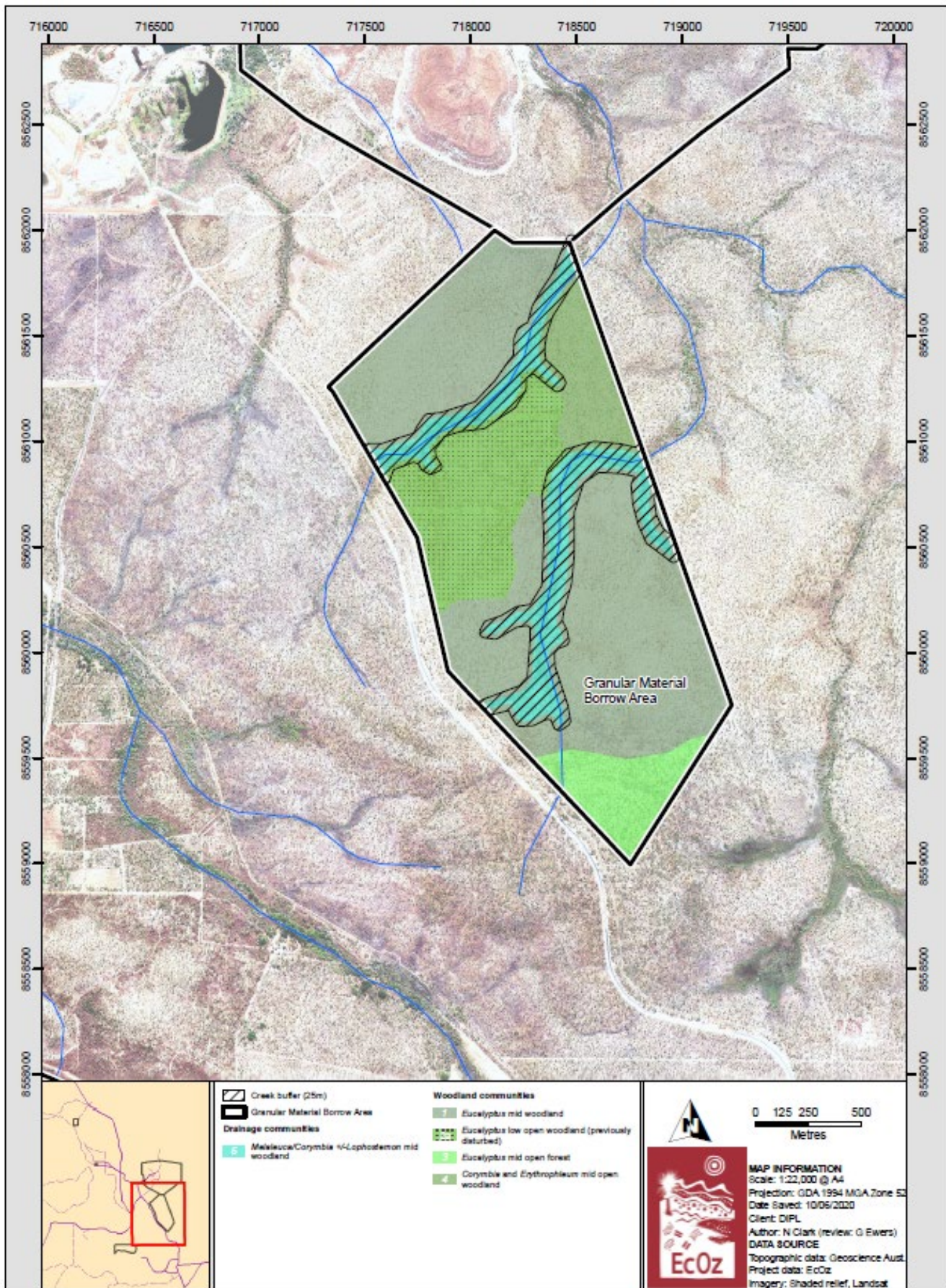
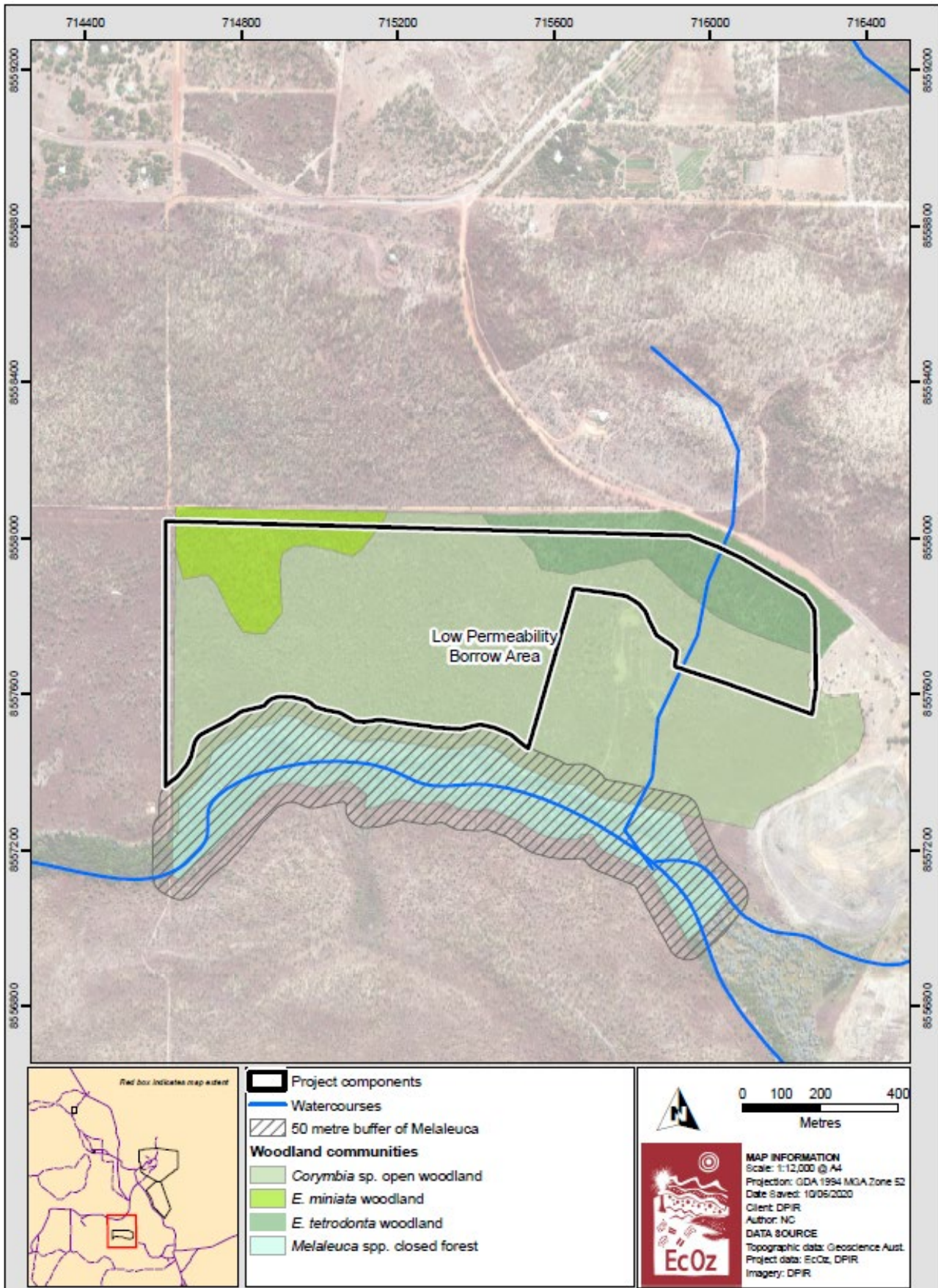


Figure 4 Map of vegetation type and buffers applied in granular material borrow area



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Figure 5 Map of vegetation type and buffers applied in low permeability borrow area

## 4. Vegetation/Ground Disturbance Application Procedure

A ground disturbance application is required when:

- Any disturbance/site works to any vegetated area – including pruning
- New facilities are proposed
- Any new or non-standard activities and changes to process are proposed.

This includes (but is not limited to):

- Clearing vegetation or ground disturbance (in undisturbed or revegetated areas)
- Construction of dams/storage areas or any new facilities
- Any other change/ground disturbance which may impact the environment or employee safety.

Special attention is required to consider the riparian buffer zones noted in the maps above, cultural heritage matters, sacred sites matters and all areas where good quality vegetation remains.

### 4.1. The Requesting Person

Prior to the commencement of clearing works, the following must be completed:

- Complete the *Description of Work/Change* section of the Ground Disturbance Request Form RJ3-4-F-004. Describe the location and the work/change that is proposed and attach a location plan and/or drawing.
- Mark up section of work on the ground so disturbance is clearly delineated on the ground for all to see.
- Meet with the HSE team on the job site to go through the proposed work so that all parties understand clearly the scope of work.
- Get approval and sign-off from the Superintendent for projects <0.5 ha onsite or the Project Director for any works offsite and >0.5 ha onsite
- Forward the completed Ground Disturbance Request Form RJ3-4-F-004 and attachments to the HSE Team.

### 4.2. Health Safety and Environment Team

Complete remaining sections of the submitted Ground Disturbance Request Form RJ3-4-F-004 by:

- Review the area to be cleared and carrying out works as described in the RJ3-4-MP-022 Rehabilitation Media Stripping and Stockpiling Procedure.
- Determine if the proposed work or change is within the scope of the Rum Jungle Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) RJ3-3-MP-003 and the proposed works are within the Land Clearing Permit.
- Determine if the proposed works are in accordance with the AAPA Certificate and the Cultural Heritage Management Plan RJ3-4-MP-013.
- Determine if the area to be cleared requires salvage of Cycads and other rehabilitation media resources (hollows, logs, topsoils, subsoils etc.).
- Determine if any stands of good quality vegetation can be preserved within the proposed disturbance area (e.g. for borrow pits) and worked around.

- Determine if the ground disturbance is genuinely required.
- Determine what other permits are required and take the appropriate action.
- If required, submit the proposal to the Department of Environment, Parks and Water Security (DEPWS).
- Fill in the *Environmental Conditions Under Which the Work is to be Carried Out* section of the Vegetation/Ground Disturbance Request Form RJ3-4-F-004.
- Stipulate that all clearing to be carried out by machinery must have a HSE Team member, a FCS and Cultural Heritage Monitor present prior to the dozer commencing work (see section 6)
- Sign and circulate the completed application to the Superintendent and the Managing Contractor for sign-off.
- Forward a copy of the completed Application to the Requesting Person and file the original.
- Inspect the work area after completion of the job and request further remedial work as appropriate.
- On satisfactory completion of the works, sign-off under the *Environmental Clearance at Completion of Work/Change* section of the original Ground Disturbance Request Form RJ3-4-F-004 filed within the HSE Team files.

#### 4.2.1. Aspects to be considered

The following aspects of the job are to be considered when determining the environmental conditions under which the work is to be carried out.

- **Total area of land that MUST be cleared** – discuss with Requesting Person options for reducing the area of land to be cleared, avoiding significant vegetation and habitat trees. Permission to be granted only for the land that MUST be cleared. Ensure it is marked out appropriately on the ground so that machine operators can see and are aware of the permitted clearing zones. An example to consider is the borrow pits – there is substantial nominated borrow pit area therefore if good quality mature stands of vegetation are in the planned clearing area – you’ll be asked to adjust your dig plan to avoid disturbing those vegetation patches and move to other already disturbed grounds.
- **Staged clearing** – clear only what is necessary within a short window of time – say 2 months. The reason for this is to avoid clearing land only to find out 6 months later that not all of that cleared land was required, or to minimise erosion risk pre-wet or to minimise spread of Gamba Grass seed back onto the pre-stripped area well before the excavation operation reaches that working surface.
- **Significant vegetation** – consider what significant vegetation might be within the disturbance area and plan according, as per the Cycad Salvaging Procedure RJ3-4-Pr-008. Significance is also determined by presence of hollows or breeding structure, maturity and if there are good quality stands within borrows that can easily be protected by borrowing around the stands adequately *Please note: Cycad salvaging requires a significant notice period prior to clearing so suitable arrangements can be made for Cycad relocation. This may push back the approval of a clearing request that is submitted with short notice.*
- **Drainage** – consider what impact on surface water flows and water quality the proposed works may have as per the Erosion and Sediment Control Plan RJ3-4-MP-014.
- **Topsoil management** – if clearing vegetation, due consideration must be given to stripping topsoil and other rehabilitation materials and stockpiling them as per the Rehabilitation Media Stripping and Stockpiling Procedure RJ3-4-Pr-009.
- **Cleared vegetation management** – cleared vegetation should be used as rehabilitation media and stripped for stockpiling in the Topsoil Stockpile. Woody debris and large rocks should be stockpiled

for use in habitat nodes, as per the Revegetation Management Plan RJ3-4-MP-009, Erosion and Sediment Control Management Plan RJ3-4-MP-014, and the Rehabilitation Media Stripping and Stockpiling Procedure RJ3-4-Pr-009.

- **Waste management** – consider what waste will be generated in the work and ensure appropriate controls are in place to manage the waste as per the Waste Management Plan RJ3-4-MP-012.
- **Fire hazards (both immediate and long term)** – consider what materials/machines/work may be associated with the job and ensure appropriate controls are in place to eliminate the risk of uncontrolled bush fire as per the Fire Management Plan RJ3-4-MP-027.
- **Fauna impacts** – consider what impacts to fauna the proposed work may have. Do you require a Fauna Spotter Catcher?
- **Hydrocarbon issues** – consider what risk there is involved with potential hydrocarbons being used on the job.
- **Weed impacts** – identify nominated washdown points and communicate with the supervisory team.
- **Ground disturbance outside of the main Rum Jungle site** must have appropriate levels of supervision and be carried out in accordance with the wishes of the landholder.
- **Site remediation** – consider what site remediation will be required for the job. Level of remediation will depend on the final land use for that area, see the engineering design for that area, consult the HSE Manager and Project Director if unsure.

## 5. Vegetation Clearing Procedure

Areas of clearing, where rehabilitation is expected to occur, should be cleared with the 'blade-up method' (with the blade approximately 30cm above the ground surface to flatten vegetation rather than clear). This method of clearing promotes vegetation growth from existing root stock and reduces impact on surface soils by retaining soil structure. However, most of the areas to be cleared require hardstands for construction of infrastructure thus requiring whole tree removal. Native vegetation will be cleared by grubbing and dozing methods.

Remember most construction areas at Rum Jungle are TEMPORARY. Apply broad thinking – can mature vegetation remain within an area being cleared for offices or borrow pits?

Woody debris should be stockpiled for the creation of habitat nodes during revegetation. Material will be stockpiled on the upper slope (where possible) to reduce the potential for erosion. Vegetation will not be stockpiled in low flood plain areas to prevent:

- Weed seed spread via rainfall / water flows
- Water erosion – channelling and concentration of run-off.

Weed contaminated log windrows will be sprayed for at least 1 wet season before being transferred to a rehabilitation area.

Previously-disturbed areas and stockpiles which contain weeds and weed seeds must be kept separate from areas free of weeds (clear areas), and should not be used for vegetation or topsoil storage – see the Weed Management Plan (WMP) RJ3-4-MP-011 for further information on quarantine zones.

### 5.1. Tasks

The following actions will be implemented during vegetation clearing.

- Establish a pre-clearing meeting (for all contractors) to ensure that the clearing plan is understood by all relevant personnel and confirm lines of communication between HSE Manager and the Managing Contractor.
- Implement all safety procedures – including safe exclusion zones and attentive communication via signalling and radio communications.
- Clear vegetation using specified machinery (i.e. a bulldozer). Only qualified and trained personnel may operate the machinery.
- Monitor boundary to ensure that machinery remains within the approved clearance area at all times. If, at any time, a machinery operator loses sight of the pegged/flagged boundary, they must cease clearing immediately and verify that they are within the approved area.
- Monitor site to ensure machinery operators do not overwork the area, which may lead to the loss of topsoil or compaction and rutting.
- Stack cleared vegetation into stockpiles within designated stockpiling locations inside the boundary of clearance area. Large woody debris will be stockpiled for revegetation activities and smaller debris will be tracked into the topsoil during the stripping process.
- Burning of logs, wood and debris **WILL NOT BE PERMITTED**. Mulching will be considered on an as needs basis but is not deemed necessary at this point as all larger materials are better used as habitat nodes.
- Suppress dust using water carts as required.
- Install erosion and sediment control structures prior to the commencement of the Wet season. (Refer to the Erosion and Sediment Control Plan (ESCP) RJ3-4-P-019 for the location and types of controls).

## 6. Monitoring of Works

It is the responsibility of the HSE Team to monitor any vegetation clearing to be carried out by machinery, and the following should be completed prior to commencement of work:

- Clearly delineate the area to be disturbed either physically using pegs and/or flagging tape. This way ALL parties are clear on what is the approved clearing zone. The clearing final approved clearing area is to be picked up by a surveyor.
- HSE Manager or a fauna spotter-catcher (FSC) and a cultural heritage monitor to conduct a pre-clearing site inspection to document sensitivities and specific mitigations required. Locate and flag any sacred sites or culturally-significant items, protected matters and historical items to avoid disturbance where they are in proximity to clearing areas.
  - Refer to the Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP) RJ3-4-MP-013 for maps and further information on restricted work areas or identified significant sites.
- Survey for and undertake control of weeds prior to clearing as per the Weed Management Plan (WMP) RJ3-4-MP-011.
- Check all earth-moving equipment for weed seed and debris before entering site, as per the Weed Management Plan (WMP) RJ3-4-MP-011. Weed declarations must be provided for any vehicle entering the site and equipment operators are responsible for meeting these requirements.
- Develop a clearing plan that can be communicated to all personnel and contractors. The clearing plan should be a map that shows areas of vegetation to be cleared and retained, exclusion areas, locations for topsoil and vegetation stockpiles, areas where specific erosion control measures are required and locations for firebreaks.



## 6.1. Conditions of Work

Prior to works commencing, the conditions of the approved Ground Disturbance Request Form RJ3-4-F-004 will be communicated to all staff detailing:

- Findings from pre-clearing site inspections
- Weed declarations
- Vegetation type
- Habitat features requiring special attention, including avoidance/protection during clearing
- Suitable fauna relocation sites
- Clearing plan to establish access for processing hollow-bearing trees.
- No-go / restricted work areas
- Locations of stockpiles
- Erosion measures
- Dust suppression measures

## 6.2. Fauna

Initial clearing will only be done using the 'raised blade' technique so that the vegetation layer is removed, and the Fauna Spotter-Catcher (FSC) can see any fauna in the area. Cleared vegetation will be pushed into stockpiles for use in rehabilitation works. In instances where stockpiles present an obstacle to fauna, breaks will be periodically left between piles to allow fauna passage. Cleared vegetation that is left in stockpiles for more extended periods can become potential refuge habitat for fauna affected by clearing operations, a FSC will be present for when long standing stockpiles are disturbed.

### 6.2.1. Tasks

The FSC will:

- Identify and assess potential habitat prior to any clearing works onsite and undertake pre-clearing surveys, including habitat tree identification.
- Determine with project engineers if habitat trees at WSF toe areas and within borrows can be worked around and left in place. *There is flexibility in design and construction and this adjustment should be the first preference.*
- Assess the suitability of habitat within the project area for the relocation of fauna.
- Ensure the supervisor of clearing activities and machine operators are made aware of the location of significant habitat features – including trees with hollows, active nests, burrows, hollow ground logs, potential dens and debris piles.
- Ensure that hollow-bearing trees will be left overnight to allow fauna to self-relocate prior to felling. Where possible, prior to felling, the FSC will inspect hollows with a torch or burrow scope and remove fauna. Otherwise, where possible, hollow-bearing trees should be gently lowered to the ground or moved to one side with an excavator using a grab attachment for inspection by the FSC. That hollow tree will then be immediately relocated to a nominated restoration area.
- Inspect cleared areas immediately afterwards to locate and capture any fauna affected by clearing.

- Assess the health of captured fauna and determine appropriate action – i.e. relocate, euthanise, appropriately dispose of or deliver to an approved [veterinarian or wildlife carer](#).

If any threatened fauna or flora species are observed within the project area, the FSC will mark the location with a GPS and immediately contact the HSE Manager. The HSE Manager will notify the Department of Environment, Parks and Water Security (DEPWS) and, with that Department's advice, review existing management measures to determine whether any additional actions or controls are required.

Construction activities will not continue in the area until this process has been followed.

### 6.3. Reporting

At the completion of clearing, or at a natural break point in works, a post-clearance report will be completed and filed with the completed Ground Disturbance Request Form RJ3-4-F-004, reporting should include:

- Area cleared
- Number and species of fauna relocated or deceased
- Locations in which release occurred
- Any recommendations for future clearing events.

## 7. Compliance Monitoring

The following monitoring activities will be undertaken to ensure compliance with this procedure:

- Direct supervision by the HSE Team of disturbance areas during activities to ensure no clearing beyond the approved boundary.
- Weekly inspections of vegetation and topsoil stockpiles to ensure correct placement and management.
- Inspections of erosion and sediment controls in accordance with the requirements of the Erosion and Sediment Control Plan (ESCP) RJ3-4-P-019.
- Monthly surveys of all disturbance areas and stockpiles for weeds.

## 8. Records Management

This procedure is to be reviewed annually or as triggered by continual improvement review.