



ecologia

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

ecologia Environment comprises a group of professional scientists offering services in all fields of environmental management. *ecologia* Environment has the expertise and capability to conduct botanical surveys, ongoing vegetation monitoring and management of native vegetation in accordance with the *Environmental Protection (Clearing of Native Vegetation) Regulations 2004*. *ecologia* Environment is dedicated to achieving project goals with cost effective strategies and timely execution.

“CLEARING” IS DEFINED AS

“Removing vegetation, particularly trees and shrubs, from a landscape, often with the intention of replacing it with plants regarded to be more directly useful to humans”



WHAT ARE THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION (CLEARING OF NATIVE VEGETATION) REGULATIONS 2004?

The regulations, gazetted in July 2004, are an amendment to Part V of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*. Under the new law clearing of native vegetation is prohibited, unless a Clearing Permit is granted by the Department of Environment, or the clearing is for an exempt purpose.

The clearing regulations apply to any person, business, company, or group of individuals wishing to clear native vegetation. This can be on both private and public lands, in urban or rural areas.

Certain activities are exempt from these regulations; however clearing that is deemed to be unauthorised may incur a fine of up to \$500 000 and the offender be ordered to restore the cleared land at their own expense.



WHAT HAS PROMPTED THESE CHANGES?

Clearance of native vegetation remains the single most significant threat to terrestrial biodiversity (Commonwealth of Australia 2001). The Australian Greenhouse Office estimates that over 564,800 ha of native vegetation was cleared in Australia during 1999. This area is exceeded by only four other countries in the world: Brazil, Indonesia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Bolivia (Figure 1). In the top 10 countries, Australia is the only developed nation.

Australia is one of the world's seventeen centres of 'mega-diversity' of plants and animals. The south west of Western Australia is known as one of the world's twenty five biodiversity "hotspots" with some of the richest and most threatened reservoirs of plant and animal life on earth. In some areas of the state, such as the Avon-Wheatbelt bioregion, ninety three percent of native vegetation has already been cleared. Clearing and consequential salinity are having a devastating effect on biodiversity through the direct loss of plant species, and the associated loss of mammals, birds and other animals which depend upon areas of bush for food and shelter.

The vegetation clearing permit process will enable the State Government to monitor clearing levels and address issues such as salinity, water quality, habitat fragmentation and greenhouse gas emissions.

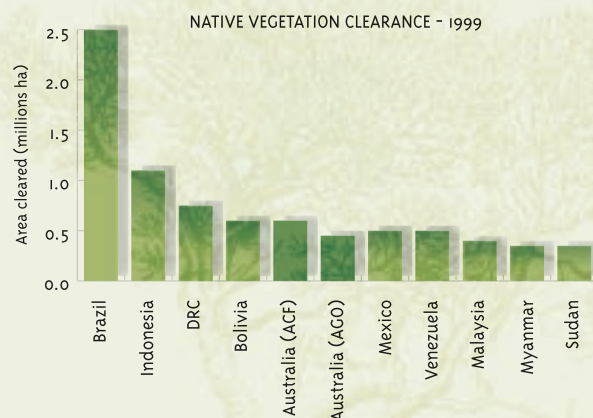


Figure 1: Countries with highest estimated rate of native vegetation clearance in 1999.

Source: after ACF (2000, 2001).

PERMIT APPLICATION PROCESS:

Under the new regulations clearing native vegetation requires a permit unless the clearing is for an exempt purpose.

Exempt purposes include:

- One hectare per year exemptions (clearing may not exceed one hectare in a financial year). These comprise:
 - Clearing to construct a building or structure;
 - Clearing for new fence lines, vehicle or walking tracks;
 - Clearing for firewood, timber for woodwork and timber for on farm and domestic use;
- Maintenance of existing cleared areas around infrastructure;
- Clearing to maintain existing cleared areas for pasture, cultivation or forestry;
- Fire breaks and fire control;
- Crown land - the owner is permitted to clear up to 1.5m on crown land to provide access to construct or maintain a fence; and
- Emergency clearing.

The two types of Clearing Permits are:

AREA PERMIT - An area permit is required before clearing specific areas of native vegetation that are not of an exempt type.

PURPOSE PERMIT - A purpose permit is required for programs of clearing, such as ongoing maintenance projects. In general, only utilities and local governments require this type of permit.

Prior to clearing, landowners are required to submit an application to clear to the Department of Environment if an exemption does not exist. Applications to clear will be assessed for possible impacts on:

- Flora and fauna present;
- Soil erosion;
- Water tables;
- Salinity levels;
- Waterways;
- Sustainability; and
- Neighbouring or other local native vegetation areas.

If the application is approved there may be conditions set, that the clearing activities will be required to meet.



PENALTIES:

Under the new regulations, unauthorised clearing carries significant penalties and offenders may also be liable for replanting and rehabilitating the area disturbed at their own expense. If unauthorised clearing causes significant environmental effects, penalties of up to \$250,000 for individuals and \$500,000 for companies may apply.

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW?

You must ensure that any clearing you undertake has a permit, or falls within the criteria for exemptions.

Information to be included in the permit application includes detailed descriptions of the vegetation and flora present within the area of proposed clearing and appropriate spatial data information.

ecologia Environment can assist you in fulfilling the requirements of the new regulations by:

- Vegetation and flora surveys;
- Desktop reviews;
- Preparation and submission of Permit application documentation; and
- Liaison with Department of Environment and Department of Conservation and Land Management.

WHY ECOLOGIA?

Because we offer the following capabilities:

- Over 15 years experience in vegetation and botanical surveys and management in 23 of the 26 Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation of Australia (IBRA) bioregions in Western Australia.
- Professional and experienced botanists and biological scientists that can provide all the requisite expertise for successful completion of vegetation clearing assessment.
- Long established relationships with key stakeholder regulatory agencies, including the Department of Conservation and Land Management, Department of Environment and the Environmental Protection Authority.
- Proven track record of achieving successful and timely environmental permit approval.



ecologia

Ecologia Enviroment

76 Thomas Street

WEST PERTH WA 6005

Phone: 9322 1944

Fax: 9322 1599

Email: ecologia@ecologia.com.au

www.ecologia.com.au



Providing cost effective environmental strategies,
management and monitoring solutions across
Western Australia.