



State Policy

For

Vegetation Management

20 November 2006

Contents

1. INTRODUCTION..... 3

2. PURPOSE 3

3. PRINCIPLES..... 3

4. OUTCOMES..... 4

5. ACTIONS PROPOSED TO ACHIEVE OUTCOMES 6

1. Introduction

The State Policy for Vegetation Management has been prepared in accordance with Section 10 of the *Vegetation Management Act 1999* (VMA). The policy states the outcomes—derived from the VMA—that frame the considerations for decisions under that Act and the associated regulatory framework.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to state the outcomes for vegetation management and actions proposed to achieve those outcomes.

3. Principles

This policy is based on the following principles.

3.1. Ecological processes and services

- 3.1.1. Vegetation plays a critical role in maintaining the functioning of ecological processes that, if degraded, detrimentally affect the condition of land and water resources, both *in situ* and elsewhere in the landscape.
- 3.1.2. Vegetation plays a significant role in the carbon cycle and the maintenance of carbon stored in vegetation will contribute to stabilising atmospheric carbon.

3.2. Conservation of biodiversity

- 3.2.1. Regulation of native vegetation clearing can prevent the loss of biodiversity at state, regional and local levels.
- 3.2.2. Conservation of remnant *endangered* and remnant *of concern* regional ecosystems necessitates limitations on clearing in excess of those necessary to conserve remnant *not of concern* regional ecosystems.

3.3. Balanced decision making

- 3.3.1. Where clearing of vegetation is permitted, the clearing will not diminish or detract from the conservation of remnant *endangered* and remnant *of concern* regional ecosystems, the conservation of biodiversity and the maintenance of ecological processes.

3.4. Support for regional communities

- 3.4.1. Regional variations in biodiversity, ecological processes and factors affecting land degradation will be recognised in regulatory arrangements and procedures.

4. Outcomes

This policy is seeking to achieve the following outcomes in accordance with the purpose of the VMA:

4.1. The conservation of biodiversity

- 4.1.1. Prevent the loss of biodiversity at state, regional, and local levels.
- 4.1.2. Conserve remnant *endangered* and remnant *of concern* regional ecosystems by not permitting clearing that further reduces the extent of the *endangered* and *of concern* regional ecosystems.
- 4.1.3. Conserve remnant *not of concern* regional ecosystems that are at risk of the remnant extent falling below 30% of the pre clearing extent or 10 000 hectares by not permitting clearing in those remnant regional ecosystems.
- 4.1.4. Conserve and enhance networks and corridors of vegetation.
- 4.1.5. Conserve habitats essential to endangered, vulnerable, rare or near threatened species under the *Nature Conservation (Wildlife) Regulation 1994*.
- 4.1.6. Conserve wetlands, lakes, springs, watercourses, and adjacent habitat.
- 4.1.7. Recognise that where clearing occurs, conservation of remnant *endangered* and remnant *of concern* regional ecosystems requires limitations on clearing in excess of those necessary to conserve remnant *not of concern* regional ecosystems.
- 4.1.8. Phase out broadscale clearing by the 31 December 2006.

4.2. The maintenance of ecological processes

- 4.2.1. Conserve vegetation to ensure that ecological processes are maintained across the landscape.
- 4.2.2. Retain vegetation to assist the maintenance of the hydrological cycle, surface and groundwater quality and quantity, and ground water levels.
- 4.2.3. Conserve networks and corridors of vegetation.
- 4.2.4. Phase out broadscale clearing by the 31 December 2006.

4.3. Ensuring that clearing does not cause land degradation

- 4.3.1. Maintain the ecological integrity and physical stability of landscapes, including watercourses, wetlands, and associated habitat.
- 4.3.2. Retain vegetation to protect land from soil erosion, salinity, and other forms of land degradation caused by clearing.

4.4. The management of the environmental effects of clearing that achieve the purpose of the Act

- 4.4.1. Provide for clearing and the environmental effects of clearing to be limited to achieve the outcomes 4.1 to 4.3 through the conditional approval or

refusal of applications for development¹ and through the making of property maps of assessable vegetation.

- 4.4.2. Consider both the short and long-term environment effects of development at local, regional, state and wider levels as part of the assessment of applications.
- 4.4.3. Consider the benefits of community infrastructure and state significant projects that advance the key priorities of government and achieve the outcomes 4.1 to 4.3.
- 4.4.4. Apply the precautionary principle² in decision making, to achieve the outcomes 4.1 to 4.3.

4.5. The reduction of greenhouse gas emissions

- 4.5.1. Reduce greenhouse gas emissions caused by vegetation clearing by 20 to 25 megatonnes per year by 2008 through the cessation of broadscale clearing of remnant vegetation by 31 December 2006.

4.6. Balanced decision making

- 4.6.1. Where clearing of vegetation is permitted, the clearing will not diminish or detract from the conservation of remnant *endangered*, remnant *of concern* and remnant *not of concern* regional ecosystems, the conservation of biodiversity and the maintenance of ecological processes.

4.7. Supporting regional communities

- 4.7.1. Regional variations in biodiversity, ecological processes and factors affecting land degradation will be recognised in regulatory arrangements and procedures.
- 4.7.2. Provide for certainty and property scale planning for the management of vegetation.
- 4.7.3. Consider the management of the commercial timber resource on State land.

¹ Development is defined in section 1.3.2 of the *Integrated Planning Act 1997*.

² The precautionary principle is the principle that lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing a measure to prevent degradation of the environment if there are threats of serious or irreversible environmental damage.

5. Actions proposed to achieve outcomes

The outcomes in section 4 will be achieved by:

5.1 Phasing out the broadscale clearing of remnant vegetation by 31 December 2006.

5.2 Using the *Vegetation Management Act 1999* and the *Integrated Planning Act 1997* for assessment and regulation of clearing of vegetation.

5.2.1 Assessing applications for clearing

- (i) Applications for clearing vegetation must only be for a relevant purpose under section 22A of the VMA. These applications must be assessed against the applicable regional vegetation management codes and the requirements of the *Integrated Planning Act 1997*.
- (ii) These regional vegetation management codes:
 - Identify performance requirements that are consistent with the outcomes of this policy.
 - May provide acceptable solutions for meeting the performance requirements.
 - Provide for the consideration of offset arrangements as a possible solution to meet the performance requirements.
 - Provide for the consideration of the impacts of clearing in areas where a vegetation clearing offence has occurred.
 - Provide for the consideration of the State's interest in commercial timber on State land.

5.2.2 Material Change of Use and Reconfiguring a Lot

- (i) Where the Department of Natural Resources and Water, as a concurrence agency, assesses applications for material change of use (MCU) or reconfiguring a lot (RaL) these applications are assessed against the MCU policy or RaL policy.
- (ii) These policies consider the future implications of clearing vegetation associated with MCU and RaL development applications and assess the likely operational works component of these applications at the time the applications are made.
- (iii) The policies only allow for the approval of the clearing of vegetation consistent with section 22A of the *Vegetation Management Act 1999*. The policies can consider the necessity and benefit of community infrastructure where the purpose of the VMA is met.

5.2.3 Vegetation Management Offsets

- (i) Provisions for offsets to meet the requirements of the codes or policies

are dealt with under an offsets policy that ensures the extent of vegetation and associated environmental values are maintained.

- (ii) The offsets policy will be used to assess development applications that propose offsetting as a solution to a performance requirement.
- (iii) Offsets are not an acceptable solution where a development would not otherwise be for a relevant purpose under the VMA.

5.2.4 **Property Maps of Assessable Vegetation**

- (i) Property maps of assessable vegetation (PMAVs) can assist landholders to determine regional ecosystems and vegetation categories on their property at scales appropriate to property management.
- (ii) PMAVs can provide certainty to landholders about the location and extent of vegetation that is, and is not, subject to regulation under the vegetation management statutory framework.
- (iii) PMAVs can provide protection for vegetation which has been subject to clearing.

5.2.5 **Period of approval**

- (i) All development approvals for broadscale clearing of remnant vegetation will expire on or before 31 December 2006.
- (ii) Other development approvals for vegetation clearing will have a term of up to 5 years.