

**Supporting guideline for ‘Roles and Responsibilities of parties under the  
Tasmanian forest practices system’**

**The ecological assessment requirements of forest practices plan applications  
for clearance and conversion of native vegetation**

**Context**

- 1) The roles and responsibilities of parties under the Tasmanian forest practices system are documented in a [policy document](#) approved by the FPA Board in 2009 (TRIM 2011/9725). Section 2 of this document states that –  
*‘The preparation of a forest practices plan is the responsibility of the applicant. The FPA provides general advice and assistance to FPOs on the interpretation and application of the Act, Code and associated planning tools.’*
  
- 2) Section 2.1 of the ‘Roles and Responsibilities’ document states that –  
*‘Routine surveys and assessments are the responsibility of the applicant. These assessments include baseline surveys, including the identification of RFA communities, threatened species habitat and eagle nests, in accordance with the planning tools and instructions provided to FPOs. **Assessments should be undertaken by suitably trained and accredited FPOs, forest planners or consultants.** Staff of the Biodiversity Program will provide assistance to FPOs as part of an ongoing training and support role.’*  
*‘Specialist surveys: FPA specialists may make a field visit to a coupe where biodiversity issues are complex or difficult to verify and/or expert advice is required to clarify the application of the Code and develop management prescriptions. **Where surveys requiring special expertise or resources cannot be undertaken by accredited officers or by the FPA the applicant may be required to engage an appropriately qualified consultant to undertake a survey.’***
  
- 3) As part of its advisory role the FPA is required to make decisions with respect to the management of biodiversity values under forest practices plans (FPP) in accordance with relevant legislation and policies, including-
  - a) The *Forest Practices Act 1985*, the *Threatened Species Protection Act 1995*, regional forest agreement 1997 and the *Nature Conservation Act 2002*
  - b) The State Government’s Permanent Native Forest Estate Policy (PNFEP)These are given effect through the FPA’s review of FPP applications prepared under the *Forest Practices Code* and associated planning tools.
  
- 4) FPP applications for clearance and conversion<sup>1</sup> of native vegetation<sup>4</sup> are more complex than native forest operations and require a higher level assessment of desktop and on-ground values (including detailed vegetation mapping and an account of known localities and potential habitat for threatened flora and fauna).

- 5) In many circumstances the preparation of an FPP involving clearance and conversion of native vegetation will require specialist input to identify values. For these FPPs it may be beyond the resources of the FPO or FPA biodiversity staff to provide the required specialist input and an independent ecological assessment will be required.
- 6) This policy seeks to provide guidance for FPOs and FPA staff on interpretation of the survey requirements under section 2.1 of the 'Roles and Responsibilities' policy. In particular clarification of the following wording –

**Routine surveys and assessments**

***Assessments should be undertaken by suitably trained and accredited FPOs, forest planners or consultants.***

**Specialist surveys**

***'Where surveys requiring special expertise or resources cannot be undertaken by accredited officers or by the FPA the applicant may be required to engage an appropriately qualified consultant to undertake a survey.'***

It aims to ensure consistency in decision-making around the level of assessment required for FPP applications involving clearance and conversion of native vegetation and, in particular, when it may be necessary for FPP applications to be accompanied by a specialist survey report by an appropriately qualified consultant.

## **Principles**

- 1) The FPA will require the applicant to provide a detailed ecological assessment by an appropriately qualified consultant for FPP applications for broad scale clearing and conversion<sup>2</sup> of native vegetation. The ecological assessments must be completed in accordance with the FPA's Guidelines for ecological surveys and reports for areas proposed for a forest practices plan (). The information gathered in the ecological assessment will be used by the FPO (with support and advice from FPA staff) to complete the biodiversity evaluation sheet for clearance and conversion operations.
- 2) The FPA may assist the FPO to complete ecological assessments for small scale clearing and conversion<sup>3</sup> of native vegetation **except** in cases when;
  - i) an FPP application is determined by the FPA to be complex due to a range of biodiversity values including but not limited to vegetation communities, threatened species localities or potential habitat for threatened species, or
  - ii) the assessment requirements are beyond the resources of the FPA at the time of the application.

Where (i) or (ii) apply then the FPA will require the applicant to complete ecological assessments for FPP applications as described in (1) above.

## **Application**

The FPA will apply this policy through its consideration of FPP applications and/or discussion with FPOs during the FPP planning phase.

**Definition of Key Terms** (from the Permanent Native Forest Estate Policy Dec 2014 and the FPA planning guideline 2008/1)

<sup>1</sup>**Clearing and conversion** means the permanent or long-term removal of significant areas of native forest and its replacement by non-native vegetation, such as plantations, orchards, crops or pastures; different native species such as a blue gum plantation, or unvegetated developments, such as artificial water bodies, buildings and other infrastructure.

<sup>2</sup> **Broadscale clearing and conversion** means clearing and conversion of 20 hectares or greater of native forest in any period of five consecutive years (based on calendar years) per property.

<sup>3</sup> **Small scale clearing and conversion** means clearing and conversion of less than 20 hectares of native forest in any period of five consecutive years (based on calendar years) per property.

<sup>4</sup>**Native vegetation** is all native forest and threatened non-forest vegetation.

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Approved by:

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