

# Native Vegetation Regulations Newsletter 4

Update on the implementation of the 2017 native vegetation removal regulations and *Guidelines for the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation* – August 2020



On 12 December 2017, the Victorian State Government introduced Amendment VC138 to the Victoria Planning Provisions and all Planning Schemes in Victoria. This included changes to Clause 12, Clause 52.16, Clause 52.17, Clause 66 and a new incorporated document, *Guidelines for the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation* (the Guidelines).

This newsletter contains recent updates from the Native Vegetation Regulation (NVR) team and addresses some of the most frequently asked questions about the implementation of the 2017 native vegetation removal regulations.

## Email tracking

To optimise response time and email tracking, ensure emails are sent to the correct email address:

- Requests to generate a report in EnSym: [EnSymNVRtool.Support@delwp.vic.gov.au](mailto:EnSymNVRtool.Support@delwp.vic.gov.au)
- Queries about the native vegetation removal regulations, the implementation of the Guidelines, and the NVIM native vegetation removal and offset tools: [NativeVegetation.Support@delwp.vic.gov.au](mailto:NativeVegetation.Support@delwp.vic.gov.au)
- Queries about native vegetation credits, registering an offset site or the Native Vegetation Offset Register (replaces the Credit Register email): [NativeVegetation.OffsetRegister@delwp.vic.gov.au](mailto:NativeVegetation.OffsetRegister@delwp.vic.gov.au)
- Queries about Vegetation Quality Assessment (VQA) methodology and competency checks: [Habitat.hectares@delwp.vic.gov.au](mailto:Habitat.hectares@delwp.vic.gov.au)

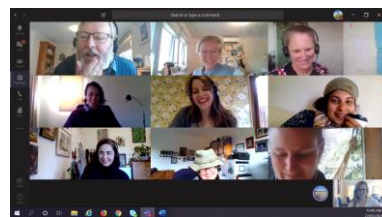
- Queries about the assessment, management and establishment of offset sites: [NativeVegetation.OffsetManagement@delwp.vic.gov.au](mailto:NativeVegetation.OffsetManagement@delwp.vic.gov.au)
- Queries about payments and invoices relating to offset sites: [Nativevegetation.Offsetpayments@delwp.vic.gov.au](mailto:Nativevegetation.Offsetpayments@delwp.vic.gov.au)

## COVID-19 update

### NVR team working from home

COVID-19 related restrictions have resulted in DELWP staff, and the NVR team working from home.

Figure 1: NVR Team meeting screenshot



There were some initial technical difficulties, but the team has now settled into the new routine and work is continuing but be aware that response times may be slower than usual as a result.

Some of our ongoing challenges relate to IT and connectivity issues, juggling work with caring for and or schooling children.

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There have also been some real positives: no commuting, more time to spend with family, having more walking meetings, and having the opportunity to think about innovative ways to deliver our work.

It is likely that working from home arrangements will continue for the foreseeable future.

## EnSym reports

We are working to process data within five business days. However, we are facing significant connectivity issues which will continue while we work remotely.

This has reduced our capacity to process reports within our usual timeframes and may cause delays to our target processing time of five business days. We understand that sometimes expectations don't go to plan, and although we will attempt to accommodate urgent requests, this may not be achievable given the current connectivity issues.

Please plan ahead for projects with critical timelines, and, for a faster turnaround time, ensure data meets our spatial data standards.

Many datasets we receive do not comply with these standards and as a result significant resources of the team are taken up with quality assurance processes, including GIS checks of data. Time spent on these requests takes us away from processing others. It is your responsibility to ensure data meets the standards available at:

[https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0014/91121/EnSym-spatial-data-standards.pdf](https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0014/91121/EnSym-spatial-data-standards.pdf)

Figure 2: EnSym spatial data standards



## VQA competency checks

All VQA competency checks are currently postponed due to COVID-19 related restrictions.

All DELWP registered VQA - *List of currently accredited native vegetation assessors* with accreditation due to expire in this period will retain their current accreditation until competency checks resume.

After the restrictions have been lifted additional checks will be run to address any backlog.

To express interest in a future session please email [habitat.hectares@delwp.vic.gov.au](mailto:habitat.hectares@delwp.vic.gov.au)

## NVR staff update

Penny Croucamp has taken up an opportunity in another role within the Division looking at Biodiversity and Climate Change and her expertise will be missed.

Luckily, we welcome back Peter Tange as the Manager of Native Vegetation Regulation team after a lengthy stint as Acting Director of Knowledge and Decision Systems. Peter previously led the NVR team, including the period through the review of the regulations.

We also welcome Andrew Warnock to the Native Vegetation Offset team for a 12-month role.

Kate Adamson is taking up an opportunity in Homelessness Policy at the Department of Health and Human Services at the end of August which is an exciting opportunity for her.

## What's new

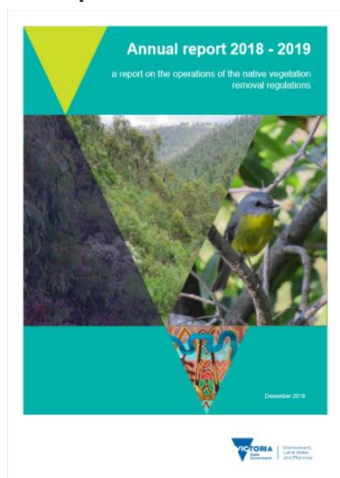
### Native Vegetation Annual Report 2018-19

The Annual report 2018-2019 – a report on the operations of the native vegetation removal regulations is available on the native vegetation website at: <https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/native-vegetation/native-vegetation>, under "Monitoring, evaluation and reporting".

This is the second annual report and presents an overview of native vegetation removal regulations during the 2018-2019 financial year.

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Figure 3: Annual report 2018-2019



It includes for the first-time, data on:

- approved permit applications to remove native vegetation under Clause 52.16 and Clause 52.17
- removal of native vegetation under the Road safety, Railways and Utility exemptions
- removal of native vegetation and counterbalancing under the Crown land exemption

## Council Data log

In order to gather data for the annual report DELWP has developed a simple data log tool. This requires simple data capture of permit numbers and Native vegetation removal report references which DELWP can then match to EnSym and NVIM reports to determine the details of native vegetation removal associated with approved permits. We received data for the 2019-2020 year from just over 40 Councils.

We hope to receive data from even more Councils this year. We encourage all councils to use the data log throughout the 2020/2021 financial year so that it is easier to send data to DELWP in July 2021.

Figure 4: Data log

For further information or to get a copy of the data log please email:

[NativeVegetation.Support@delwp.vic.gov.au](mailto:NativeVegetation.Support@delwp.vic.gov.au)

## Electricity utilities

The *Procedure to rely on the utility installations exemption in planning schemes – Electricity distributors* and the list of Electricity distributors with written agreement to rely on the Utility installations exemption is now available at:

<https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/native-vegetation/native-vegetation/exemptions-from-requiring-a-permit>

This procedure sets out mandatory requirements electricity distributors must comply with when provided with written agreement.

Figure 5: Procedure to rely on the utility installation exemption in planning schemes



## Release of the Victorian Land Cover Time Series

The newly developed Victorian Land Cover Time Series dataset provides valuable insights into land cover changes across the state.

It gives users a visual and analytical snapshot of the current and previous type of cover over different areas. That cover can include native forests, bushland, wetlands, farmland, land used for recreation, and built up areas, including towns and cities.

Details on accessing and viewing the data are available at: <https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/biodiversity/Victorias-Land-Cover-Time-Series>



## **Flora and Fauna Guarantee Amendment Act 2019**

Amendments to the FFG Act were recently passed by the Victorian Parliament to provide for a modern and strengthened framework for the protection of Victoria's biodiversity. The amendments took effect on 1 June 2020. More information can be found at:

<https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/conserving-threatened-species/victorias-framework-for-conserving-threatened-species>

Or by contacting the DELWP FFG team at:  
[ffg-act.review@delwp.vic.gov.au](mailto:ffg-act.review@delwp.vic.gov.au)

## **Melbourne Strategic Assessment**

The *Melbourne Strategic Assessment (Environment Mitigation Levy) Act 2020* came into effect on 1 July. The new Act clarifies and simplifies the requirements of the MSA Program. More information can be found at:

<https://www.msa.vic.gov.au/melbourne-strategic-assessment-act-2020>

Or by contacting the DELWP MSA team at:  
[msa.habitatcompensation@delwp.vic.gov.au](mailto:msa.habitatcompensation@delwp.vic.gov.au)

## **Native Vegetation Offset Site Monitoring News**

Richard Boon joined the offset management team in February 2020 to focus on offset monitoring until June 2021. Between five and six agreements are monitored every two weeks. At the end of May fifty visits were completed.

Landowners have welcomed the visits, and many are keen to share their knowledge and discuss successes and challenges. They have been willing to accept and implement findings which are discussed with them. So far all landowners have met deadlines for completion of actions. Visits have also prompted the submission of several overdue annual reports.

**Figure 6: Cranberry Heath near Stawell**



Perhaps the biggest monitoring challenge has been determining progress with controlling or eliminating herbaceous weeds. This involves estimating herbaceous weed cover at the time of monitoring and making comparisons with cover estimates done by landowners for annual reporting and those done by site assessors at the time of the original assessment.

Comparisons are difficult because cover is determined by time of the year, recent growing conditions, observers' ability to find and identify weeds and differences in the way individuals estimate cover. It is particularly tricky to get this right when sites have many zones, the vegetation is dense, or the topography is difficult. To assist with our assessments, the team is working to improve how cover is estimated for annual reporting.

**Figure 7: Kangaroo proof fence and yellow gums near Little Desert National Park**



## **Native Vegetation Credit Register online search tool**

The search tool that enables brokers, purchasers and the public to search the Native Vegetation Credit Register (NVCR) is available at:  
<https://nvcr.delwp.vic.gov.au>

The search tool helps applicants address the requirements of the native vegetation removal regulations. The tool can be used to:

- search registered offset sites for availability of specific attributes that match offset requirements
- help prepare an offset statement required to apply for a planning permit to remove, destroy or lop native vegetation
- to identify which broker or landowner to contact to find out more information or to trade native vegetation credits.

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The search tool generates a downloadable report which provides evidence that the required offset is available to purchase from an existing or proposed offset site. The report also lists relevant brokers who can arrange the trades to secure the required offsets. Over 6,200 searches were conducted from 1st July 2019 to 30th June 2020.

## Native vegetation removal regulations online training

An online training course that provides an overview of the native vegetation removal regulations is available at: <http://elearning.vic.gov.au/>. This course is targeted at responsible and referral authorities who review and decide on applications to remove native vegetation under:

- Clause 52.16 or Clause 52.17
- planning scheme amendments or
- other approval mechanisms.

Figure 8: Native vegetation removal regulations online training

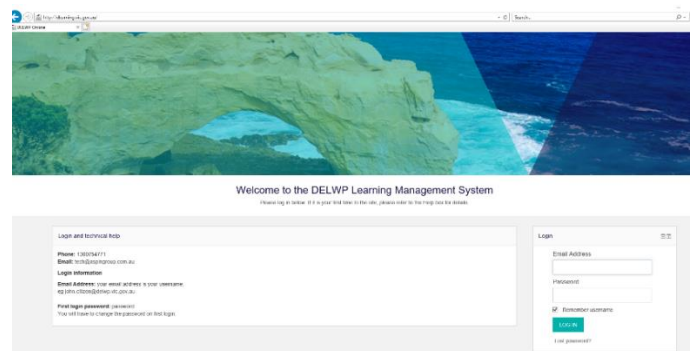


It is also useful for consultants who prepare planning permits and other applications to remove, destroy or lop native vegetation.

The course describes:

- what native vegetation is, its values and the maps used in the regulations
- the permit process including the assessment pathways and application requirements
- offset eligibility and security requirements.

Figure 9: DELWP e-learning page



To access the training, you must log in as follows:

- DELWP staff: your DELWP email address will be your username and your password will be initially be password (you will be prompted to change after the first login).
- Non DELWP staff: email [Nativevegetation.support@delwp.vic.gov.au](mailto:Nativevegetation.support@delwp.vic.gov.au) to be provided with log in details.

Once logged in, click on *site home* and select *Technical and Specialist* and then click on the *Native vegetation removal regulation* tab.

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