

Environmental Outcomes Assessment Methodology
Natural Resources Commission
GPO Box 4206
Sydney NSW 2001

25th January 2011

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Submission In Support Of Amendments To The Environmental Outcomes Assessment Methodology

The Lower Murray Darling Catchment Management Authority has reviewed the proposed amendments to the Environmental Outcomes Assessment Methodology. Please find our submission as follows.

Whilst not all the proposed amendments will be applicable to the Lower Murray Darling catchment, the changes to stream line assessment of native vegetation categories where the native vegetation:

- exists as scattered clumps or isolated trees, or
- is within a Mitchell landscape and vegetation type which is 10% or less cleared

will assist in creating a more efficient way of assessing clearing (with appropriate offsets) of native vegetation and improve service to landholders and other applicants for clearing PVPs.

One of the major issues confronting the Lower Murray Darling Catchment Management Authority (LMD CMA) is the assessment of large properties (average rangeland property size ~ 30 000 – 40 000 hectares plus), where small degraded remnants and paddock trees are scattered over a large area through irregularly shaped areas that have been cleared for cropping.

The presence of very large numbers of very small clumps of trees in clearing proposals creates complexity and is a major contributor to the excessive time currently required to complete a PVP assessment.

A recent example from the LMD CMA included:

- 2,065 paddock trees, and
- 283 individual remnants with an average size of 0.98 hectares

For this PVP the approved clearing comprised only 0.95 % of the total remaining vegetation on the property. Due to the complexity of the assessment and scale of data entry and processing, this PVP took over six months to complete.

The proposed category 4 for assessment of native vegetation where the Mitchell landscape and vegetation type are 10% or less cleared will assist in reducing assessment times significantly without compromising environmental outcome and is supported by LMD CMA.

LMD CMA do however believe that 30% or less is a more appropriate threshold for adoption of the streamlined approach for both the Mitchell Landscape and vegetation type and can provide scientific data to support this.

LMD CMA considers that the category 4 streamline approach should only be considered for small (<5 ha), non viable remnants within an intact landscapes, in which the clearing does not enlarge the clearing footprint.

The LMD CMA considers the major advantages of a streamlined approach are:

- a marked reduction in PVP assessment times,
- the ability to process applications more quickly,
- resulting in processing more PVPs in a given period,
- leading to shorter waiting times for landholders,
- reduced waiting lists, and
- less landholder angst in regards to both waiting and processing times.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mark Kiing', written in a cursive style.

Mark Kiing
Chair LMD CMA

