

Appendix G

Habitat Tree Felling Procedure

The following is to be implemented upon the identification of trees identified as potentially containing relevant MNES.

A two-phased clearing process will be used to minimise fauna displacement:

- Phase 1
 - The ground, understory, and shrub layers will be removed at least 24 hours before larger canopy trees are felled.
 - This approach encourages fauna to vacate habitat trees naturally before felling, without human intervention.
- Phase 2
 - After a 24-hour period following Phase 1 clearing, larger canopy trees will be cleared sequentially, allowing fauna to relocate into adjacent habitat without human intervention.
 - Non-habitat trees will be felled first, leaving habitat trees (e.g. hollow bearing trees, trees with nests) until last.

Cleared vegetation, once assessed by a Fauna Spotter Catcher, will be stockpiled or mulched if:

- The vegetation does not contain habitat features suitable for relocation
- Habitat features are destroyed during the clearing process and are no longer suitable for threatened species

All suitable habitat features will be retained and relocated within the Project Area for use as fauna habitat.

Vegetation Clearing Procedure

- Fauna spotter catchers will be present for all vegetation clearing activities. At least one Fauna Spotter Catcher will be allocated to each vegetation clearing machine undertaking clearing works. No vegetation clearing will be undertaken without a Fauna Spotter Catcher present.
- During clearing works, the Fauna Spotter Catcher and plant operator must maintain positive two-way radio contact at all times. To ensure effective communication, the Fauna Spotter Catcher and the plant operator will maintain a regular call-in schedule. All radio equipment will be checked as daily during pre-start meetings. If radio contact is lost at any point, the Fauna Spotter Catcher will establish visual contact with the plant operator from a safe distance, and direct the operator to stop work until radio contact is re-established.
- The Fauna Spotter Catcher has authority to halt clearing if there is a threat to a protected matter or if the Fauna Spotter Catcher needs to temporarily leave the clearing to relocate captured fauna.
- The Fauna Spotter Catcher will supervise vegetation clearing and the removal of habitat features. This includes the removal of canopy trees, understory vegetation, groundcover (e.g. grass) and topsoil. The Fauna Spotter Catcher will also supervise any dewatering activities that may impact on fauna.
- Stockpiled vegetation that has been left for more than 24 hours since stockpiling, is to be inspected by a Fauna Spotter Catcher immediately prior to mulching to ensure fauna are not utilising the stockpile.
- The Fauna Spotter Catcher will follow the any machine stripping soil or groundcover, such as grass.
- For safety purpose, the Fauna Spotter Catcher will maintain a distance of at least 1.5 times the tree height (in the opposite direction of the tree fall) during the felling of a tree.

Sensitive Clearing Techniques

Non-habitat trees will be felled first under the supervision of a Fauna Spotter Catcher. All habitat trees will be felled last, with the Fauna Spotter Catcher directly supervising the process. The Fauna Spotter Catcher will determine whether habitat trees should remain standing for 24 hours before felling (to enable wildlife to relocate naturally), or whether felled trees should remain undisturbed for 24 hours to provide wildlife with an opportunity to move on their own.

For the felling of marked habitat trees, the following guidelines will be followed:

- The Fauna Spotter Catcher will inspect habitat trees to determine whether hollows are occupied (if unable to determine presence, it will be assumed that the hollow is occupied).
- If a tree is occupied, the Fauna Spotter Catcher (or the plant operator under their direct instruction and supervision), will attempt to encourage the fauna to leave by:
 - tapping on the tree with hand tools (e.g. mallet, pry bar, snake hook, etc.) to create noise
 - tapping or shaking the tree using the blade of a dozer or the bucket of an excavator
 - capturing and physically relocating the fauna to a suitable, pre-identified habitat outside the Stage 1 Clearing Footprint
 - allowing 24 hours for the fauna to vacate naturally.
- If the fauna is unable to be relocated, habitat trees will be felled gently or lowered to the ground by skilled plant operators, ensuring the trees do not land on the inhabited hollow. Gentle tree felling can be conducted by:
 - Planning the felling approach:
 - Identify the natural lean and structural stability of the tree
 - Clear vegetation within the fall path of the tree prior to felling habitat tree
 - Place other felled trees around the habitat trees to minimise impact
 - Determine the preferred fall direction based on:
 - Avoiding damage to vegetation outside of the Stage 1 Clearing Footprint
 - Safety of fauna in tree (ensuring the tree does not land on the inhabited hollow).
 - Dismantling tree:
 - Remove / break off branches that are not inhabitant prior to felling tree
 - Using machinery to apply controlled tension and guide the fall.
- Once felled, habitat trees will be further inspected by the Fauna Spotter Catcher to assess occupancy and health of the fauna.
- If the hollow is still occupied, any fauna found will be captured and relocated to suitable habitat outside the Stage 1 Clearing Footprint and released after nightfall to minimise the risk of predation by diurnal predators. Any animals that are inadvertently injured will be assessed by the Fauna Spotter Catcher to determine the appropriate course of action (i.e. transport to an authorised carer or veterinary clinic, or humanely euthanise).
- If necessary and at the discretion of the Fauna Spotter Catcher, occupied habitat trees and hollows will be plugged with a suitable material and relocated to an appropriate area outside the Stage 1 Clearing Footprint. The hollow will then be unplugged to allow fauna to escape.