

7. MANAGEMENT OF SITES OF NATURAL SIGNIFICANCE AND OTHER AREAS OF NATIVE VEGETATION

7.01 General Policy

The long term protection and conservation of all remaining areas of remnant native vegetation and wildlife habitat, including that on land designated as a Site of Natural Significance, must be ensured.

7.02 Sites of Natural Significance

Within any land that is designated as a **Site of Natural Significance**, as shown on **Map 6** and described in **Schedule 3**, the clearing of native vegetation must be prohibited, except:

- to provide for a land use, or the construction of a building or works, including utility services, which has been permitted under the Planning Scheme and where the native vegetation to be removed is detailed on a plan approved by the responsible authority;
- where the vegetation to be removed is exempt from the permit requirements of the planning scheme.

Where, within a Site of Natural Significance, clearing of native vegetation is required to provide for an approved use, development, buildings or works, construct an approved building and/or its driveway, it must be ensured that:

- the removal of native vegetation is subject to a planning permit;
- the removal of native vegetation is minimised and that such removal does not adversely affect the integrity of the site, and
- clearing of native vegetation is avoided on slopes greater than 20% or within 30 metres of a watercourse.

7.03 Management of land in a Site of Natural Significance

Sites of Natural Significance, and where necessary the areas in their vicinity, must be protected and managed to maintain and, where possible, enhance the natural resources and characteristics identified.

This protection and management will be achieved by careful land use and development controls, and by the introduction of management practices which ensure that all use and development within Sites of Natural Significance are carried out in a manner which:

- maintains the significance of existing native vegetation and its value as a refuge or habitat for wildlife;
- prevents soil erosion;
- protects the environment of watercourses;
- protects the site from wildfire;

- includes measures to ensure that the condition of the site and the effectiveness of the program are monitored;
- identifies areas within which development is to be precluded, and areas which require treatment in specified ways;
- provides for an appraisal of areas in the vicinity of a Site of Natural Significance and the development of programs, where possible, which are supportive of the management of the Site of Natural Significance and for consideration of external factors in relation to the site, such as buffer zones, flight paths for birds and the need for feral animal and environmental weed control;
- ensure measures are taken to eradicate environmental weed infestations, to prevent degradation of the site, and
- protects the site from domestic pets and vermin.

7.04 Further actions for Sites of Natural Significance

Further investigation of environmental resources, and identification of additional Sites of Natural Significance where desirable, must be carried out.

All owners and occupiers of Sites of Natural Significance should be informed of their importance and significance, and of the best ways to conserve and protect them.

Government Departments, Public Authorities and Councils responsible for management of land within Sites of Natural Significance must ensure their protection, and must prepare and implement programs for the proper management of that land.

Encouragement and assistance must be given for further research to identify additional Sites of Natural Significance and to improve knowledge of the habitat and management requirements of flora and fauna, and to coordinate the preparation of a public information program for the Region to increase public awareness of the need to identify, protect and manage these Sites.

7.05 Additional measures to protect Native Vegetation

Additional measures to maintain and enhance the integrity of native vegetation must be provided for. Some of these measures include the:

- facilitation and active encouragement of environmental weed eradication measures, and active discouragement of planting of environmental weeds, including the development of an environmental weed management strategy for the Region;
- facilitation and active encouragement of revegetation with indigenous species, particularly in the establishment/reinforcement of wildlife corridors between Sites of Natural Significance and other areas of significant remnant vegetation;
- active encouragement to fence off stock from areas containing native vegetation;
- facilitation of measures to inform residents and visitors of the Region's rich natural environment and the importance of its conservation;
- requirement that public utilities and firebreaks, wherever possible, are located over cleared land rather than over areas with remnant vegetation;

- requirement that native vegetation on roadside reserves be conserved, wherever possible, during road construction, upgrading and all other times;
- investigation of the feasibility of providing incentives for the conservation of Sites of Natural Significance;
- ensuring that fire prevention measures in areas of native vegetation have conservation of flora and fauna as a high priority, and that fuel reduction programs are monitored to evaluate whether the objectives are being met in the medium to long term, and
- promotion of amendments to the licensing system for use of public land to ensure that conservation of Sites of Natural Significance is a high priority.

The Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Councils and voluntary groups and organisations, are encouraged to develop information systems and provide advisory services to the landowners on the values, maintenance and management of native vegetation, particularly in Sites of Natural Significance.

Planning schemes must ensure that, within all Landscape Living, Rural and Public Land Policy Areas, a planning permit is required for the removal or clearance of native vegetation, except where exemptions apply under the planning scheme.

7.06 Management of Sites of Natural Significance on Public Land

The long-term conservation of Sites of Natural Significance on Public Land must be ensured.

The management of Public Land containing Sites of Natural Significance must be through appropriate management programs. These programs must be in conformity with the Regional Strategy Plan and must include:

- identification of the location and the extent of the Site of Natural Significance;
- measures to contain any adverse effects brought about by the use or development of the land which contains the Site;
- measures to retain and enhance native vegetation;
- consideration of external factors in relation to the site, such as buffer zones, flight paths for birds, the control of feral animals and environmental weeds, wildlife refuges and corridors for wildlife movement; and
- measures to prevent degradation of the site and to ensure that the condition of the site and the effectiveness of the program are monitored.

Any Government Department, Public Authority or Council carrying out works or undertakings in a Site of Natural Significance, must ensure that in carrying out those works and undertakings, they have regard to:

- any management program prepared for the site;
- the maintenance and enhancement of landscape character;
- the intrinsic value of existing vegetation and its value as a refuge or habitat for wildlife;
- the prevention of soil erosion;

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- the protection and the need for enhancement of the environment of watercourses;
- the protection of the area from wildfire; and
- the protection of the area from environmental and noxious weeds, vermin and domestic animals.