

Land Clearing in the Territory

Land clearing rates in the Northern Territory have dramatically increased over the last seven years particularly in the Litchfield Shire. By May 2001 ten thousand hectares (the equivalent of 6,666 football fields) had been cleared in the Litchfield Shire alone (Brock, 2001). There are no signs of this trend easing.

Elsewhere in the NT there are plans for agricultural expansion, such as proposed land releases for mixed agriculture (stock, crops, horticulture) in the Katherine Daly region.

There are many direct, indirect and cumulative impacts from land clearing including habitat loss, soil erosion and poor water quality.

There are no mechanisms to protect important habitat such as river vegetation and rainforests (apart from on pastoral land). Inappropriate land clearing splits up habitats creating islands of bush too small to support animal and plant populations which are highly susceptible to impacts from fire, weeds and feral animals.

We need to ensure the long-term maintenance of the Territory's existing native bushland which is vital to the survival of its native animals and ecosystems. The first step toward achieving this is to develop land clearing controls that apply to all land whether it is a Crown lease, freehold, pastoral lease etc.



In November last year two Berry Springs landholders were fined \$8,500 for clearing a population of Grevillea longicuspis (a rare plant with bright red flowers)

in breach of their clearing permit conditions.

Some of the values intact ecosystems provide, include:

- *maintaining biodiversity*
- *protecting water resources*
- *forming and protecting soil*
- *maintaining water table levels and preventing salinity*
- *fishing and boating*
- *camping, birdwatching and bushwalking*
- *providing sites for tourism and recreation*
- *providing windbreaks for crops*
- *continuance of Aboriginal cultural practices for example, hunting, gathering food, didgeridu making etc.*

Current controls on clearing

Land clearing controls in the Northern Territory are limited to the Litchfield Shire and on pastoral leases.

In Litchfield Shire a landholder can clear up to 50% of their block, regardless of the size, without a permit. Under this system sensitive habitat types and neighbourhood amenity are poorly protected. A permit is required to clear the remaining 50%.

On pastoral leases landholders must get a permit to clear land from the Pastoral Lands Board, unless clearing for infrastructure, such as roads or fences. There are **guidelines** that pastoralists are expected to comply with when undertaking any clearing activities.

Contact the Department for Infrastructure, Planning and Environment or the Pastoral Land Board for further information about these processes (details at end of flier).

Territory-wide **voluntary guidelines** have recently been released. However, these only assist landholders to minimise environmental impacts when clearing their land, they do not control land clearing (eg. how much occurs and where). Guidelines available at: www.lpe.nt.gov.au

Future plans ...

The NT Government is planning to release a land clearing **policy** in the near future. The policy will outline a new approach to the management of land clearing. A set of controls will be required to implement the policy, however at this stage it is unclear what these controls will be and how they will be developed.

The Environment Centre of the NT (ECNT) is very keen to be involved in this process and is encouraging the entire community to contribute.

The Government will be heavily influenced by public opinion. This is your opportunity to have a say and make a difference.

Be Informed and Get Involved

Everyone needs to think about how clearing affects them and the world they live in.

You can:

- Attend future public meetings
- Get together with your friends and prepare submissions
- Write to politicians and newspapers
- Fill out an ECNT campaign postcard calling for land clearing legislation give some to your friends, family
- Consider joining a Landcare group, the Environment Centre or Land for Wildlife

Watchdog on Duty



We are collecting information on clearing. To help us out we need to know:

- Where lot numbers, marked locations on maps etc
- What how big is the area being cleared?

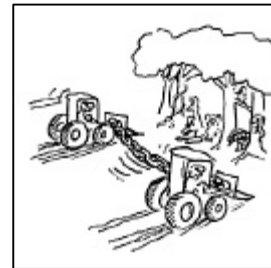
- When dates and timing of clearing
 - * Remember trespassing is illegal *

Any details about clearing, concerns with land clearing and ideas for regulation etc contact Jann at ECNT or Sally Jacka at Litchfield Shire.

The Environment Centre is committed to ensuring that appropriate and effective land clearing regulations are implemented across the Territory.

****Make sure you have your say****

Contacts



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