

R0001984493

## Environmental management standard for vegetation management and clearing work

### Approval

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# Environmental management standard for vegetation management and clearing work

## HSEQ Management System

### 1. Purpose

This standard sets out TasNetworks minimum requirements for managing environmental and cultural heritage risks posed by our program of work. Specifically, it includes TasNetworks vegetation management program, all capital and operational work, and the use of herbicides that directly impacts vegetation.

In undertaking our program of work, TasNetworks seeks to manage the risk harm caused by failure of our network or our operations to as low as reasonably practical. Specifically, the ongoing vegetation management program is primarily targeted towards removing vegetation that is likely to come into contact with our network, preventing risks associated with network outages, community safety and bushfire ignition.

In conjunction with necessary works being undertaken, our business also has a low appetite for the potential to cause environmental harm resulting from our operations. TasNetworks aims to address the low appetite for environmental risk and harm caused by our operations through implementing and maintaining an effective environmental management system (Figure 1).

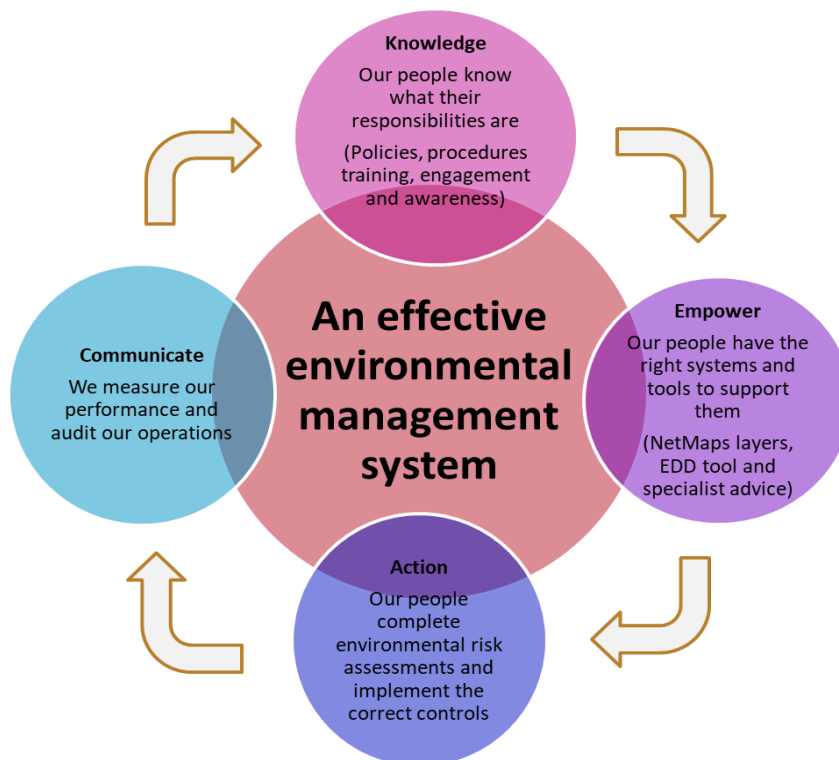


Figure 1: TasNetworks environmental management system

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## 2. Scope

This standard applies to everyone working for, or on behalf of TasNetworks, while planning or executing any work that will directly impact vegetation including:

- TasNetworks routine vegetation management programs for existing network assets including distribution, transmission, telecommunications, and facilities
- The clearing of vegetation for new network assets, telecommunications assets, access tracks, and facilities
- The clearing or management of vegetation undertaken during the replacement or maintenance of existing assets, facilities, and access tracks.

Work that directly impacts vegetation includes:

- Any cutting or pruning of vegetation (excluding the removal of fallen vegetation for the purposes of easement access or outage restoration);
- Use of herbicides for the management of vegetation or the control or eradication of weeds or;
- Mechanical clearing, mulching or slashing and;
- Any other method used for the management or clearing of vegetation not explicitly mentioned above.

The requirements of this standard does not apply to work that will result in low-level, incidental impact to vegetation in our easements. However, all workers are expected to make all reasonable efforts to minimize their environmental impact and comply with all requirements as described in the TasNetworks Environmental Handbook.

The standard does not apply to garden maintenance undertaken inside the property boundary of TasNetworks owned or managed facilities or substations.

This standard must be followed at all times unless an alternative more stringent standard or Environmental Management System (**EMS**) has been endorsed by the Environment and Sustainability Team Leader.

## 3. General requirements

At all times, vegetation management and clearing work shall be undertaken in a manner which minimises impact on environmental, heritage and community values as far as reasonably practical. This includes special consideration of community expectations for the protection and conservation of important vegetation and important locations as described in Chapter 8A of the Tasmanian Electricity Code (**TEC**).

In particular, all vegetation management and clearing work must comply with:

- All relevant state and federal legislation, regulations, standards, exemptions Memorandums of Understanding (**MoUs**) and codes of practice
- Commitments and conditions granted as part of an Environment Management Plan (**EMP**), regulatory approvals, or a *permit to take*
- All relevant policies, standards, procedures and work practices as part of TasNetworks environmental management system (including the TasNetworks Environmental Handbook)
- Any specialist environmental advice received from the E&S Team

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- Additional requirements prescribed by the land manager, authorised environmental specialist (i.e. botanists) or regulatory authority
- Team members and contractors are encouraged to comply with all relevant council by-laws where reasonably practical to do so.

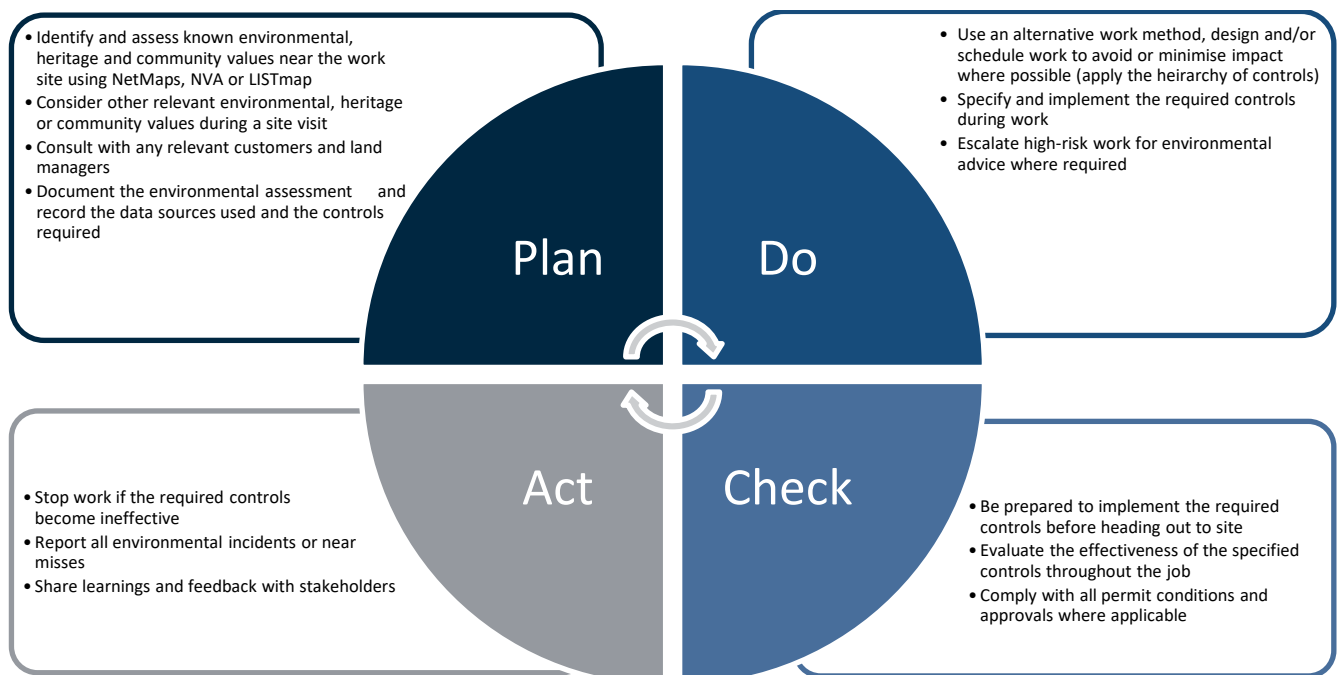
Work that will deviate from the requirements in this standard, must be risk assessed, documented and authorised by the applicable General Manager.

For vegetation management and clearing work completed under emergency or fault conditions, a documented environment assessment is not required. However, best endeavours should be made to identify and minimise environmental impact where practical to do so (i.e. by using the flora, fauna and reserves layer in NetMaps). The Environment and Sustainability Team (**E&S Team**) must be notified of any unauthorised work impacting a listed threatened plant species as per the One Hour rule.

## 4. Environmental assessments

An environmental assessment must be completed and documented prior to commencing any vegetation management or clearing work. The environmental assessment must include checks for known environmental, heritage and community values and the source used to confirm the presence or absence of known records. This process is described in more detail in the draft [Environmental Assessments Procedure for Vegetation and Clearing Work](#).

Any team member or contractor undertaking vegetation management and clearing work must complete, or have documentation which shows that an environmental assessment has been completed prior to work commencing (Figure 2). Where applicable, the environmental assessment must include a copy of any permits to take any other required approvals. All records of environmental assessments must be provided to TasNetworks and/or captured and documented for a period of not less than 5 years for future reference and auditing.



**Figure 2 – Environmental management process for vegetation management and vegetation clearing work**

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## 4.1 Desktop assessments

A desktop environmental assessment must be completed which checks all current publically available records for known environmental and heritage values that may be impacted by vegetation management or clearing work. The assessment must record the data source used (i.e. NetMaps, the Natural Values Atlas or LISTmap) and the level of risk posed.

The desktop environmental assessment should be completed as early as reasonably practical during the works planning process to ensure risks to identified values (e.g. listed threatened species) are avoided or minimised. This will also minimise disruption to the delivery of planned work. The assessment will define the appropriate work method, clearance space and/or timing of work to minimise risks as per the hierarchy of controls (see Figure 3).

## 4.2 On-site assessments and stakeholder consultation

An on-site assessment, including customer and land manager consultation, must be completed and documented prior to work commencing where required. If the controls required by a land manager cannot be adhered to, work must not commence until authorised.

## 4.3 Environmental advice

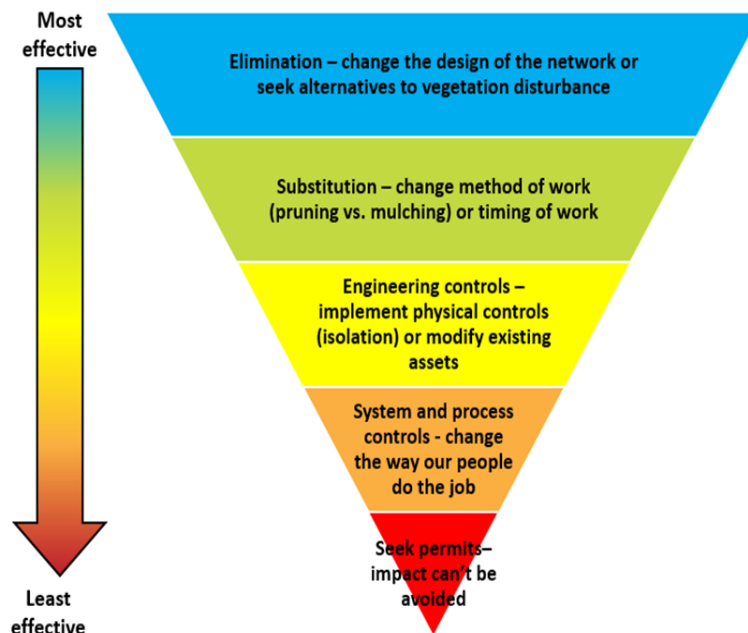
Any work that poses a high-risk to known environmental, heritage and community values, (i.e. work that involves mechanical clearing of threatened species, potential clearing of threatened species habitat or breeding disturbance), should be escalated for environmental advice as soon as reasonably practical. Early escalation will minimise any potential impacts on program or project delivery. Any advice received from an environmental specialist, botanist or other subject matter expert, (including conditions as described on a permit to take or in an EMP), must be adhered to at all times when undertaking work. Environmental advice must be sought and provided within any agreed timeframes to minimise impact on program delivery.

## 4.4 Specifying and implementing controls

TasNetworks' preference is to avoid impact on environmental, heritage and community values by ensuring they are identified and considered during design, planning and scheduling. All relevant TasNetworks team members and contractors must consider the hierarchy of controls when planning any work that will directly impact vegetation:

- Siting and aligning network assets, telecommunications assets and/or facilities so that the impact on important vegetation and important locations is eliminated or minimised over the entire life of the asset
- Selecting the work method that causes the least impact to known values, particularly in areas with threatened flora (i.e. pruning versus machine mulching)
- Applying for permits with relevant authorities to remove/disturb in instances where the practicality of alternative methods are disproportionate to clearing methods
- Prescribing a suitable regrowth space once environmental, heritage and community values have been adequately considered along with all other relevant risks
- Scheduling work to limit disturbance to threatened species and to minimise biosecurity risks

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**Figure 3 – The hierarchy of controls**

Seeking permits to take listed threatened flora, or the clearing of threatened vegetation communities outside of existing easements, should only be considered if there's no other reasonably practical measure to avoid impact. The removal of any listed threatened vegetation community must be offset and paid for by the works owner if required to do so. This should be identified in any applicable functional specifications or scopes of work.

## 5. Systems and processes

Adequate systems and processes are a fundamental component of an effective environmental management system. At a minimum, environmental management systems must;

- Meet all relevant compliance obligations;
- Enable the documentation of environmental assessments which meets the requirements of this standard;
- Support robust document management and record keeping; and
- Enable all work to be inspected and audited in a timely manner.

## 6. Training, awareness, inspections and auditing

All people who have responsibilities under this standard, should be made aware of their responsibilities and TasNetworks businesses requirements. They must also be provided with training to ensure they have sufficient skills and knowledge to meet their responsibilities as defined in Section 4.

All vegetation management and clearing work will be periodically inspected and audited to check that all current requirements are being met. Where performance is deficient, corrective actions should be assigned and followed-up as soon as reasonably practical by the action owner.

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## 7. Reporting incidents, near misses and conducting investigations

All environment and heritage related incidents and near misses, must be reported to the contract owner and works delivery team leader in accordance with TasNetworks One Hour Rule.

TasNetworks contract manager or works delivery team leader will then notify TasNetworks E&S Team.

Any work which has the potential to adversely impact environmental, heritage or community values, must cease until such time that effective controls are in place and approval to proceed is obtained.

## 8. Other requirements

### 8.1 Special species timber recovery

Where mature special timber species are to be removed as part of new capital work, the recovery of any identified timber shall be coordinated and facilitated between the land owner, the Forest Practices Authority and TasNetworks prior to work commencing via an agreed EMP or Vegetation Management Plan. See [Tasmanian Special Species Management Plan 2017](#) for more information.

### 8.2 Vegetation Management Plans (VMP)

For vegetation clearing work which involves the clearing of more than 5ha of vegetation, TasNetworks will arrange or facilitate a vegetation management plan which meets an equivalent standard required under a Forest Practices Plan (FPP). The plan will also consider the removal of special species timber. The E&S Team can assist in the development of a VMP.

### 8.3 Standing environmental management plans

Where areas of significant environmental and heritage value need to be managed for the purposes of minimising bushfire and reliability risks on a routine basis, a site specific standing environmental management plan may be developed in consultation with the relevant works or asset owner and nominated environmental specialist(s). Plans must cover all the requirements as described in this standard, and reviewed and updated prior to undertaking work to ensure that all relevant considerations are included and that the prescribed controls are still effective.

### 8.4 Significant impact on matters of national environmental significance

Vegetation management or clearing work may also require approval under the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation act 1999* (EPBC). Approval from the minister is required if the action has, will have, or is likely to have, a significant impact on a matter of national environmental significance (MNES; see Appendix A). If any vegetation management or clearing work will impact a matter of national environmental significance (threatened fauna, flora, the habitat and threatened vegetation communities), then a significant impact assessment will need to be completed prior to work being undertaken. Further advice must also be sought from the Environment and Sustainability Team. See the [Matters of National Environmental Significance - Significant Impact Guidelines](#) for more information.

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## 9. Responsibilities

The table below summarises the responsibilities for ensuring the requirements of this standard are met.

Role	Responsibility
<b>General Managers and Enterprise Leaders</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support, understand and communicate the requirements and expectations set out in this standard</li> <li>Ensure that TasNetworks' team members and contractors are meeting those requirements</li> <li>Ensure adequate resourcing and funding is made available to meet the requirements in this standard</li> <li>Ensure findings and recommendations from audit and incident investigation reports are actioned</li> <li>Review and support environmental objectives and targets, which will drive improved performance and maturity</li> </ul>
<b>Works initiator</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure the requirements of this standard are adequately captured in relevant documents, asset management plans and regulatory proposals</li> <li>Endorse this standard</li> <li>Support strategies, actions and approaches which minimise the impact and risks to environmental, cultural and heritage values over the life of TasNetworks assets</li> <li>Ensure that projects or programs are adequately funded to meet the requirements of this standard</li> </ul>
<b>Works owner</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support, understand and communicate the requirements and expectations as set out in this standard</li> <li>Ensure an adequate environmental assessments are being completed and documented prior to work being undertaken</li> <li>Make reasonable efforts to avoid or eliminate environmental or heritage risks and specify any controls required</li> <li>Engage or seek environmental advice for high-risk where required</li> <li>Support the development and implementation of systems and processes which ensure the requirements of this standard are being met</li> <li>Help develop and support environmental objectives and targets, which will drive improved performance and maturity</li> <li>Action findings and recommendations from audit and incident investigation reports</li> </ul>
<b>Works delivery</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that all applicable requirements as described in this standard are communicated, understood and complied with by all relevant team members and contractors</li> <li>Ensure adequate environmental assessments are being undertaken and documented prior to work being undertaken</li> <li>Make reasonable efforts to find alternative solutions to eliminate environmental and heritage risks and specify adequate control measures</li> <li>Ensure that the control measures specified to minimise environmental risk are being implemented by those undertaking work</li> <li>Escalate high-risk work for environmental advice where required</li> <li>Ensure all advice, permit conditions and approvals are complied with</li> <li>Report and help investigate any environmental incidents and near misses in line with the Incident Management Procedure and the One Hour Rule.</li> </ul>

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Role	Responsibility
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stop work if there is the potential an adverse environmental, heritage or community values, until such time that effective controls are in place</li> </ul>
<b>Operations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that all requirements as described in this standard are communicated, understood and complied with by all relevant team members</li> <li>Where applicable, ensure an adequate environmental assessments are being undertaken and documented prior to starting work</li> <li>Comply with all relevant environmental advice, permits and approvals and ensure that the specified controls are effectively implemented at all times</li> <li>Comply with all permit conditions and ensure that a copy of any permit(s) is kept on site during work at all times</li> <li>Report any environmental incidents and near misses in line with the required timeframes (the One Hour Rule) and comply with any incident investigations</li> <li>Stop work if there is the potential to adversely impact environmental, heritage or community values, until such time that effective controls are in place</li> <li>Ensure all team members are adequately trained and competent to manage environmental and heritage risks</li> </ul>
<b>Contractors</b>	<p>While undertaking work on behalf of TasNetworks:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that all applicable requirements in this standard are being met unless otherwise agreed</li> <li>Understand and communicate TasNetworks requirements and expectations in relation to the environment and heritage to all team members</li> <li>Maintain an effective EMS to manage relevant environmental and heritage risks posed by operations</li> <li>Ensure that all applicable team members are adequately trained and competent to manage environmental and heritage risks</li> <li>Where required, ensure adequate environmental assessments are being undertaken and documented prior to work being undertaken</li> <li>Make reasonable efforts to find alternative solutions to eliminate environmental and heritage risks and specify adequate controls</li> <li>Escalate high-risk work for environmental advice where required</li> <li>Comply with all applicable environmental advice, permits and regulatory approvals during work</li> <li>Comply with all permit conditions and ensure that a copy of any permit(s) is kept on site during work at all times</li> <li>Report environmental incidents and near misses in line with the required timeframes to TasNetworks (the One Hour Rule) and comply with any incident investigations</li> <li>Stop work if there is the potential to adversely impact environmental, heritage or community values, until such time that effective controls are in place</li> </ul>
<b>Environment and Sustainability Team</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide or coordinate specialist environmental advice within agreed timeframes or as negotiated with the works owner</li> <li>Complete or coordinate the application and submission of any environmental or heritage approvals including the development and preparation of EMPs or RAAs</li> <li>Complete or coordinate the development of EMPs where required for complex or high-risk projects</li> <li>Assist with or develop training where required</li> </ul>

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Role	Responsibility
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Help develop and implement systems and processes which ensure the requirements in this standard are met</li> <li>Coordinate routine environmental audits and inspections</li> <li>Liaise with regulators and help facilitate permits applications (unless an alternative process has been approved by the E&amp;S Team)</li> <li>Coordinate the investigation of environmental incidents or near misses as required by the Incident Management Procedure</li> <li>Manage, update and review this standard as required by the document management system</li> <li>Approve the engagement of qualified environmental specialists to provide environmental advice and undertake assessments.</li> <li>Help develop and support environmental objectives and targets, which will drive improved performance and maturity.</li> <li>Ensure relevant contracts and contractors environmental management systems meet the requirements specified in this standard.</li> </ul>

## 10. Related Documents and Compliance Requirements

### 10.1 Internal documents and requirements

Document Number	Document Title
	<a href="#">TasNetworks Risk Appetite Statement</a>
	<a href="#">TasNetworks Risk Management Framework</a>
	<a href="#">TasNetworks Environment and Sustainability Policy</a>
R0001975386	<a href="#">Environmental Assessment Procedure for Vegetation Management and Clearing Work (draft)</a>
R0002091338	<a href="#">Biosecurity Standard</a>
R0000112530	<a href="#">Environmental Handbook</a>
R0000502409	<a href="#">Animal Interactions with Power Infrastructure</a>
	TasNetworks Cutting Instruction Distribution
	TasNetworks Assessment Instruction Distribution
	Technical Schedules – Vegetation Distribution
R0000502011	<a href="#">Environmental Considerations: Distribution – Design, Construction and Decommissioning</a>
R0000480105	<a href="#">Vegetation Asset Management Plan</a>
R0001050776	<a href="#">Vegetation Operations Management Plan</a>
R0000346829	<a href="#">Vegetation Management Scope of Work for Authorised Service Providers</a>
R0000094015	<a href="#">Incident Management Procedure</a>

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Document Number	Document Title
R0000502077	<a href="#">Hazardous Substances Management Procedure</a>
	<a href="#">One Hour Rule</a>
R0001599490	<a href="#">Environment and Sustainability Risk Register</a>
R0002143258	<a href="#">Biosecurity hygiene work practice</a>

## 11. External documents and compliance requirements

Refer to the [Summary of TasNetworks external environmental obligations](#) for more information

Document Title, Section or Part
<a href="#">Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals (Control of Use) Act 1995 (Tas)</a>
<a href="#">Aboriginal Heritage Act 1975</a>
<a href="#">Biosecurity Act 2019</a>
<a href="#">Crown Lands Act 1976</a>
<a href="#">Electricity Supply Industry Act 1995</a>
<a href="#">Environmental Management and Pollution Control Act 1994</a>
<a href="#">Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</a>
<a href="#">Forest Practices Act 1985</a>
<a href="#">Historic Cultural Heritage Act 1995</a>
<a href="#">Litter Act 2007</a>
<a href="#">Land Use Planning and Approvals Act 1993</a>
<a href="#">National Parks and Reserves Management Act 2002</a>
<a href="#">Nature Conservation Act 2002</a>
<a href="#">Threatened Species Protection Act 1995</a>
<a href="#">Wellington Park Act 1999</a>
<a href="#">Water Management Act 1999</a>
<a href="#">Biosecurity Regulations 2022</a>
<a href="#">Forest Practices Regulations 2017</a>
<a href="#">Nature Conservation (Wildlife) Regulations 2021</a>
<a href="#">Forest Practices Code 2020</a>
<a href="#">Forest Practices Act Exemption - Distribution</a>
<a href="#">Forest Practices Act Exemption - Transmission</a>
<a href="#">Tasmanian Electricity Code – Chapter 8A</a>

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Document Title, Section or Part
<a href="#">Parks and Wildlife Service Memorandum of Understanding - Distribution</a>
<a href="#">Parks and Wildlife Service Memorandum of Understanding - Transmission</a>
<a href="#">Public Authority Management Agreement for Threatened Species</a>
<a href="#">FPA Fauna Technical Notes</a>
<a href="#">Guidelines for terrestrial Natural Values Surveys related to Development Proposals</a>
<a href="#">NRE's guidelines for the safe and effective used of herbicide near waterways</a>
<a href="#">Tasmanian Wash-down Guidelines for Weed and Disease Control</a>
<a href="#">Code of Practice for Ground Spraying</a>
<a href="#">NRE (2015) Weed and Disease Planning &amp; Hygiene Guidelines</a>
<a href="#">NRE (2010) Keeping It Clean - A Tasmanian field hygiene manual to prevent the spread of freshwater pests and pathogens</a>
<a href="#">Matters of National Environmental Significance - Significant Impact Guidelines</a>
<a href="#">Standard: Protection of trees on development sites</a>

## 12. Definitions

Term	Definition
AHT	Aboriginal Heritage Tasmania
Clearing or Clearance	Clearance means the trimming or removal of trees or of living or dead parts of a plant. Includes chemical application where permitted
Cutting (cut) Pack	Means a work pack issued by TasNetworks for the cutting works to be completed on a particular Feeder or Feeder segment
NRE	Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania
EMP	Environmental Management Plan
Environmental, heritage and community values	Environment, heritage and community values includes the definition of 'Important Vegetation' and 'Important Locations' under Chapter 8A of the Tasmanian Electricity Code as well all environmental and cultural heritage aspects, definitions and obligations under applicable legislation, regulations, codes of practice and guidelines
EPBC Act	Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act
Escalation	Where advice on controls for impact on environment and heritage values is required from an environmental specialist
HSE	Health Safety and Environment
Important vegetation	As described in Chapter 8A of the Tasmanian Electricity Code (Appendix A).

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Term	Definition
Important locations	As described in Chapter 8A of the Tasmanian Electricity Code (Appendix A).
NVA	Natural Values Atlas.
High-risk	Any work that potentially requires regulatory approvals or a permit to take or; Unavoidable impact that could possibly lead to an externally reportable environmental (or heritage) incident (i.e. the spreading of declared weeds in a sensitive area)
Pruning or cutting	The removal of any part of a plant (living or dead) as part of vegetation management work - any work which does not involve the clearing or removal of an entire plant (i.e. tree trimming).
PWS	Parks and Wildlife Service.
RAA	Reserve activity assessment
Threatened flora (threatened plant)	Any plant species listed as threatened under the <i>Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation act 1999</i> or <i>Threatened Species Protection act 1995</i>
Special species timber	As defined in the Tasmanian Special Species Management Plan (October, 2017)
Work site	The area in which vegetation management or clearing work is to be undertaken.
Work	Covers any operational or maintenance activities relating to vegetation control or clearing including the trimming or removal of trees, hand clearing, pruning, mechanical clearing and chemical application (herbicide) or a combination of any of these.

## 13 Document Control

### 13.1 Document history

Version	Date	Amended by	Comments
0.1	18/08/2021	Thomas Webster	First draft for feedback
0.2	21/11/2021	Thomas Webster	Minor changes following stakeholder consultation
0.3	24/02/2022	Thomas Webster	Final version for sign-off
1.0	27/04/2022	Thomas Webster	Approved version
1.1	04/07/2023	Thomas Webster	Added Biosecurity Regulations, removed Weed Management Act

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