52.17 NATIVE VEGETATION

30/10/2025
VC291

Purpose

To ensure that there is no net loss to biodiversity as a result of the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation. This is achieved by applying the following three step approach in accordance with the *Guidelines for the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation* (Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, 2025) (the Guidelines):

1. Avoid the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation.

2. Minimise impacts from the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation that cannot be avoided.

3. Provide an offset to compensate for the biodiversity impact if a permit is granted to remove, destroy or lop native vegetation.

To manage the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation to minimise land and water degradation.

52.17-1 Permit requirement

12/12/2017
VC138

A permit is required to remove, destroy or lop native vegetation, including dead native vegetation. This does not apply:

- If the table to Clause 52.17-7 specifically states that a permit is not required.
- If a native vegetation precinct plan corresponding to the land is incorporated into this scheme and listed in the schedule to Clause 52.16.
- To the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation specified in the schedule to this clause.

52.17-2 Application requirements

14/07/2022
VC213

An application to remove, destroy or lop native vegetation must comply with the application requirements specified in the Guidelines.

52.17-3 Property vegetation plans

12/12/2017
VC138

A permit granted to remove, destroy or lop native vegetation in accordance with a property vegetation plan must include the following condition:

"This permit will expire if one of the following circumstances applies:

- The removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation does not start within two years of the date of this permit.
- The removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation is not completed within ten years of the date of this permit."

52.17-4 Decision guidelines

12/12/2017
VC138

Before deciding on an application, in addition to the decision guidelines in Clause 65, the responsible authority must consider the decision guidelines specified in the Guidelines as appropriate.

52.17-5 Offset requirements

14/07/2022
VC213

If a permit is required to remove, destroy or lop native vegetation, the biodiversity impacts from the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation must be offset, in accordance with the Guidelines. The conditions on the permit for the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation must specify the offset requirement and the timing to secure the offset.

52.17-6 Transitional provisions

20/03/2023
VC229

The requirements of this clause in force immediately before the commencement of Amendment VC138 continue to apply to an application for:

- A permit lodged before that date.
- An amendment to a permit if:
  - the original permit application was lodged before that date; or
  - the original permit application was one that benefited from the following transitional provision.
- A permit lodged within 12 months after that date, if the Secretary to the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (as constituted under Part 2 of the *Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987*) has stated in writing that a report about the proposed removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation has been generated by the Department's native vegetation information systems within 12 months before that date.

52.17-7 Table of exemptions

16/08/2024
VC262

The requirement to obtain a permit does not apply to:	
Conservation work	Native vegetation that is to be removed, destroyed or lopped to the minimum extent necessary to enable the carrying out of conservation work: ▪ which provides an overall improvement for biodiversity; and ▪ with written agreement of the Secretary to the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (as constituted under Part 2 of the *Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987*).
Crown land	Native vegetation that is to be removed, destroyed or lopped to the minimum extent necessary to manage Crown land: ▪ by or on behalf of the Secretary to the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (as constituted under Part 2 of the *Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987*), the Great Ocean Road Coast and Parks Authority or Parks Victoria, and in accordance with the *Procedure for the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation on Crown land* ; or ▪ with written permission from the Secretary to the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (as constituted under Part 2 of the *Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987*).
Dead native vegetation	Native vegetation that is dead. This exemption does not apply to a standing dead tree with a trunk diameter of 40 centimetres or more at a height of 1.3 metres above ground level.
Emergency works	Native vegetation that is to be removed, destroyed, or lopped: ▪ in an emergency by, or on behalf of, a public authority or municipal council to create an emergency access associated with emergency works; or ▪ where it presents an immediate risk of personal injury or damage to property. Only that part of the vegetation that presents the immediate risk may be removed, destroyed or lopped under this exemption.
Existing buildings	Native vegetation that is to be removed, destroyed, or lopped to the minimum extent necessary to enable the use or maintenance of a building constructed in accordance with a planning or building permit issued before 15 September 2008. This exemption does not apply to:

The requirement to obtain a permit does not apply to:	
	▪ the operation or maintenance of a fence; or ▪ native vegetation located more than 10 metres measured from the outermost point of the building.
Existing buildings and works in the Farming Zone and Rural Activity Zone	Native vegetation that is to be removed, destroyed, or lopped to the minimum extent necessary to enable the use or maintenance of an existing building or works used for Agricultural production, including a dam, utility service, bore, horticultural trellising and accessway in the Farming Zone or the Rural Activity Zone. This exemption does not apply to: ▪ the use or maintenance of a Dwelling; or ▪ the operation or maintenance of a fence; or ▪ native vegetation located more than 10 metres measured from the outermost point of the building or works.
Extractive industry	Native vegetation that is to be removed, destroyed or lopped to the minimum extent necessary to enable the carrying out of extractive industry in accordance with a work plan approved under the *Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990* and authorised by a work authority under that Act.
Fences	Native vegetation that is to be removed, destroyed, or lopped to the minimum extent necessary to enable: ▪ the operation or maintenance of an existing fence; or ▪ the construction of a boundary fence between properties in different ownership. The clearing along both sides of the fence when combined must not exceed 4 metres in width, except where land has already been cleared 4 metres or more along one side of the fence, then up to 1 metre can be cleared along the other side of the fence.
Fire protection	Native vegetation that is to be removed, destroyed or lopped to the minimum extent necessary to carry out any of the following fire protection activities: ▪ fire fighting; ▪ planned burning; ▪ making or maintenance of a fuelbreak or firefighting access track (or any combination thereof) that does not exceed a combined width of 6 metres; ▪ making a strategic fuelbreak up to 40 metres wide by, or on behalf of, a public authority in accordance with a strategic fuelbreak plan approved by the Secretary to the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (as constituted under Part 2 of the *Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987*); ▪ in accordance with a fire prevention notice issued under either: – section 87 of the *Fire Rescue Victoria Act 1958* ; – section 65 of the *Forests Act 1958* ; or – section 41 of the *Country Fire Authority Act 1958* . ▪ keeping native vegetation clear of, or minimising the risk of bushfire ignition from, an electric line in accordance with a code of practice prepared under Part 8 of the *Electricity Safety Act 1998* ;

The requirement to obtain a permit does not apply to:	
	▪ minimising the risk to life and property from bushfire on a roadside of a public road managed by the relevant responsible road authority, and carried out by or on behalf of that authority, in accordance with the written agreement of the Secretary to the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (as constituted under Part 2 of the *Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987*). In this exemption, roadside, public road and responsible road authority have the same meanings as in section 3 of the *Road Management Act 2004* . *Note: Additional permit exemptions for bushfire protection are provided at Clause 52.12.*
Geothermal energy exploration and extraction	Native vegetation that is to be removed, destroyed or lopped to the minimum extent necessary in accordance with an operation plan approved under the *Geothermal Energy Resources Act 2005* .
Grasses	Native grass that is to be mowed or slashed for maintenance only, provided that the grass is: ▪ located within a lawn, garden or other landscaped area; or ▪ maintained at a height of at least 10 centimetres above ground level.
Grazing	Native vegetation that is to be removed, destroyed or lopped by domestic stock grazing on: ▪ freehold land; or ▪ Crown land in accordance with a license, permit or lease granted under applicable legislation.
Greenhouse gas sequestration and exploration	Native vegetation that is to be removed, destroyed or lopped to the minimum extent necessary in accordance with an operation plan approved under the *Greenhouse Gas Geological Sequestration Act 2008* .
Harvesting for timber production – naturally established native vegetation	Naturally established native vegetation that is to be removed, destroyed or lopped to enable timber harvesting operations and associated activities that are in accordance with the *Code of Practice for Timber Production 2014 (as amended 2022)* (Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, 2022) and are: ▪ undertaken on public land under a licence or permit issued under section 52 of the *Forests Act 1958* ; or ▪ authorised in accordance with Part 5 of the *Sustainable Forests (Timber) Act 2004* .
Land management or directions notice	Native vegetation that is to be removed, destroyed or lopped to the minimum extent necessary to comply with a land management notice or directions notice served under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* .
Land use conditions	Native vegetation that is to be removed, destroyed or lopped to the minimum extent necessary to comply with a land use condition served under the *Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994* .
Lopping and pruning for maintenance	Lopping or pruning native vegetation, for maintenance only, provided no more than 1/3 of the foliage of each individual plant is lopped or pruned. This exemption does not apply to: ▪ the pruning or lopping of the trunk of a native tree; or

The requirement to obtain a permit does not apply to:	
	▪ native vegetation on a roadside or railway reservation.
Mineral exploration and extraction	Native vegetation that is to be removed, destroyed or lopped to the minimum extent necessary by the holder of an exploration, mining, prospecting, or retention license issued under the *Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990* : ▪ that is low impact exploration within the meaning of Schedule 4A of the *Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990* ; or ▪ in accordance with a work plan approved under Part 3 of the *Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990* . *Note: Schedule 4A of the Mineral Resources (Sustainable Development) Act 1990 specifies limits on the extent of native vegetation that may be removed as part of low impact exploration.*
New buildings and works in the Farming Zone and Rural Activity Zone	Native vegetation that is to be removed, destroyed or lopped to the minimum extent necessary to enable the construction of a building or works used for Agricultural production, including a dam, utility service, bore and accessway, in the Farming Zone or the Rural Activity Zone. The maximum extent of native vegetation that may be removed, destroyed or lopped under this exemption on contiguous land in the same ownership in a five year period must not exceed any of the following: ▪ 1 hectare of native vegetation which does not include a tree. ▪ 15 native trees with a trunk diameter of less than 40 centimetres at a height of 1.3 metres above ground level. ▪ 5 native trees with a trunk diameter of 40 centimetres or more at a height of 1.3 metres above ground level. This exemption does not apply to the construction or operation of a pivot irrigation system or horticultural trellising.
New dwellings in the Farming Zone and Rural Activity Zone	Native vegetation that is to be removed, destroyed or lopped to the minimum extent necessary to enable the construction of a dwelling in the Farming Zone or Rural Activity Zone. The maximum extent of native vegetation removed, destroyed or lopped under this exemption on contiguous land in the same ownership in a five year period must not exceed any of the following: ▪ 300 square metres of native vegetation which does not include a tree. ▪ 5 native trees with a trunk diameter of less than 40 centimetres at a height of 1.3 metres above ground level. ▪ 1 native tree with a trunk diameter of 40 centimetres or more at a height of 1.3 metres above ground level. This exemption does not apply native vegetation removed, destroyed or lopped to enable the construction of a swimming pool, tennis court or horse ménage.
Personal use	Native vegetation that is to be removed, destroyed or lopped to the minimum extent necessary to obtain reasonable amounts of wood for personal use by the owner or lawful occupier of the land. For the purpose of this exemption personal use means uses such as heating and cooking, building and fence construction on land, and hobbies such as arts and craft. This exemption does not apply to: ▪ contiguous land in one ownership that has an area of less than 10 hectares;

The requirement to obtain a permit does not apply to:	
	▪ the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation by means other than cutting or chopping; or ▪ a standing native tree (including a dead tree) with a trunk diameter of 40 centimetres or more at a height of 1.3 metres above ground level.
Pest animal burrows	Native vegetation that is to be removed, destroyed or lopped to the minimum extent necessary to enable the removal of pest animal burrows in the Farming Zone or the Rural Activity Zone: ▪ in accordance with written agreement of an officer of the department responsible for administering the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act 1988* ; or ▪ provided the maximum extent of native vegetation removed, destroyed or lopped on contiguous land in the same ownership in a five year period does not exceed any of the following: – 1 hectare of native vegetation which does not include a tree; or – 15 native trees with a trunk diameter of less than 20 centimetres at a height of 1.3 metres above ground level.
Planted vegetation	Native vegetation that is to be removed, destroyed or lopped that was either planted or grown as a result of direct seeding. This exemption does not apply to native vegetation planted or managed with public funding for the purpose of land protection or enhancing biodiversity unless the removal, destruction or lopping of the native vegetation is in accordance with written permission of the agency (or its successor) that provided the funding.
Railways	Native vegetation that is to be removed, destroyed or lopped to the minimum extent necessary to maintain the safe and efficient function of an existing railway, or railway access road, in accordance with the written agreement of the Secretary to the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (as constituted under Part 2 of the *Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987*).
Regrowth	Native vegetation that is to be removed, destroyed or lopped that has naturally established or regenerated on land lawfully cleared of naturally established native vegetation, and is: ▪ less than 10 years old; or ▪ bracken (*Pteridium esculentum*); or ▪ within the boundary of a timber production plantation, as indicated on a Plantation Development Notice or other documented record, and has established after the plantation; or ▪ less than ten years old at the time of a property vegetation plan being signed by the Secretary to the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (as constituted under Part 2 of the *Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987*), and is: – shown on that plan as being ‘certified regrowth’; and – on land that is to be used or maintained for cultivation or pasture during the term of that plan. This exemption does not apply to land where native vegetation has been destroyed or otherwise damaged as a result of flood, fire or other natural disaster.

The requirement to obtain a permit does not apply to:	
Road safety	Native vegetation that is to be removed, destroyed or lopped to the minimum extent necessary by and on behalf of a public authority or municipal council to maintain the safe and efficient function of an existing road in accordance with the written agreement of the Secretary to the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (as constituted under Part 2 of the *Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987*).
Site area	Native vegetation that is to be removed, destroyed or lopped on land, together with all contiguous land in one ownership, which has an area of less than 0.4 hectares. This exemption does not apply to native vegetation on a roadside or rail reservation.
Stock movements on roads	Native vegetation that is to be removed, or destroyed by stock being moved along a road. This exemption does not apply to grazing as a result of holding stock in a temporary fence (including an electric fence) on a roadside for the purpose of feeding.
Stone exploration	Native vegetation that is to be removed, destroyed or lopped to the minimum extent necessary to enable the carrying out of Stone exploration. The maximum extent of native vegetation that may be removed, destroyed or lopped under this exemption on contiguous land in the same ownership in a five year period must not exceed any of the following: ▪ 1 hectare of native vegetation which does not include a tree. ▪ 15 native trees with a trunk diameter of less than 40 centimetres at a height of 1.3 metres above ground level. ▪ 5 native trees with a trunk diameter of 40 centimetres or more at a height of 1.3 metres above ground level. This exemption does not apply to costeaning and bulk sampling activities.
Surveying	Native vegetation that is to be removed, destroyed or lopped to the minimum extent necessary by, or on behalf of, a licenced surveyor (within the meaning of section 3 of the *Surveying Act 2004*) using hand-held tools to establish a sightline for the measurement of land.
Traditional owners	Native vegetation that is to be removed, destroyed or lopped by a person acting under, and in accordance with: ▪ a natural resource agreement under Part 6 of the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* ; or ▪ an authorisation order made under sections 82 or 84 of the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* as those sections were in force immediately before the commencement of section 24 of the *Traditional Owner Settlement Amendment Act* in 2016 (1 May 2017).
Tram stops	Native vegetation that is to be removed, destroyed or lopped to the minimum extent necessary by or on behalf of the Head, Transport for Victoria to construct a tram stop, including a tram stop shelter.

The requirement to obtain a permit does not apply to:	
Transport land	Native vegetation that is to be removed, destroyed or lopped to the minimum extent necessary by or on behalf of the Head, Transport for Victoria on land in a Transport Zone, or land in a Public Acquisition Overlay if the Head, Transport for Victoria is the acquiring authority, to construct or maintain transport system infrastructure, in accordance with the written agreement of the Secretary to the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (as constituted under Part 2 of the *Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987*).
Utility installations	Native vegetation that is to be removed, destroyed or lopped to the minimum extent necessary: ▪ to maintain the safe and efficient function a Minor utility installation; or ▪ by or on behalf of a utility service provider to maintain or construct a utility installation in accordance with the written agreement of the Secretary to the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (as constituted under Part 2 of the *Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987*).
Vehicle access from public roads	Native vegetation that is to be removed, destroyed, or lopped to the minimum extent necessary to enable the construction or maintenance of a vehicle access across a road reserve from a property boundary to a public road. This exemption only applies to properties which share a common boundary with the road reserve, and the total width of clearing must not exceed 6 metres. This exemption does not apply where there is a practical opportunity to site the accessway to avoid the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation. In this exemption, roadside and public road have the same meanings as in section 3 of the *Road Management Act 2004* . *Note: Under the Road Management Act 2004 the written consent of the coordinating road authority is required to conduct any works, including removing a tree or other vegetation, in, on, under or over a road.*
Weeds	Native vegetation that is to be removed, destroyed or lopped to the minimum extent necessary to enable the removal or destruction of a weed listed in the schedule to Clause 52.17. The maximum extent of native vegetation that may be removed, destroyed or lopped under this exemption on contiguous land in the same ownership in a five year period must not exceed any of the following: ▪ 1 hectare of native vegetation which does not include a tree. ▪ 15 native trees with a trunk diameter of less than 20 centimetres at a height of 1.3 metres above ground level.

52.17-8
14/07/2022
VC213

Melbourne Strategic Assessment Levy Area

The following provisions apply to the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation in the levy area within the meaning of the *Melbourne Strategic Assessment (Environment Mitigation Levy) Act 2020* .

Despite clauses 52.17-2, 52.17-4, 52.17-5 and anything in the Guidelines:

- An application to remove, destroy or lop native vegetation is not required to be accompanied by an offset statement providing evidence that an offset that meets the offset requirements for the native vegetation to be removed has been identified and can be secured in accordance with the Guidelines.
- Before deciding on an application, a responsible authority is not required to consider whether an offset that meets the offset requirements for the native vegetation to be removed has been identified and can be secured in accordance with the Guidelines.

- The biodiversity impacts of the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation are not required to be offset in accordance with the Guidelines.