

## How does the *PVP Developer* work?

The *PVP Developer* is a computer program that provides landholders, Landcare groups, local Catchment Management Authority staff and interested members of the public with access to the best available science and information on native vegetation in their district.

It will help them prioritise incentive payments to farmers to improve the condition of native vegetation on their properties and to assess whether clearing proposals meet the requirements of the new *Native Vegetation Act 2003*.

This revolutionary new system includes access to \$4 million of the latest satellite imagery purchased by the NSW government to help farmers decide how and where to manage native vegetation on their property.



### Incentive funding

Landholders may apply to their CMAs for financial assistance to voluntarily improve the condition of native vegetation on their properties.

Your local CMA will prioritise this expenditure through their Catchment Action Plan, to ensure tax payers money is directed to the best outcome for the catchment.

Landholders can access this incentive funding for native vegetation by contacting their local CMA and completing a Property Vegetation Plan.

The *PVP Developer* is used to help CMA staff assess the environmental value of incentive proposals. It is used to help prioritise proposals, assess cost effectiveness and also account for expenditure of public money.

For further information on incentives and how to access them, see Info Sheet 2 and talk to your CMA.

### Clearing proposals

The *Native Vegetation Act 2003* requires proposals for clearing remnant native vegetation to be assessed to determine whether they will “improve or maintain environmental outcomes.”

Catchment Management Authority staff will use the *PVP Developer* and local knowledge obtained during property visits with the landholder to assess native vegetation clearing proposals.

The *PVP Developer* (version 2.0) is a major upgrade of the software trialled on over 100 properties across NSW last year. It incorporates major changes which are the result of these on-farm trials, public submissions and assessment by a panel of independent scientists.

## Does the *PVP Developer* make the final decision?

Catchment Management Authorities are required by law to use the *PVP Developer* to help decide whether to approve a clearing application.

The CMA will use this science and apply their local knowledge to a particular application.

If the CMA has more accurate data it may be able to use this data in the *PVP Developer*. Similarly where a CMA has expert advice that indicates that a minor change to the *PVP Developer* will mean that the proposal will still improve or maintain environmental outcomes, then the CMA may override the *PVP Developer*. The regulations specify the aspects of the developer that cannot be changed by these variations.

Also, in some cases a proposal may be consistent with a local policy that has been exhibited for public comment and approved by the Minister. The local policy can allow minor clearing that will improve the quality of native vegetation in the long term and does not have to be assessed using the *PVP Developer*.

## Can the *PVP Developer* be changed if new information becomes available?

Yes. The new system of native vegetation management for NSW has been developed to accommodate changes to the rules as new or better information becomes available.

It will always therefore be up to date with the latest science on salinity, water quality, biodiversity and soil conservation.

The decision to change the *PVP Developer* rests with the Minister for Natural Resources. Any changes to biodiversity of threatened species need the agreement of the Minister for the Environment.

If a CMA, a landholder or a community group have new information they believe should result in a change to the *PVP Developer*, they can make a submission. The independent Natural Resources Commission will evaluate that submission and make a recommendation to the Government.

This provides a transparent and rigorous process to ensure that the objective of improving or maintaining environmental outcomes from clearing native vegetation is always based on science.

## How do the components work?

The *PVP Developer* has separate modules for salinity, water quality, biodiversity (including threatened species), land and soil capability and invasive native species.

In the future, new modules may be added, for example, to assist farmers access trading in carbon credits.

## Salinity

In areas where salinity is known to be a problem, a more detailed assessment of the impacts is done. The salinity component in the *PVP Developer* calculates what is known as a 'salinity benefits index'.

Clearing is deemed to improve or maintain salinity outcomes if there is no predicted increase in long-term average in-stream salinity. It does this by calculating the difference to in-stream salinity levels resulting from changes to vegetation cover.

When vegetation cover is changed, rainfall run off and infiltration change. These changes influence the amount of salt that can be transported to a stream.

Rainfall, soil type, landscape position, slope, vegetation cover, groundwater and soil salinity influence overland and subsurface flow as well as the distribution of salt stored within a catchment.

Once the influence of each of these factors is determined for the current vegetation cover, the impact on salt loads and stream flow of changing that vegetation cover can be calculated.

If the salinity benefits index is negative, clearing can only occur if action is taken to offset the negative impacts on downstream salinity.

## Water Quality

The *PVP Developer* uses riparian (riverside) buffers as a measure of the value of native vegetation in protecting water quality.

Riparian buffer distances reflect the many benefits riverbank vegetation has on water quality, bank stability, salinity, aquatic habitat, (including shade and food sources) and terrestrial and aquatic biodiversity.

The size of the buffer is determined from the size of the stream and its location in the landscape.

Clearing within the riparian buffer distance around certain wetlands or in or within 20m of a prescribed stream generally will not be approved because it is deemed to cause negative impacts on water quality. This rule is consistent with laws in existence in NSW since 1803.

Clearing native vegetation elsewhere within the riparian buffer distances may be approved if suitable water quality offsets are provided.

## Biodiversity

The biodiversity assessment underpins certification of a landholder's Property Vegetation Plan under the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*. As a result, landholders with approved Property Vegetation Plans do not need separate threatened species licences for up to 15 years or the life of the clearing approval in the PVP.

The biodiversity assessment is in two parts:

1. A biodiversity assessment which allows for offsets to balance the biodiversity impacts of the clearing in many circumstances, particularly where clearing of paddock trees or low condition vegetation is proposed. It also recognises that some clearing such as thinning or clearing invasive native scrub can in its own right, improve or maintain environmental outcomes for biodiversity under certain conditions.  
  
There is some clearing which because of the importance of the vegetation can not improve or maintain environmental outcomes.
2. A threatened species assessment that allows for clearing where offsets would improve the habitat for specific threatened species at least to the same extent as the habitat values lost through the proposed clearing. The assessment does not allow clearing where impacts are unsustainable for a local population of a threatened species.

## Land and Soils Capability

Land and soil hazards include sensitive terrain such as sand dunes, water and wind erosion, mass movement such as landslides, acid sulfate soils, shallow soils, rockiness, and soil structural issues.

The severity of these hazards determines the land and soil capability, which range from low risk (class 1) to high risk (class 8).

For each clearing site, data on the slope, soil characteristics, drainage and landform determines its risk. If a clearing proposal is in classes 7 or 8 (high risk) the application is considered negative for land and soil conservation and will not be approved.

If the land is in classes 1 and 2 it is considered positive and can be approved for land and soil conservation. If the land is in classes 3 to 6, it may be approved when offsets or certain management actions are included that reduce the level of risk.

## Invasive Native Scrub

Where a clearing proposal involves invasive native species, a separate assessment process within the PVP

*Developer* can be used, because clearing of invasive native species to establish an open woodland or native grassland is recognised as providing environmental as well as economic benefits.

The *PVP Developer* contains a list of invasive native species for each CMA and a range of management actions that are appropriate for the local conditions.

The following types of clearing may be considered:

- burning (for example, low intensity fire);
- clearing of individual plants with no disturbance to groundcover (for example, chemical spot treatment or ringbarking);
- clearing of individual plants with minimal disturbance to groundcover (for example, grubbing);
- clearing of plants at paddock scale with nil to minimal disturbance to soil and groundcover (for example, chaining, slashing or roping);
- clearing of plants at paddock scale with temporary disturbance to soil and groundcover (for example, blade-ploughing); and
- clearing of plants at paddock scale with longer-term disturbance to soil and groundcover (for example, short-term cropping).

There are limits to the proportion of the area over which the various types of clearing can be applied at any one time to reduce the risk of land degradation.

For further information on managing invasive native species, see Info Sheet 9 and talk to your CMA.

## Requirements under other legislation

Clearing undertaken in accordance with a development consent or Property Vegetation Plan will meet the requirements of both the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995* and the *Native Vegetation Act 2003*.

It does not however remove the need to meet other statutory requirements such as cultural heritage obligations under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*. Some local Council Local Environment Plans may also require approval for clearing.



New South Wales  
Government

# Native vegetation management in NSW

Native Vegetation Act 2003

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## For more information:

Contact your local CMA, or you may also:

**Visit:** [www.nativevegetation.nsw.gov.au](http://www.nativevegetation.nsw.gov.au) **Email:** [info@nativevegetation.nsw.gov.au](mailto:info@nativevegetation.nsw.gov.au) **Freecall:** 1800 237 012

*Note: This information does not constitute legal advice. Please seek specific advice from your local CMA before undertaking any clearing.*