

Namoi Catchment Management Authority

Report under the NV Act 2003 in relation to a Minor Variation (clause 27 of the Native Vegetation Regulation 2005)

Report prepared by: Accredited Expert No: 30608

PVP reference number: 1611

I am of the opinion that:

- a) a minor variation to the Assessment Methodology would result in a determination that the proposed clearing will improve or maintain environmental outcomes (other than a variation that is not allowable under this clause), and
- b) strict adherence to the Assessment Methodology is in the particular case unreasonable and unnecessary.

The proposed minor variation does not relate to any of the following aspects of the Assessment Methodology:

- a) riparian buffer distances or associated offset requirements,
- b) classification of vegetation as likely habitat for threatened species,
- c) classification of a plant species as a threatened species or a component of an endangered ecological community,
- d) classification of the condition of vegetation,
- e) classification of the vegetation type or landscape type as overcleared,
- f) the assessment of the regional value of vegetation.

Description of the proposed clearing:

Clearing of 110.63 ha of White Cypress pine (*Callitris glaucophylla*) deemed to be acting invasively.

Background:

- The PVP Developer Invasive Native Scrub module (EOAM Chap 7) currently requires that:
 - 17A) “For methods of clearing of individual plants with no disturbance to groundcover and clearing of individual plants with minimal disturbance to groundcover:
 - a) Plants of the species listed in Table 7.1 as requiring retention are to be retained at the densities specified in Table 7.1, except I) Where the vegetation is a derived vegetation community; or II) As set out in criterion 17A (b).
 - b) Where more than one species is present, the total retention requirement for all species does not exceed 20 stems per hectare. If there is more than one species present, the stems retained must reflect the proportion of total individuals for each species present and stems are to be retained for a range of size classes present less than the dbh specified in Table 7.1”
- For *Callitris sp.* within the Namoi CMA the retention rate prescribed within the PVP Developer INS module is 20 stems per hectare less than 20 cm diameter.
- It is proposed that a general policy be adopted within Namoi CMA to permit reduction of the number of stems of INS listed *Callitris sp.* < 20 cm diameter required to be retained, on the basis of a one-for-one substitution of *Eucalyptus sp.* or other present native overstorey species regrowth occurring within the vegetation community in which the *Callitris sp.* are being cleared.

Reasons for recommending the proposed minor variation:

- Observation of intact vegetation throughout the Namoi CMA indicates that the overstorey of areas currently impacted by *Callitris sp.* behaving invasively would generally have contained a much higher proportion of *Eucalyptus sp.* in the upper canopy.
- Anecdotal and documentary evidence (eg van Kempen, E. (1997)) indicates that removal of Eucalypt competition by paddock scale or selective clearing (eg ring-barking or felling) is a common contributing factor to *Callitris sp.* behaving invasively.
- Small Eucalypt stems that are present under these circumstances, would be defined as regrowth under the NVA 2003 (regrowing since 1990 following previous clearing) and their removal therefore permitted without approval.
- Variation of the INS Module prescriptions to favour retention of *Eucalypt sp.* will reduce the likelihood and severity of reinvasion by *Callitris sp.* and in many instances contribute to the restoration of a *Eucalypt* dominated woodland. It would have no detrimental impact on salinity, water quality or soil degradation. As such it would meet the *improve or maintain environmental outcomes test*.

Details of the proposed minor variation:

- In applying this variation, the assessing officer will amend specifications and management actions tables within the PVP Agreement to state “The number of stems of *Callitris glaucophylla* required to be retained per hectare, may be reduced on the basis of a one-for-one substitution of *Eucalyptus* species or *Brachychiton populneus* (Kurrajong) regrowth (having grown since 1990) retained in the proportion in which they occur in the vegetation community being cleared. The total number of stems of *Callitris glaucophylla*, *Eucalyptus* species or *Brachychiton populneus* regrowth plants less than 20 cm diameter combined must equal or exceed 20 stems/ha (Total under 20cm dbh)”.