



Permitted clearing of native vegetation

Defining and classifying native vegetation

Fact sheet

In Victoria, a planning permit is required to remove, destroy or lop native vegetation. Landholders wishing to remove native vegetation need to apply for a permit from their local council.

The *Permitted clearing of native vegetation – Biodiversity assessment Guidelines* (the Guidelines) are incorporated into all Victorian planning schemes. The Guidelines set out how impacts on Victoria's biodiversity are assessed when an application for a permit to remove native vegetation is considered.

This fact sheet provides general information on how native vegetation is defined and classified for the purposes of these Guidelines. If vegetation does not meet the Guidelines' definition of native vegetation the biodiversity considerations in Clause 52.17 of planning schemes and the Guidelines are not required to be applied. However a permit for the removal of the vegetation may still be required in planning schemes.

Definition of native vegetation

Native vegetation is defined in the Victoria Planning Provisions as 'plants that are indigenous to Victoria, including trees, shrubs, herbs and grasses'. A planning permit is required to remove native plants that meet this definition, unless an exemption applies.

The *Permitted clearing of native vegetation – Biodiversity assessment guidelines* (the Guidelines) classify native vegetation in two categories; remnant patches and scattered trees.

Remnant patch

A remnant patch of native vegetation is either:

- an area of vegetation where at least 25 per cent of the total perennial understorey plant cover is native
- any area with three or more native canopy trees where the canopy foliage cover is at least 20 per cent of the area.

Scattered tree

A scattered tree is a native canopy tree that does not form part of a remnant patch.

Note: A canopy tree is a mature tree that is greater than three metres in height and is normally found in the upper layer of a vegetation type.

Distinguishing between remnant patches and scattered trees

Native canopy trees are considered scattered trees when they are spread out (not in contact with each other) and the vegetation around them is not native. Scattered trees most commonly occur in paddocks that have been cropped or sown with exotic pastures.

Native canopy trees that are in groups of three or more, or are surrounded by native vegetation are considered to be part of a remnant patch.

Examples of vegetation that does not meet the Guidelines' definition

Examples of vegetation that does not meet either of the Guidelines' definition of remnant vegetation or scattered trees may include:

- isolated native shrubs or isolated native grass tussocks
- areas where native vegetation has been replaced by exotic species (e.g. pasture grasses).
- planted exotic vegetation such as crops, or in gardens.

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