Vegetation Clearing Desktop Report

Three Springs Terminal Expansion

Clean Energy Link North (CEL-N)

May 2025

Western Power

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Document Control

Document version history

Version	Date	Amendment
1	13.01.2025	Initial version
	16.01.2025	Review
2	05.05.2025	Revised version for issue

1. Project Information

Project Area		
Project name: Three Springs Terminal expansion CEL-N		**Contract/Work Order No:** T0628974
Main purpose of clearing	**Permanent/Temporary**	**Clearing area (ha)**
New terminal substation site	Permanent ☒	0.6 ha of native vegetation within a 26.04 ha development area
	Temporary ☐	
Proposed start date: 1/10/2025		**Expected completion date: 30/11/2025**
Method of clearing: Mechanical		**Machinery to be used:** Bobcat or equivalent
Project details: This project involves the installation of a new 132 kV yard including associated infrastructure such as fencing, roads and drainage. It also includes reconfiguration of transmission lines connecting the terminal including new interconnectors. These works are required to support the grid expansion for the Clean Energy Link North (CEL-N) project and require the clearing of up to 0.6 ha of native regrowth.		
Guardian Permit ID reference number: PER-0001518		**Permit/Exemption number:** CPS 1918/11

2. Map/photos

Figures 1-5 show photos of the vegetation contained within the development area (the boundary in which clearing is proposed). Figures 6 and 7 show the location of the development area and the 20 km Study Area boundary, respectively.

Figure 1: Non-native Vegetation Present within the Development Area

Figure 2: Non-native vegetation within Development Area

Figure 3: Native Vegetation to be Cleared

Figure 4: Native Vegetation to be Cleared

Figure 5: Native Vegetation to be Cleared


115°47'20"E
115°47'25"E
115°47'30"E
115°47'35"E
115°47'40"E
115°47'45"E
115°47'50"E
115°47'55"E
115°48'0"E
29°30'55"S
29°31'0"S
29°31'5"S
29°31'10"S
29°31'15"S
29°31'20"S
PERENJORI-THREE SPRINGS RD
Legend
TST Substation - Development Area
Road
Vegetation Type
Cleared
Paddock weeds with scattered native regrowth
0 0.0375 0.075 0.15 Kilometers
THREE SPRINGS
N
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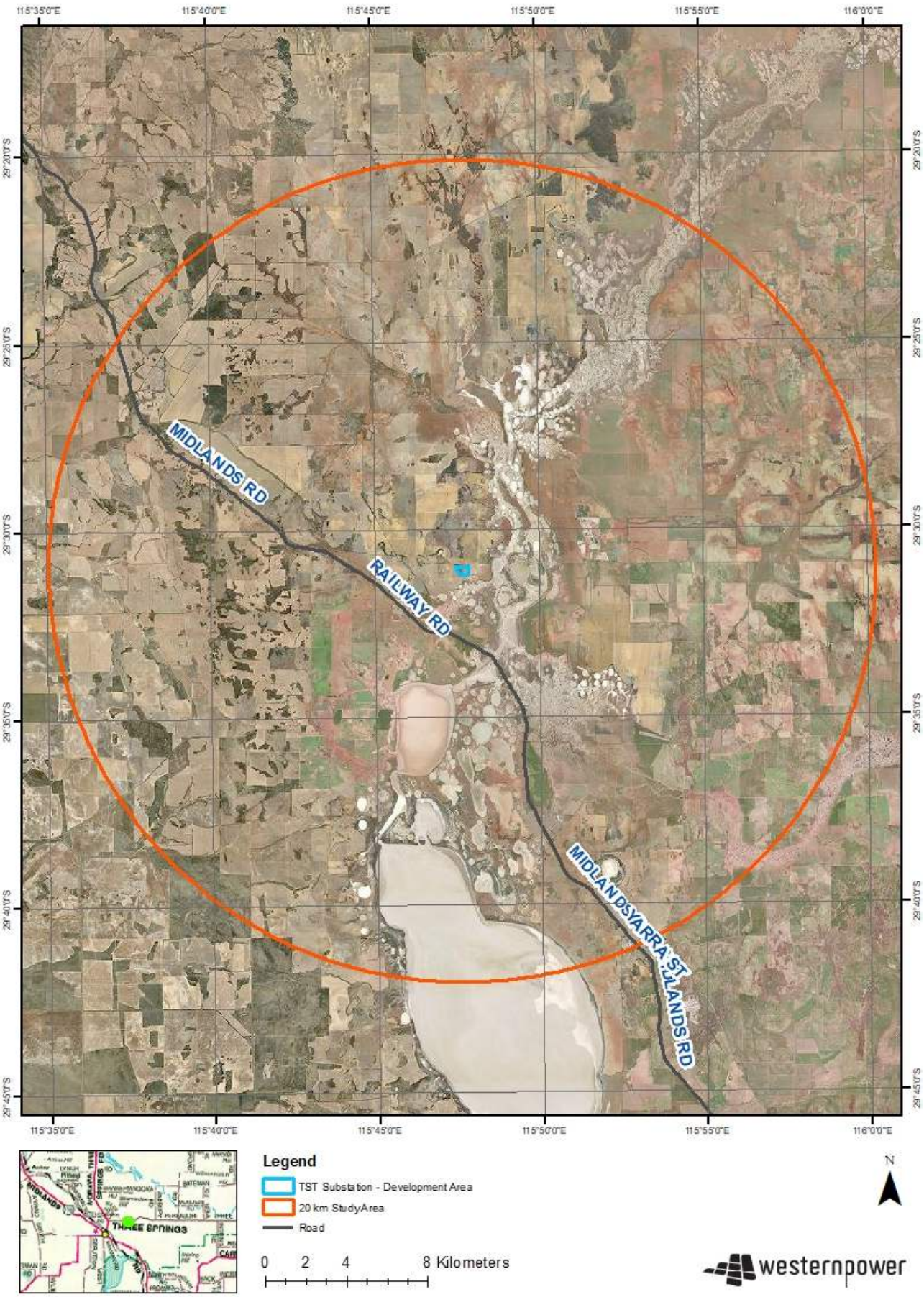
Figure 6: Three Springs Development Area (area in which clearing is proposed)



Legend

- TST Substation - Development Area
- 20 km StudyArea
- Road

0 2 4 8 Kilometers

N

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Figure 7: 20 km Study Area

3. Avoid, minimise and reduce extent and impact of clearing

Actions undertaken to avoid, minimise and reduce extent and impact of clearing are summarised in the table below.

Alternative to Clearing	Applicable	Discussion
Directional drilling of underground cables instead of open trenching	No	Underground cables do not form part of the proposed scope.
Existing tracks are utilised where possible	Yes	Existing access tracks and roads both inside and outside of the development area are being utilised to reduce the requirement for clearing for access.
Utilising previously cleared areas where possible	Yes	The majority of the development area is already cleared of native vegetation. The development area accommodates for the placement of ancillary activities such as laydown, parking, turnaround areas and access within areas that are already cleared and/or contain minimal native vegetation regrowth of negligible habitat value. The northern boundary of the development area was specifically moved southward to avoid the requirement to clear mature roadside vegetation.
Consideration of alternative engineering and design options	No	Works involve expansion of an existing terminal so consideration of alternative engineering and design options was limited.
Other	No	

4. Site context

4.1 Land Tenure (Cadastral Information)

Property:

- Western Power Owned; Lot 22 (0) Perenjori-Three Springs Road, Womarden

Conservation Estates:

- N/A

Local Government:

- Shire of Three Springs

4.2 Vegetation description

The development area occurs within pre-European vegetation association no. 142, described as Medium woodland; York gum and salmon gum.

The development area is located within Lot 22 (0) Perenjori-Three Springs Road, Womarden. A site inspection conducted by Western Power in November 2024 indicates that the clearing area is dominated by weeds including introduced pasture grasses and herbs (Figures 1-5). The vegetation condition of native vegetation within the development area is considered Completely Degraded (EPA, 2016) as the structure of the vegetation is no longer intact with only very few isolated native shrubs remaining; the result of regrowth from historic clearing (Figures 3-5).

Areas of the development area containing regrowth native vegetation are illustrated in Figure 6. Given that these areas are almost entirely devoid of native vegetation, a conservative coverage of 5% native vegetation has been assumed within these areas; resulting in an overall clearing area of up to 0.6 ha of native vegetation within the development area.

The vegetation description and condition are based on site photos, site inspection and aerial imagery.

The mean daily maximum temperature over 30 years (1990 – 2019) is 36.6°C (Jan) and 18.5°C (Jul). Average annual rainfall over 30 years (1990 – 2019) is 346 mm (BoM, 2024).

5. Spatial assessment (SPIDA View)

Western Power's online risk GIS database was analysed, and the following layers are indicated as having the potential for clearing impacts within a local area search radius of 5m.

DBCA managed tenure	☐	Bush Forever	☐	CAWS Act Area	☐	Native Vegetation Clearing Regs ESAs	☐
Conservation listed fauna	☐	Conservation listed flora	☒	Western Power ESA sites	☐	Native vegetation remaining	☒
Threatened ecological communities	☐	Acid Sulfate Soils	☒	PDWSA	☐	Ramsar or Important Wetlands	☐
Geomorphic or other mapped wetlands	☐	Disease Risk Areas	☐	Erosion risk	☐	Offset areas	☐
Watercourses	☐	Land Degradation	☐		☐		
Other ☐ Details:							

6. Assessment of vegetation clearing impacts

The proposed clearing has been assessed against each of the clearing principles in accordance with the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation guideline "*A guide to the assessment of applications to clear native vegetation under Part V Division 2 of the Environment Protection Act 1986*" (DER, 2014).

Clearing permit principles full assessment	
a) Native vegetation should not be cleared if it comprises a high level of biological diversity.	**Not likely to be at variance**
Assessment: The project requires the clearing of up to 0.6 ha of highly modified native vegetation. The remainder of the development area comprises 25.4 ha of cleared/pastoral land for the upgrade and construction of new bays at Three Springs Terminal. Western Power undertook a site inspection in November 2024. Photographs from the site inspection indicate that the development area is dominated by introduced grasses and herbs with emergent isolated shrubs. The vegetation condition is considered Completely Degraded as the structure of the vegetation is no longer intact with overstorey missing and only small patches of isolated native shrubs remaining, likely to be regrowth following historic clearing. No significant ecological communities, flora or fauna species have been recorded within the development area and none are expected to occur based on the highly disturbed nature of the vegetation proposed to be cleared. The clearing area does not represent an area of high biodiversity as the project only involves the removal of non-native (weeds) and individual native shrubs in an area that has previously been cleared for farming land. For these reasons, the proposed clearing is not likely to be at variance to this principle.	
b) Native vegetation should not be cleared if it comprises whole or part of, or is necessary for the maintenance of, a significant habitat for fauna indigenous to Western Australia.	**Not likely to be at variance**
Assessment: Due to the absence of trees or mature vegetation within the clearing area it is considered unlikely to support significant habitat for conservation significant fauna. There are potentially thirteen bird species, one reptile and one invertebrate of conservation significance potentially occurring within the development area (based on historic Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) records within 10km from the clearing area). The likelihood of these species occurring within the development area is low based on the absence of mature habitat trees and the presence of sporadic native shrubs within almost entirely cleared surrounds. All of these significant fauna species are highly mobile and therefore the potential impacts to them of the proposed clearing are low. The development area occurs in the mapped distribution of Carnaby's Cockatoo. No Carnaby's Cockatoo suitable breeding or roosting sites were identified within the clearing area based on the site visit and desktop searches. The nearest known breeding site is approximately 11km away and the closest known roost site is more than 20 km away. The vegetation within the clearing area is not identified as preferred Carnaby's Cockatoo foraging habitat. Therefore clearing withing the footprint will not negatively impact this species. The fauna habitat within the clearing area is restricted to isolated shrubs over introduced grasses and herbs. It is considered that the vegetation within the clearing area provides neglibible habitat, breeding habitat or value to native fauna. The vegetation surrounding the clearing area is in a better condition and will continue to provide habitat and linkages. The proposed clearing is not likely to be at variance to this principle.	

c) Native vegetation should not be cleared if it includes, or is necessary for, the continued existence of rare flora.	Not likely to be at variance

Assessment:

Searches of the DBCA Threatened and Priority Flora Database, WA Herbarium Database (WAH, 1998-), *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) Protected Matters Search Tool (PMST) identified 15 flora taxa listed under the EPBC Act and/or as Threatened under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act* 2016 as occurring within the 20km Study area. The nearest known record of Threatened flora is located 1.4km to the west of the clearing area. The proposed clearing will therefore not impact this flora.

The vegetation present within the clearing area does not contain known Threatened flora records and is therefore unlikely to be necessary for the continued existence of Threatened flora. The vegetation of the clearing area is considered Completely Degraded in condition and is dominated by introduced grasses and herbs. Based on the Completely Degraded condition and high weed load within the clearing area, it is not considered to represent suitable habitat for Threatened flora. Accordingly the proposed clearing is not likely to be at variance to this principle.

d) Native vegetation should not be cleared if it comprises the whole or a part of, or is necessary for the maintenance of, a threatened ecological community.	Not likely to be at variance

Assessment:

A search of the historic DBCA data identified the potential for the following significant ecological communities to occur within the development area:

- Plant assemblages of the Billeranga System – Critically Endangered (BC Act)
- Plant assemblages of the Inering System – Critically Endangered (BC Act)
- Eucalypt woodlands of the Western Australian Wheatbelt – Critically Endangered (EPBC Act); Priority 3 listed by DBCA.

The vegetation within the clearing area comprises isolated regrowth native shrubs over introduced grasses and herbs in Completely Degraded condition. The vegetation within the clearing area therefore is not considered to be representative of any of these Threatened Ecological Communities (TECs), represented by woodland, thicket or shrubland vegetation types. Based on the highly disturbed condition of the vegetation within the development area, no other TECs are considered likely to occur within the development area.

Given that no impacts are anticipated on any TECs, the proposed clearing is not likely to be at variance to this principle.

e) Native vegetation should not be cleared if it is significant as a remnant of native vegetation in an area that has been extensively cleared.	Not likely to be at variance

Assessment:

The EPA has an objective of retaining more than 30 percent of the pre-clearing extent of each ecological community. The representation data for the mapped vegetation association no. 142 is presented below.

Pre-European Vegetation Association	Scale	Pre-European extent (ha)	Current extent (ha)	Percent remaining	% Current Extent remaining in DBCA reserves (proportion of Current extent)
Vegetation Association No. 142	**Statewide**	787,948	208,347	26	3.92
	IBRA Bioregion Avon Wheatbelt	637,707	79,309	12	3.00
	IBRA Sub-region Merredin	413,441	63,255	15	3.21
	Local Government Authority Three Springs	28,123	3,518	12	0.4

(Source: Government of Western Australia, 2019)

A site inspection was conducted by Western Power in November 2024. Photographs from the site inspection indicate the relatively small clearing area is represented by emergent isolated shrubs over introduced grasses and herbs. Although the mapped pre-European vegetation association is underrepresented at all scales, the vegetation condition is considered Completely Degraded as the structure of the vegetation is no longer intact. Eucalypt overstorey consistent with the mapped pre-European vegetation type is completely absent, with only scattered isolated native shrubs remaining, having regrown following previous clearing. The vegetation represents negligible habitat value for native flora and fauna. Accordingly, the vegetation proposed to be cleared does not form part of a significant native vegetation remnant. Native vegetation located along the road abutting the proposed clearing area will not be impacted by the proposed works. The proposed clearing is not likely to be at variance to this principle.

f) Native vegetation should not be cleared if it is growing in, or in association with, an environment associated with a watercourse or wetland.	Not likely to be at variance

Assessment:

No watercourses or wetlands are mapped within the development area. A site inspection was conducted by Western Power in November 2024. Photographs from the site inspection indicate the clearing area is dominated by introduced grasses and herbs with isolated emergent shrubs, and did not record any watercourses. The vegetation within the clearing area does not grow in or in association with an environment associated with a watercourse or wetland. Accordingly, the proposed clearing is not likely to be at variance to this principle.

g) Native vegetation should not be cleared if the clearing of the vegetation is likely to cause appreciable land degradation.	Not likely to be at variance

Assessment:

The landscape is undulating with low hills and dunes. Soils are predominately calcareous loamy soils and deep siliceous sandy soils. The area to the east of the clearing area is characterised by saline lake systems and alluvial plains.

Areas dominated by sandy soils are more vulnerable to subsurface acidification. However, given the small scale and nature of proposed clearing, there is not likely to be an appreciable increase in land degradation due to subsurface acidification. Standard erosion and dust management control measures will be implemented during construction to reduce the incidence of land degradation. Clearing of the native vegetation within the clearing area is not likely to cause appreciable land degradation. The proposed clearing is not likely to be at variance to this principle.

h) Native vegetation should not be cleared if the clearing of the vegetation is likely to have an impact on the environmental values of any adjacent or nearby conservation area.	Not likely to be at variance

Assessment:

No nature reserves occur within or adjacent to the development area, the nearest is Yarra Yarra Lakes Nature Reserve, located more than 5 km to the south of the development area. A Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development conservation covenant is also located approximately 5km to the north of the development area. No impacts on conservation areas are expected due to the distance from the development area. The proposed clearing is not likely to be at variance to this principle.

i) Native vegetation should not be cleared if the clearing of the vegetation is likely to cause deterioration in the quality of surface or underground water.	Not likely to be at variance

Assessment:

No watercourses or wetlands intersect the clearing area. No Public Drinking Water Source Areas occur within the broader Study Area. It is considered unlikely that the small scale of clearing, in an area that is already predominantly cleared for agricultural purposes would disturb or interrupt any natural drainage and surface water run-off patterns and is unlikely to alter ground water quality patterns in the local area. The proposed clearing is unlikely to cause deterioration in the quality of surface or underground water. The proposed clearing is not likely to be at variance to this principle.

j) Native vegetation should not be cleared if clearing the vegetation is likely to cause, or exacerbate, the incidence of flooding.	Not likely to be at variance

Assessment:

Given the small scale and nature of the proposed clearing within an already cleared area, it is unlikely that the proposed removal of vegetation would cause or exacerbate the incidence or intensity of flooding or localised waterlogging in the local area. The proposed clearing is not likely to be at variance to this principle.

7. Planning instrument or other relevant matters

The development area occurs within land owned by Western Power. The works do not occur within a Region Scheme so no formal development approval is required.

The clearing area does not fall within a *Country Areas Water Supply Act 1947* controlled catchment, nor does it impact any land subject to a conservation covenant. Accordingly no associated approvals are required. Based on the minor scale and nature of the proposed impacts approval under Part IV of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986* or *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* are not required. The area is located within a Registered Aboriginal Heritage Site. Western Power has undertaken the required consultation and Aboriginal Heritage Survey with Traditional Owners and has been granted a section 18 consent to disturb the site under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972*.

No Environmental Protection Policies or other approved policies and planning instruments apply to the clearing area.

8. Clearing Permit Details

Western Power manages impacts of clearing through the implementation of an internal Vegetation Clearing Permit (VCP). The Western Power VCP outlining the relevant clearing conditions is available in Volt Document ID80-1811635832-79231. In accordance with the Clearing Intervention thresholds (EDM 63170507) this project has been deemed to be Low Risk given that clearing will be undertaken under CPS 1918/11 and it is not at variance with any clearing principles. Accordingly, no Clearing Intervention is required and the standard condition suite for low risk clearing has been included in the internal VCP.

The development area is not located in an area susceptible to dieback (refer to Section 9) and it is highly modified as a result of historic agricultural land uses. Accordingly, standard condition 15 requiring a dieback management plan to be in place during wet soil conditions has been removed from the VCP.

9. Post assessment requirements

Post assessment	Outcome	Justification / Further Action Required
Are submissions required?	No	Clearing not at variance
Could the area be affected by dieback?	No	Annual rainfall <400mm. *Phytophthora cinnamomi* has not been identified this far north or inland.
Could the area be affected by other pathogens?	No	No notification received
Is a Vegetation Management Plan required?	No	Clearing not at variance
Is rehabilitation/revegetation required?	No	No temporary clearing
Is a Dieback Management Plan required?	No	Area not susceptible to dieback
Is an offset required?	No	Clearing not at variance

10. References

Bureau of Meteorology (BoM) (2024). Climate Averages for Australian Sites –Morowa Airport – Available online from http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/data/index.shtml Accessed 16.12.24.

Department of Environment Regulation (DER). (2014). A Guide to the Assessment of Applications to Clear Native Vegetation Under Part V Division 2 of the Environmental Protection Act 1986.

Environmental Protection Authority (EPA). (2016). Technical Guide – Terrestrial Flora and Vegetation Surveys for Environmental Impact Assessment (eds. K Freeman, G Stack, S Thomas and N Woolfrey). Perth, Western Australia.

Government of Western Australia. (2019). 2018 Statewide Vegetation Statistics incorporating the CAR Reserve Analysis (Full Report). Current as of March 2019. Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions, Perth, Western Australia. https://catalogue.data.wa.gov.au/dataset/dbca-statewide-vegetation-statistics

Western Australian Herbarium (WAH) (1998-). FloraBase – The Western Australian Flora. Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions. Available from: https://florabase.dpaw.wa.gov.au/.16.12.24.