

## Land clearing

### Principle:

*Current land clearing proposals and land clearing operations have been identified as low threatening processes to natural resource values. Land clearing issues associated with plantation forestry development, road construction, extractive activities and infrastructure development have been addressed elsewhere within the Strategy.*

In contrast to other areas in Australia, land clearing has not been a major threat to the natural resources of the region. Woinarski *et al.* (2003a) estimated that historic and recent clearing for timber plantations and other disturbed areas constituted only about 2% of the region, and listed clearing as a low threatening process.

Significant clearing proposals for the region are limited to the expansion of plantation forestry. The current 30,000ha project takes up less than 4% of the land mass, and clearing related threats such as loss of biodiversity, weed invasion, decreased water quality and quantity and soil erosion are addressed both in the Plantation Forestry Strategic Plan and elsewhere in this Strategy. Potential fragmentation of retained native forest from plantation operations has been addressed by consolidation of the plantation estate into the western half of Melville Island, and the retention of buffer zones and wildlife corridors.

Other clearing activity in the region is restricted to road upgrades, extraction of sand, topsoil and gravel, construction of a radar defence facility at Point Fawcett and (anticipated) expansion of community and outstation areas. Development of generic clearing guidelines, while not a priority, would further limit degradation processes associated with land clearing, and the implementation of existing guidelines for borrow pit operations should be strongly encouraged.

### Outcome:

Protection of the region's economic and natural resource values from on and off-site effects of clearing operations.

### Objective:

16. Encourage best practice clearing operations within the region.

### Recommended Actions:

- 16.1 Develop generic clearing guidelines; distribute locally and to external contractors.

