

On 12 December 2017, the Victorian Government announced its revisions to the native vegetation clearing regulations, **effective immediately**.

Policy Position

While some positive changes have been made to Victoria's native vegetation rules through the review process, we harbour significant concerns around increasing the focus of the regulations towards avoidance. Unfortunately, this change takes us back to a three-step approach of 'avoid', 'minimise' and 'offset', with an **avoid and minimisation statement and offset strategy now required for all assessment pathways**, rather than simply for those related to the removal of native vegetation that "makes significant contribution to Victoria's biodiversity". **The practical reality in many instances is that starting with avoidance makes it difficult to balance competing policy objectives of housing supply and affordability with vegetation management.**

UDIA considers that the emphasis on **avoiding the removal of native vegetation in all cases** directly conflicts with the point of a regulatory review, which is to make changes which increase efficiency and effectiveness. In this case, remnant native vegetation in areas identified as 'low risk' have already been assessed as having a relatively low value to Victoria's biodiversity. Adding additional steps associated with assessing and determining the removal of native vegetation with low biodiversity value will simply **delay approvals with no benefit**.

On a positive note, UDIA is pleased to see the allowance of some **site-based information to supplement mapped information**. This should overcome the scenario where rare and threatened species have been mapped for a particular site, but on a proper analysis of that site, are unlikely to exist. Previously, the loss of the species would have been required to be offset. **Now there is an opportunity to demonstrate through ground-truthing that the species do not exist in the area and therefore offsetting is not required.**

Next Steps

UDIA will engage with DELWP to gain further clarity on the key changes and implications for industry. In particular, we will pay close attention to any additional cost or time related to the site assessment and approval process, along with any higher costs associated with fulfilling an offset under Clause 52.17, which has been changed to place greater emphasis on avoiding removal as the first step for all applications.

Reference Materials

- [Guidelines for the removal, destruction or lopping of native vegetation](#)
- [Summary of key changes](#)
- [DELWP website: Review of the native vegetation clearing regulations](#)

Contact

Please email policy@udiavic.com.au to get in touch with the UDIA Policy and Advocacy team.