

29 July 2026

TO: Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water.

RE: Nature Repair Committee Enhancing Native Vegetation method consultation

Introduction

The Association of Mining and Exploration Companies (AMEC) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the Nature Repair Committee Enhancing Native Vegetation method consultation (the method) to the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW).

The focus and content of these methods are crucially important for the Australian mining and mineral exploration industry as they will define how the Nature Repair Market (NRM) will operate. A functioning and liquid NRM will have the dual benefits of encouraging more environmental restoration and facilitating development in a constructive manner.

About AMEC

AMEC is a national industry association representing over 550 member companies across Australia. Our members are mineral explorers, emerging miners, producers, and a wide range of businesses working in and for the industry. Collectively, AMEC's member companies account for over \$100 billion of the mineral exploration and mining sector's capital value. Mineral exploration and mining make a critical contribution to Australia's economy, directly employing over 314,000 people. In 2025-26, the industry generated \$383 billion in resource exports, invested \$3.95 billion in exploration expenditure to discover future mines, and collectively paid over \$59.4 billion in royalties and taxes.

General comments

AMEC recommends that the Enhancing Native Vegetation method be available for suitable projects in the Pilbara, including within the Fortescue and Chichester IBRA subregions.

As drafted, the method appears confined to eligible subregions listed in Schedule 1. This is directed mainly at modified agricultural landscapes in eastern, southern and south-western Australia. The current drafting excludes Pilbara projects.

Industry feedback has suggested that the exclusion is difficult to understand on ecological or economic grounds. Parts of the Pilbara have been affected by long-term pastoral use, altered fire regimes, invasive species and other threatening processes. A well-designed restoration and land-management projects may deliver measurable gains in these areas. The method should test those gains against evidence, as there are questions as to the assumption that worthwhile repair occurs only where land has been historically cleared.

Geographic exclusion also weakens the method's usefulness as a source of environmental offsets. Mining projects generally need offsets relevant to the affected species, ecological communities and bioregion. A certificate generated in south-western Australia, for example, is

unlikely to have practical value for a Pilbara impact. However, applying the method in the Pilbara could create a local supply of projects with closer ecological relevance, reduce the time spent searching for suitable offsets and direct private investment towards repair in the region where development occurs. Any use as an offset will always be subject to acceptance under the relevant statutory approval.

A technical annexure

While the Pilbara is different from other parts of Australia, this method is close to being applicable. These difference could be overcome by a technical annexure to incorporate the realities of enhancing native vegetation in a rangelands environment, such as the Pilbara.

Foremost is that eligibility in the Pilbara should not be dependent primarily on evidence of historical broadscale clearing. That test suits some Australian agricultural landscapes but does not adequately describe arid and semi-arid systems. Eligibility should instead require evidence of the baseline condition, an identified threatening process and management actions capable of producing an additional and measurable improvement. Industry has noted that expansion would not make all landscape in the Pilbara eligible, but a sizeable portion.

The method should allow suitable land to be assessed on its condition and prospects, rather than rejected by geography alone.

A challenge for the annexure will be separating genuine project gains from natural variability. Pilbara vegetation responds to drought, flood, fire and irregular rainfall, often over long periods. The method will therefore need Pilbara-specific baseline, sampling and attribution rules. These should permit representative reference sites, seasonal assessment windows and validated use of satellite imagery, GIS data, LiDAR, aerial surveys and drones, supported by targeted field verification.

Permanence rules

Credible protection may be secured through a sequence of pastoral tenure arrangements, conservation agreements, Indigenous-led land-management arrangements, approval conditions, management plans and enforceable contractual obligations. The test should be whether the arrangement is legally effective, sufficiently durable and capable of surviving a change in ownership or control.

What is drafted in the method appears to favour freehold covenants, which is not a common form of tenure in the vast majority of the Australian landscape. For the methods to work across the majority of Australia there needs to be a way to meet the permanence rules in the Crown Estate or leasehold, rather than freehold.

Five year delay

The proposed five-year delay before an application for a biodiversity certificate limits the method's value as an offset. Projects, financing and regulatory offset obligations seldom wait five years for the ecosystems condition indicators.

A staged certification is a possible pathway to achieve a balance of certainty and timeliness: early recognition of the registered project and its expected outcomes, followed by verified certificates as milestones are achieved. The five year delay also creates a carrying cost risk for any future offset providers, as natural events (such as lightning strike, fire, flood) could immediately devalue the investment.

Final remarks

We consider that Schedule 1 should be amended to include suitable parts of the Pilbara, supported by a Pilbara technical annexure covering eligibility, baselines, monitoring, natural disturbance and tenure. If that cannot be settled before the initial method commences, the final instrument should contain a way to achieve that through a defined expansion pathway.

Without that step, the method for establishing a national market that is unavailable where substantial restoration opportunities and offset needs already exist.

The drafting of this method, and future methods, will facilitate the operation of the NRM. AMEC is supportive of the NRM as an institution, and these methods are structurally critical to its operation. Ensuring the early success and delivery of the NRM will lead to positive economic outcomes for Australia over the long term.

For further information contact:

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