



Landcover change (woody and non woody) for Rural Regulated Land 2018

Summary

This summary provides some background and figures relating to detected woody and non woody (grasses, small shrubs and groundcover) vegetation loss that has occurred since 25 August 2017 on Rural Regulated Land.

This is the first full report on landcover change to both woody and non woody vegetation on Rural Regulated Land under the *Local Land Services Act 2013*.

Detailed information is available in the **Results Landcover Change on Rural Regulated Land 2018 (127KB XLSX)**.

Rural Regulated Land is defined as rural land required to be categorised as either Category 2 Regulated land or Category 2 Vulnerable Regulated land and/or Category 2 Sensitive Regulated land under Part 5A of the *Local Land Services Act 2013*. Rural Regulated Land categories set out the pathways available for landholders to authorise clearing and management of vegetation.

Category 2 Regulated Land – all parts of the **Land Management (Native Vegetation) Code 2018** are available and all **Allowable Activities** are permitted.

Category 2 – Vulnerable Regulated Land - some parts of the **Land Management (Native Vegetation) Code 2018** are not permitted, some **Allowable Activities** are not permitted or have reduced limits. Clearing of dead and non-native plants is to be regulated in the same manner as native vegetation.

Category 2- Sensitive Regulated Land – use of the **Land Management (Native Vegetation) Code 2018** is not permitted however, an application can be made to the **Native Vegetation Panel** to consider the social, economic and environmental aspects of the application. Allowable Activities are reduced in the same manner as Vulnerable Regulated land.

Table 1 shows the different criteria set out in the *Local Land Services Act 2013* and Regulations for these categories of land.

How is the landcover change information obtained?

Woody vegetation loss is identified using the Statewide Landcover and Tree Study (SLATS) data. This method detects change through a combination of automated and manual interpretation of the differences between Sentinel2 satellite images captured during summer of each year. Imagery interpreters validate the change and assign a replacement landcover class identifying the intended purpose for the change. More detailed information is available on the **Woody Vegetation Change (SLATS) page**.

Non woody vegetation loss (removal of grasses, small shrubs and groundcover) is identified using satellite derived products and referenced against high resolution imagery. Interpretative experts use supporting data to map change and assign landcover classes as with woody vegetation change. More information about this method is available on request.

When undertaking landcover change analysis, the best available cloud free Sentinel scenes are selected for the whole of NSW closest to 1 January for each calendar year. Due to conditions, the image date can vary by up to 3 months. As the legislation was enacted on 25 August 2017, the first reporting period is approximately 4 months from 25 August 2017 - 1 January 2018 and images were selected as close as possible to 25 August. The second reporting period (2018) is from the image closest to 1 January 2018 to the image closest to 1 January 2019. All future reporting periods will use scenes captured as close as possible to 1 January each year to report landcover change in hectares for the calendar year.

This summary identifies vegetation loss that has been associated with an approval or exemption under a Regulating Act.

Unexplained clearing refers to areas of vegetation loss on Rural Regulated Land defined by the *Local Land Services Act 2013* for which the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) does not yet know the background or specific details of the clearing.

This can include vegetation loss for routine farm management (Allowable Activities), land management activities under the Land Management Code 2018 that do not require certification or notification (eg regrowth), landholder self-assessment of the level disturbance of grasslands or groundcover, or other legislative exemptions. In some instances, activities may be unlawful and will require determination by court actions. To confirm authorisation, detected areas of vegetation loss are compared against all available spatial data for approvals (certificates and notifications) from the *Local Land Services Act 2013* or other relevant legislation including the former *Native Vegetation Act 2003*.

Data released may be updated in the future as more accurate or additional information becomes available.

Table 1: Criteria for Rural Regulated Land – Including Sensitive Regulated Land

Criteria for Code managed land (Regulated) S60I (2) LLS Act	Sensitive Regulated Land CI 108 LLS Regulation
Not cleared of native vegetation on 1 January 1990 or proven unlawfully cleared since that date	No
Coastal SEPP (Coastal Wetlands and Littoral Rainforest) including proximity zone	Yes – except proximity zone
Public funded vegetation conservation and restoration, private land conservation agreements (Biodiversity Conservation Act, NPWS Act or Nature conservation Trust Act)	Yes – while an obligation remains
Rainforest and Old Growth Forest (from Regional Forest Agreements - Comprehensive Regional Assessment)	Yes
Private Native Forestry approvals (if still active)	No
Core Koala Habitat (in an approved Koala Plan of Management)	Yes
RAMSAR Wetland	Yes
Critically Endangered Ecological Communities	Yes
Remedial Directions	No
Biocertification (Conservation)	Yes
Field assessed as not Low Conservation Value Grasslands/Groundcover	Only if field assessed as High Conservation Value
Land containing Critically Endangered Plants	Yes
Condition of Environmental Planning & Assessment Act Consent	Yes – while in force
Plantation and Reforestation Act – retained vegetation and drainage areas	Yes
NV Act PVP Offsets and L and Management Code - set aside areas	Yes – while in force
Travelling Stock Route (except Western Division)	No
Low conservation value grasslands within dripline of woody vegetation deemed as regulated	No

Criteria for Vulnerable Regulated Land

These are carried over from definitions of previous legislation during the Transitional Period to minimise soil erosion and protect stream water quality

- Steep land (over 18 degrees slope) or highly erodible land
- Protected riparian land (within 20 metres of bed or banks of a named watercourse)
- Special category land – including land with salinity hazard, prone to mass movement or lands slip, Southern Mallee Conservation Agreements

Descriptions of abbreviations

Authorising Act	Description
LLS Act	Under the LLS Act, the aim of the Land management code is to authorise clearing of native vegetation on Category 2-regulated land
NV Act	Clearing is associated with an authorisation under the Native Vegetation Act 2003
Other Acts	Clearing associated with other Acts predominately Plantation and Reafforestation Act 1999
Unexplained	Other clearing detected that has not been associated with an authorisation

Authorisations NV Act	Description
INS MO	Routine Agricultural Management Activity for the management invasive native species under ministerial order
PVP 20 Policy	Clearing for conservation or long-term environmental benefit under clause 20 in accordance with a property vegetation plan
PVP INS	Management of invasive native species that improves or maintains environmental outcomes under a property vegetation plan
PVP clearing	Broadscale clearing that improved or maintained environmental outcomes under a property vegetation plan
PVP continuing use	Clearing of regrowth authorised under a property vegetation plan

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Authorisations NV Act	Description
PVP thinning	Ecological thinning of vegetation that improves or maintains environmental outcomes under a property vegetation plan
Paddock trees MO	Routine Agricultural Management Activity for the clearing of paddock trees under ministerial order
Thinning MO	Routine Agricultural Management Activity for the ecological thinning of vegetation under ministerial order

Authorisations LLS Act	Description
Part 2:1	Native Vegetation Code Part 2 Division 1 - Invasive Native Species - Low impact clearing of invasive native species
Part 2:2	Native Vegetation Code Part 2 Division 2 - Invasive Native Species - Moderate impact clearing of invasive native species
Part 3:1	Native Vegetation Code Part 3 Division 1 - Pasture Expansion - Uniform thinning of woody native vegetation (notification)
Part 3:2	Native Vegetation Code Part 3 Division 2 - Pasture Expansion - Uniform thinning of woody native vegetation (certification)
Part 3:3	Native Vegetation Code Part 3 Division 3 - Pasture Expansion - Mosaic thinning of woody native vegetation
Part 4:1	Native Vegetation Code Part 4 Division 1 - Continuing Use - Managing woody native regrowth in managed native pastures
Part 4:2	Native Vegetation Code Part 4 Division 2 - Continuing Use - Continuation of land management activities undertaken after 1990
Part 4:3	Native Vegetation Code Part 4 Division 3 - Continuing Use - Continuation of rotational activity undertaken prior to 1990
Part 5:1	Native Vegetation Code Part 5 Division 1 - Equity - Removing native vegetation from paddock tree areas
Part 5:2	Native Vegetation Code Part 5 Division 2 - Equity - Clearing compromised native groundcover

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Authorisations LLS Act	Description
Part 5:3	Native Vegetation Code Part 5 Division 3 - Equity - Removing native vegetation from small areas
Part 5:4	Native Vegetation Code Part 5 Division 4 - Equity - Removing native vegetation from regulated rural areas
Part 6:1	Native Vegetation Code Part 6 Division 1 - Farm Plan-Removing native vegetation from paddock tree areas
Part 6:2	Native Vegetation Code Part 6 Division 2 - Farm Plan-Removing native vegetation from regulated rural areas
PNF Plan	Private Native Forestry plans

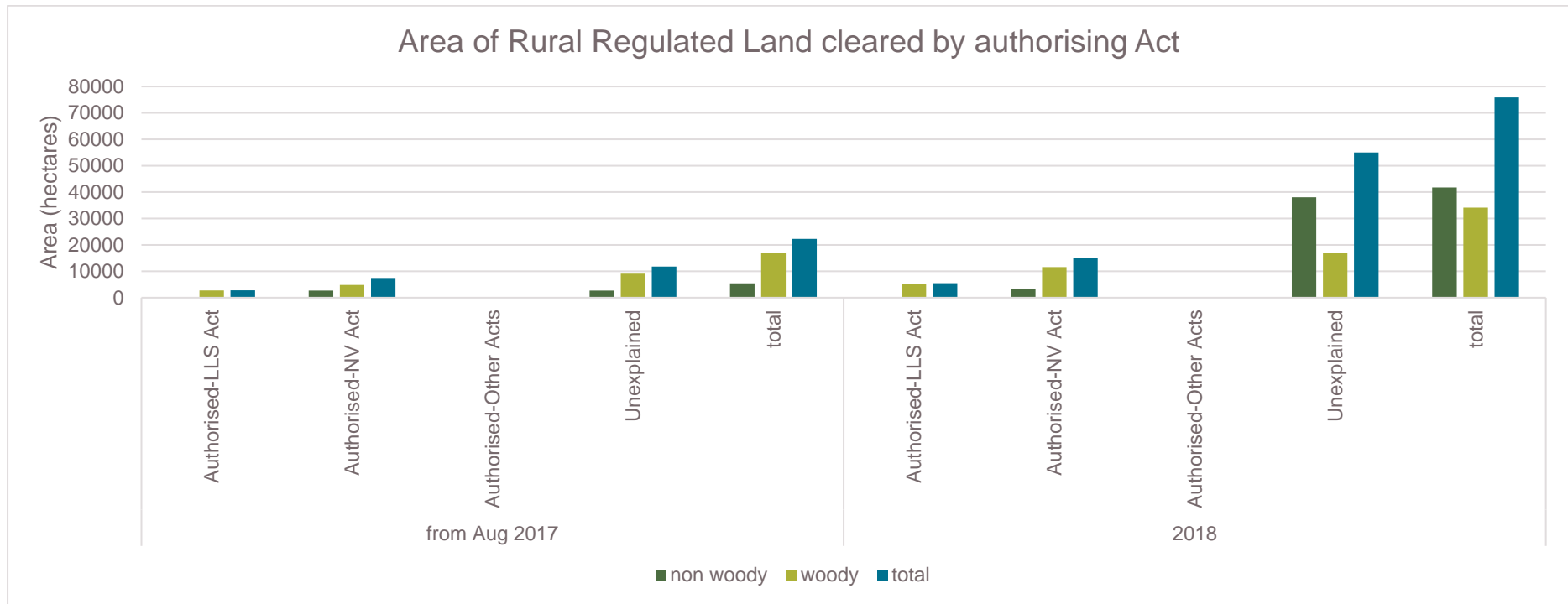


Figure 1: Area of Rural Regulated Land cleared by authorising Act

In 2018 there was a total of 76,000 hectares of vegetation loss on Rural Regulated Land. 34,000 hectares was covered by woody vegetation (forests and woodlands), 42,000 hectares was covered by non woody vegetation (grasses, herbs and shrubs). Figure 1 shows the proportion of unexplained clearing on Rural Regulated Land increases in 2018. The hectares for unexplained clearing from 2017 are not directly comparable with 2018 figures as reporting for 2017 is only for four months (from 25 August 2017). Authorised clearing for both the 2017 and 2018 periods is predominantly under the repealed *Native Vegetation Act 2003* authorisations rather than the current *Local Land Services Act 2013*.

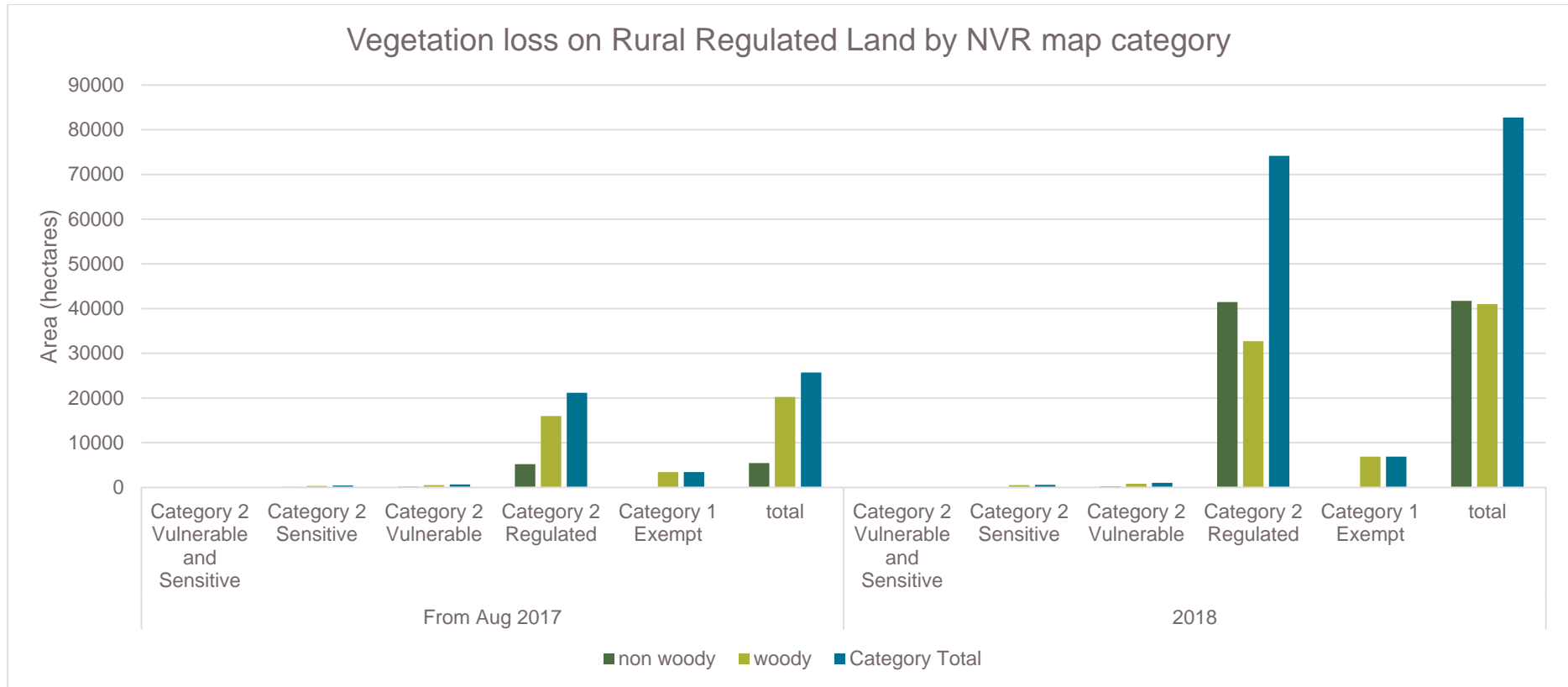


Figure 2: Area of vegetation loss on Rural Regulated Land by NVR Map category

Taking into consideration the short reporting period for 2017 (from 25 August), Figure 2 still shows a significant increase in both woody and non woody vegetation loss for 2018 on Category 2 Regulated land. There is minimal variation in the areas cleared for the Category 2 Sensitive, Vulnerable and combined Sensitive and Vulnerable categories between post 25 August 2017 and 2018.

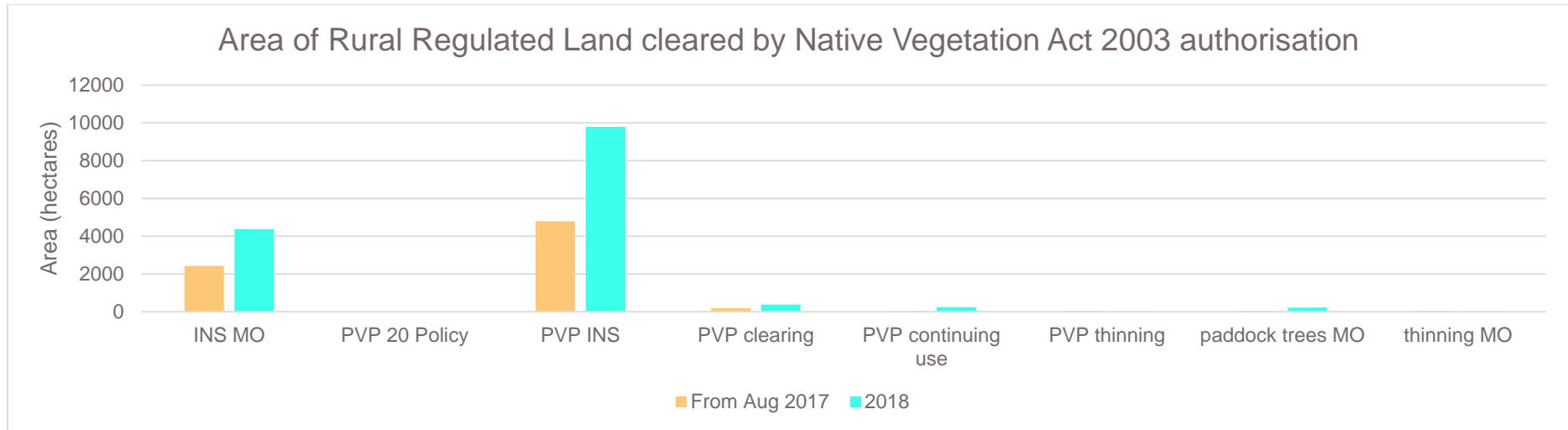


Figure 3: Area of Rural Regulated Land cleared by the Native Vegetation Act 2003 authorisation

The majority of authorised clearing under the *Native Vegetation Act 2003* (Figure 3) has been approved under the following:

- Routine Agricultural Management Activity for the management invasive native species under ministerial order – from August 2017 at 2,425ha and 2018 at 4,378ha
- Management of invasive native species that improves or maintains environmental outcomes under a property vegetation plan - from August 2017 at 4,787ha and at 2018, 9,791ha.

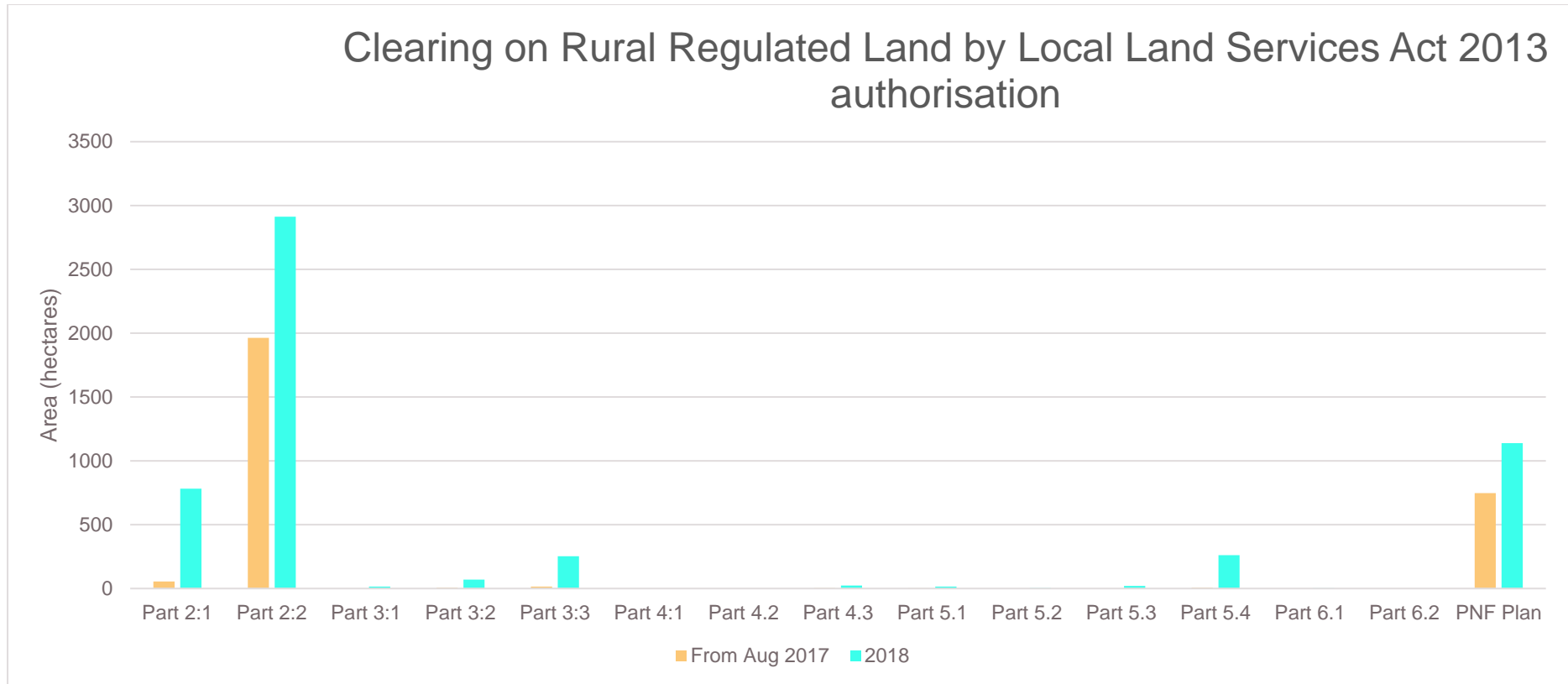


Figure 4: Clearing on Rural Regulated Land by Local Land Services Act 2013 authorisation

Under the LLS Act, the aim of the Land management code is to authorise clearing of native vegetation on Category 2-regulated land, provide for establishment and management of set aside areas and authorise re-categorisation of land.

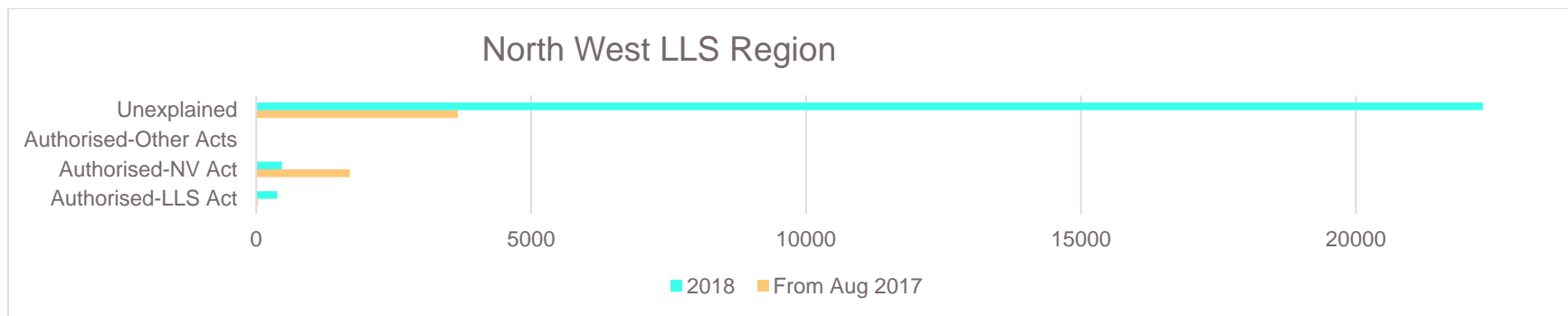
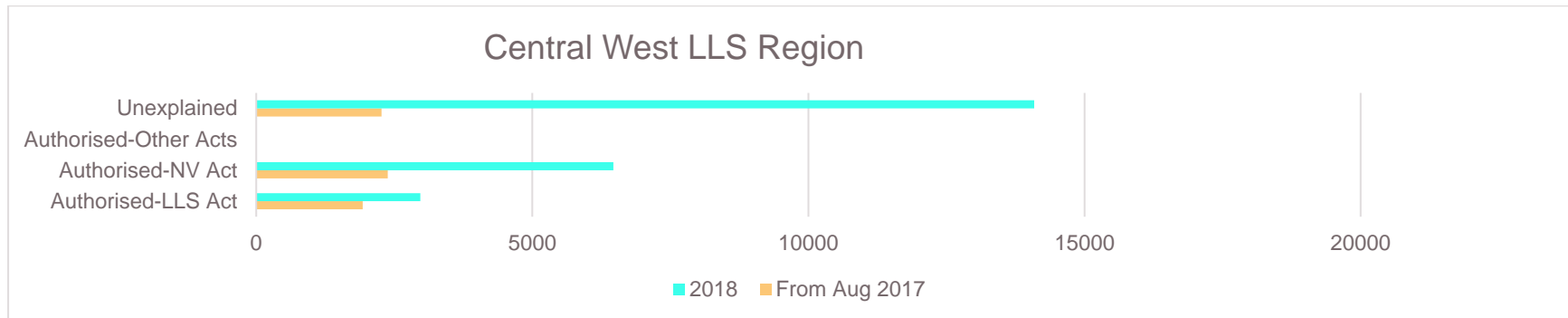
The parts of the code most used for authorising clearing of native vegetation are Part 2 - Invasive Native Species, Division 2 - Moderate impact clearing of invasive native species with a total of 4,875ha. Part 2- Invasive Native Species, Division 1 - Low impact clearing of invasive native species. Private Native Forestry plans are also being used at 837ha and 1,886ha respectively.

Figure 4 shows increased usage in 2018 of Land management Code Part 3 - Pasture Expansion, Division 3 - Mosaic thinning of woody native vegetation and Part 5 - Equity Division 4 - Removing native vegetation from regulated rural areas both with a total of 268ha.

Vegetation loss on Rural Regulated Land by Local Land Service Region

Authorised clearing for all Local Land Services Regions is shown in the Results Land Management Framework 2018 spreadsheet. The results for three Local Land Services Regions is outlined in Figure 5. The two most active regions of landcover change in NSW are North West and Central West LLS regions, accounting for 62% of the total vegetation loss on Rural Regulated Land. Both of these regions have high proportions of unexplained clearing (96% and 60% respectively).

Authorised clearing in Western Region is predominately under the *Native Vegetation Act 2003* authorisations and total authorised clearing is over double unexplained clearing.



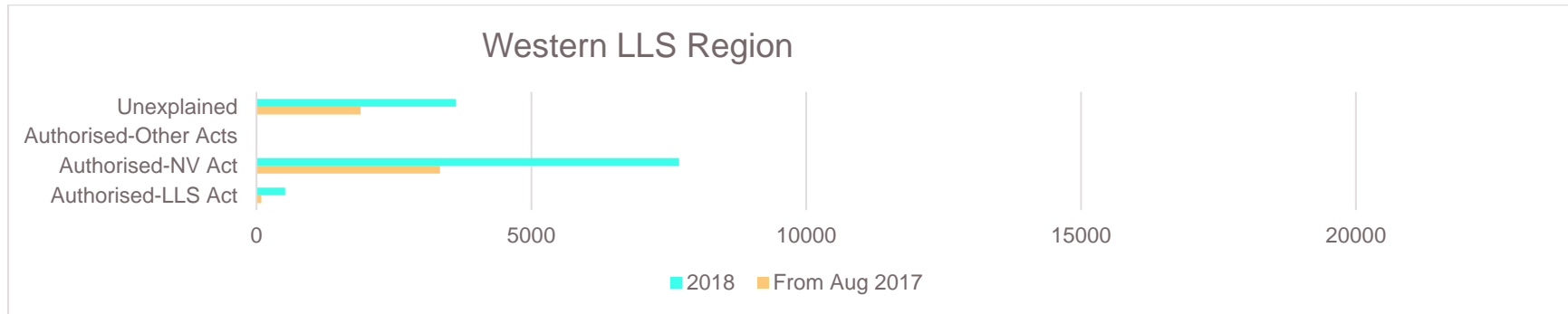


Figure 5: Vegetation loss on Rural Regulated Land by authorising Act for three Local Land Services Regions

More information

- [Landcover monitoring and reporting \(link\)](#)
- [SEED](#)

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