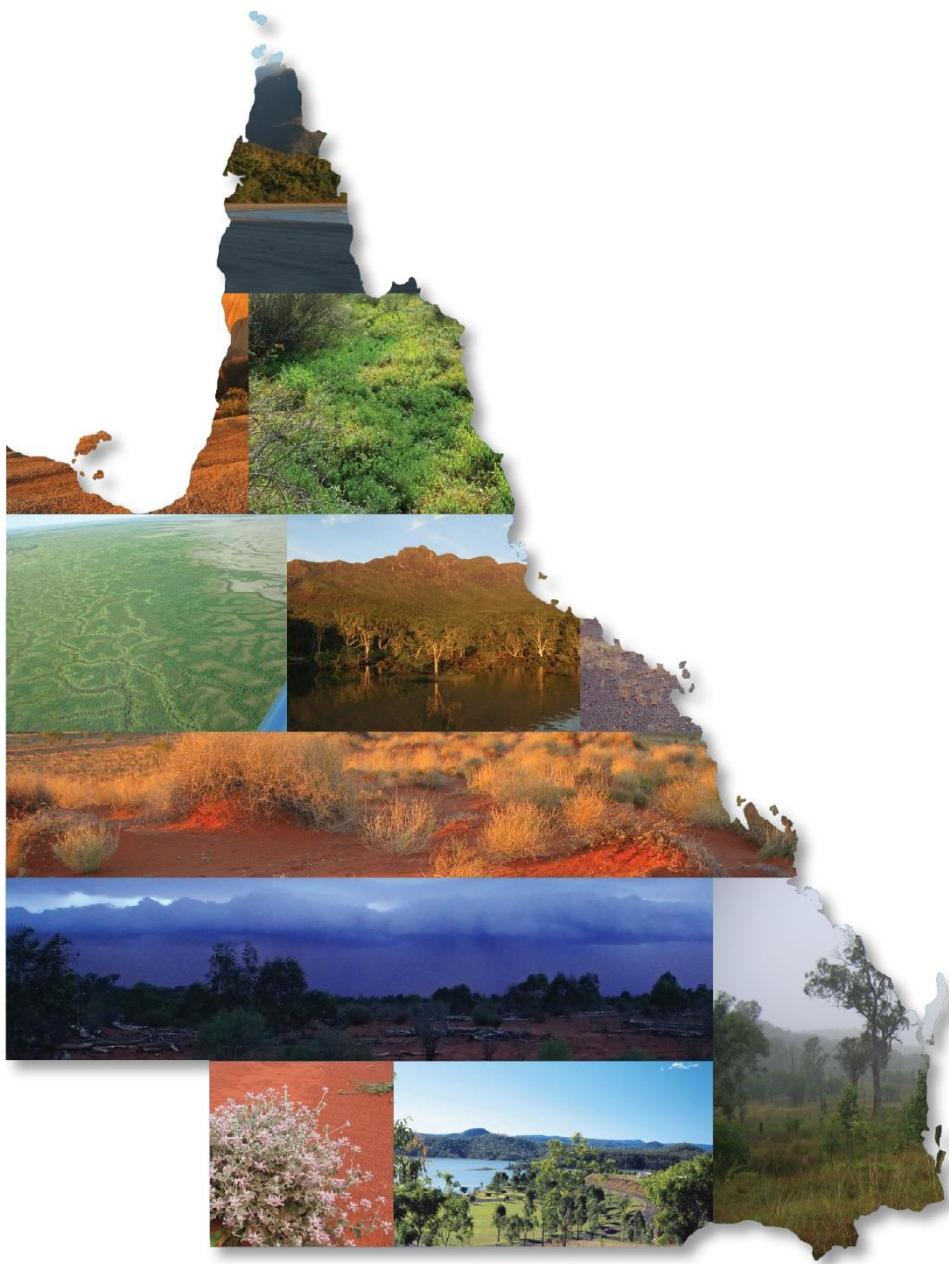


Land cover change in Queensland 2015–16

Statewide Landcover and Trees Study Report



Executive Summary

BACKGROUND

The Statewide Landcover and Trees Study (SLATS) is a vegetation monitoring initiative of the Queensland Government undertaken by the Department of Science, Information Technology and Innovation (DSITI).

The maps and statistics derived from SLATS support the *Vegetation Management Act 1999* (VMA) administered by the Department of Natural Resources and Mines (DNRM).

The study detects changes in woody vegetation using Landsat satellite imagery. Images captured approximately one year apart are compared using a combination of automated and manual mapping techniques to produce a statewide map of land cover change.

Woody vegetation encompasses both woody remnant and woody regrowth vegetation as defined by the VMA. Some examples of woody vegetation include undisturbed and disturbed native woodlands, timber plantations and exotic species.

To facilitate comparison between analysed periods, results are reported as woody vegetation clearing rates in thousands of hectares per year (,000 ha/year) for all of Queensland.*

KEY FINDINGS

2015–16 period

- 395 000 ha/year of woody vegetation was cleared, statewide. This represented a 33% increase from the 2014–15 woody vegetation clearing rate of 298 000 ha/year (Figure 1 and Table 1).**
- 138 000 ha/year of remnant woody vegetation was cleared, statewide, representing 35% of the total woody vegetation clearing (Figure 1 and Table 1). This compared to 114 000 ha/year of remnant woody vegetation clearing in 2014–15 (38% of total woody vegetation clearing).
- 158 000 ha/year of woody vegetation was cleared in the Great Barrier Reef (GBR) catchments (Figure 2). This represented a 45% increase from 109 000 ha/year of woody vegetation clearing in 2014–15.
- The Brigalow Belt biogeographic region had the highest woody vegetation clearing rate of 207 000 ha/year (Figure 3). This represented a 57% increase from 132 000 ha/year of woody vegetation clearing in 2014–15.
- The Murray-Darling drainage division had the highest woody vegetation clearing rate of 173 000 ha/year (Figure 4). This represented a 43% increase from 121 000 ha/year of woody vegetation clearing in 2014–15.

* All reported rates and percentages are approximate only. Rates are rounded to the nearest 1000 ha/year and percentages are rounded to the nearest whole percentage.

** Updated number based on a new rates calculation methodology introduced in the 2014–15 SLATS report. Refer to the full SLATS report for explanation.

WOODY VEGETATION CLEARING

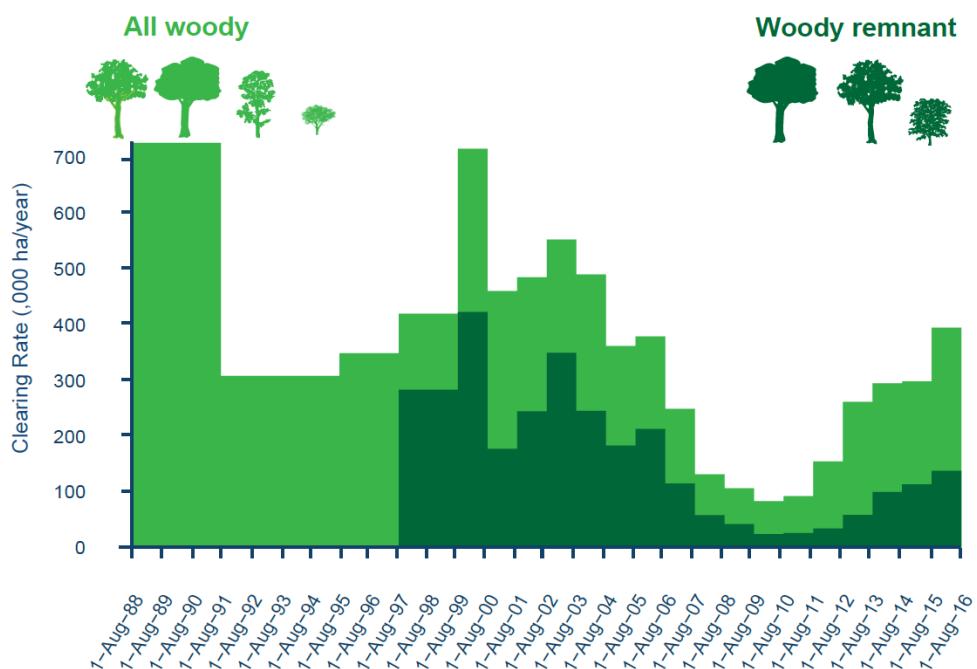


Figure 1: Historic woody vegetation clearing in Queensland

Table 1: Clearing by woody vegetation type (,000 ha/year)

Period	Non-remnant	Remnant	Total clearing
2015–16	257 (65%)	138 (35%)	395

GREAT BARRIER REEF (GBR) CATCHMENTS

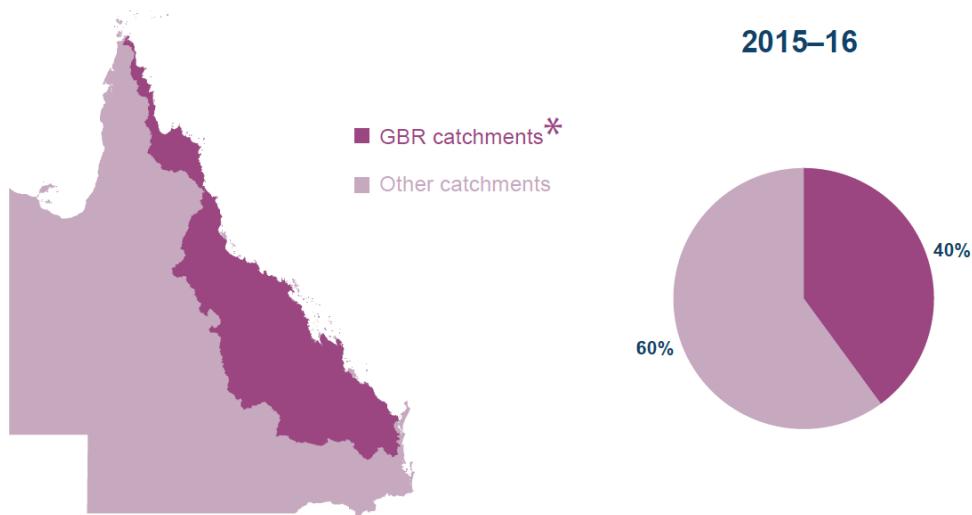


Figure 2: Woody vegetation clearing in the Great Barrier Reef catchments as a percentage of total clearing in Queensland (Table 1)

158 000 ha/year of woody vegetation was cleared in 2015–16 in the GBR catchments (Figure 2). This compared to 109 000 ha/year of woody vegetation clearing in 2014–15.

* The GBR catchments are a subset of the North East Coast drainage division indicated in Figure 4.

BIOGEOGRAPHIC REGION

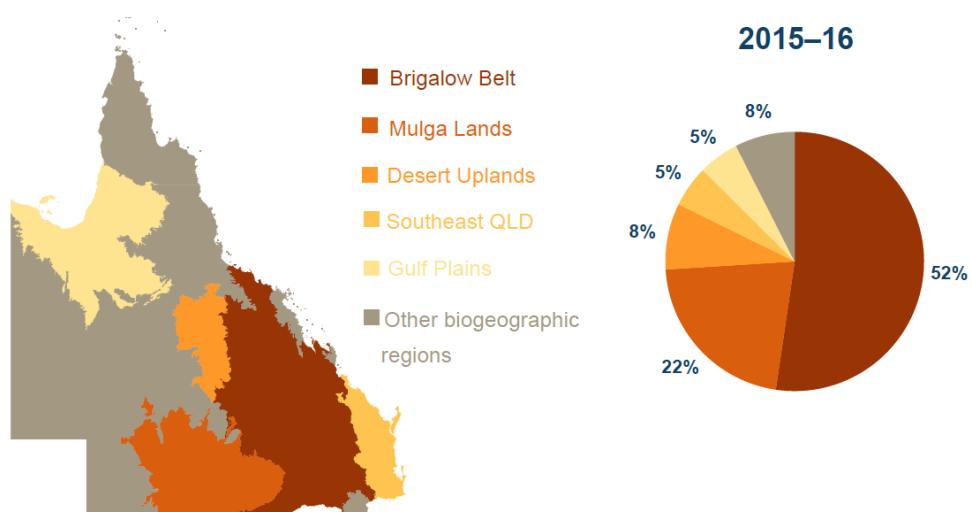


Figure 3: Woody vegetation clearing in key biogeographic regions as a percentage of total clearing in Queensland (Table 1)

The Brigalow Belt and Mulga Lands biogeographic regions continued to record the highest woody vegetation clearing rates in 2015–16. 207 000 ha/year and 86 000 ha/year were cleared in those regions (Figure 3). In 2014–15 comparatively, 132 000 ha/year of woody vegetation clearing occurred in the Brigalow Belt and 66 000 ha/year in the Mulga Lands.

Woody vegetation clearing rates increased in the Desert Uplands region (33 000 ha/year in 2015–16 compared to 19 000 ha/year in 2014–15). In the ‘other’ category, woody vegetation clearing rates decreased in the Mitchell Grass Downs region (14 000 ha/year in 2015–16 compared to 26 000 ha/year in 2014–15).

DRAINAGE DIVISIONS

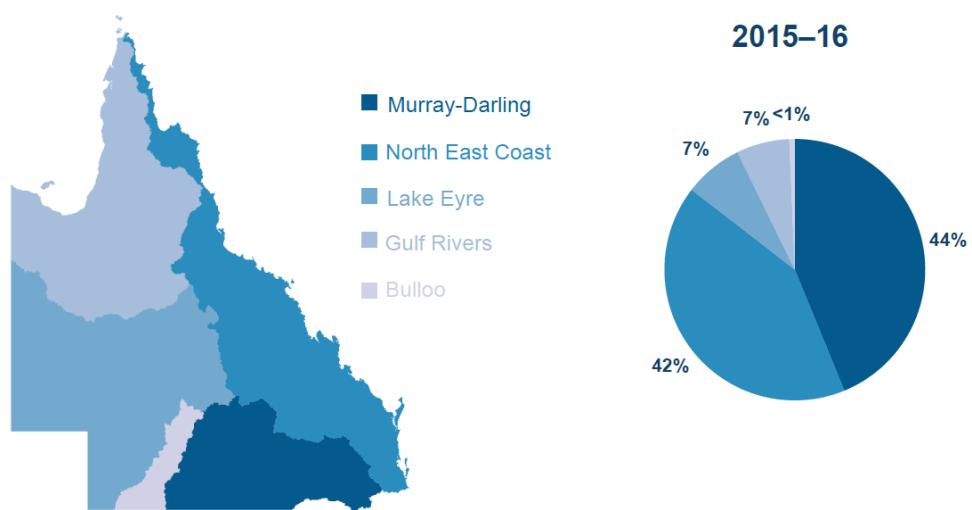


Figure 4: Woody vegetation clearing in the drainage divisions as a percentage of total clearing in Queensland (Table 1)

The Murray-Darling and North East Coast drainage divisions continued to record the highest woody vegetation clearing rates in 2015–16. 173 000 ha/year and 164 000 ha/year of woody vegetation were cleared in those regions (Figure 4). In 2014–15 comparatively, 121 000 ha/year of woody vegetation clearing occurred in the Murray-Darling and 116 000 ha/year in the North East Coast divisions. Woody vegetation clearing rates decreased in the Lake Eyre division (29 000 ha/year in 2015–16 compared to 37 000 ha/year in 2014–15).

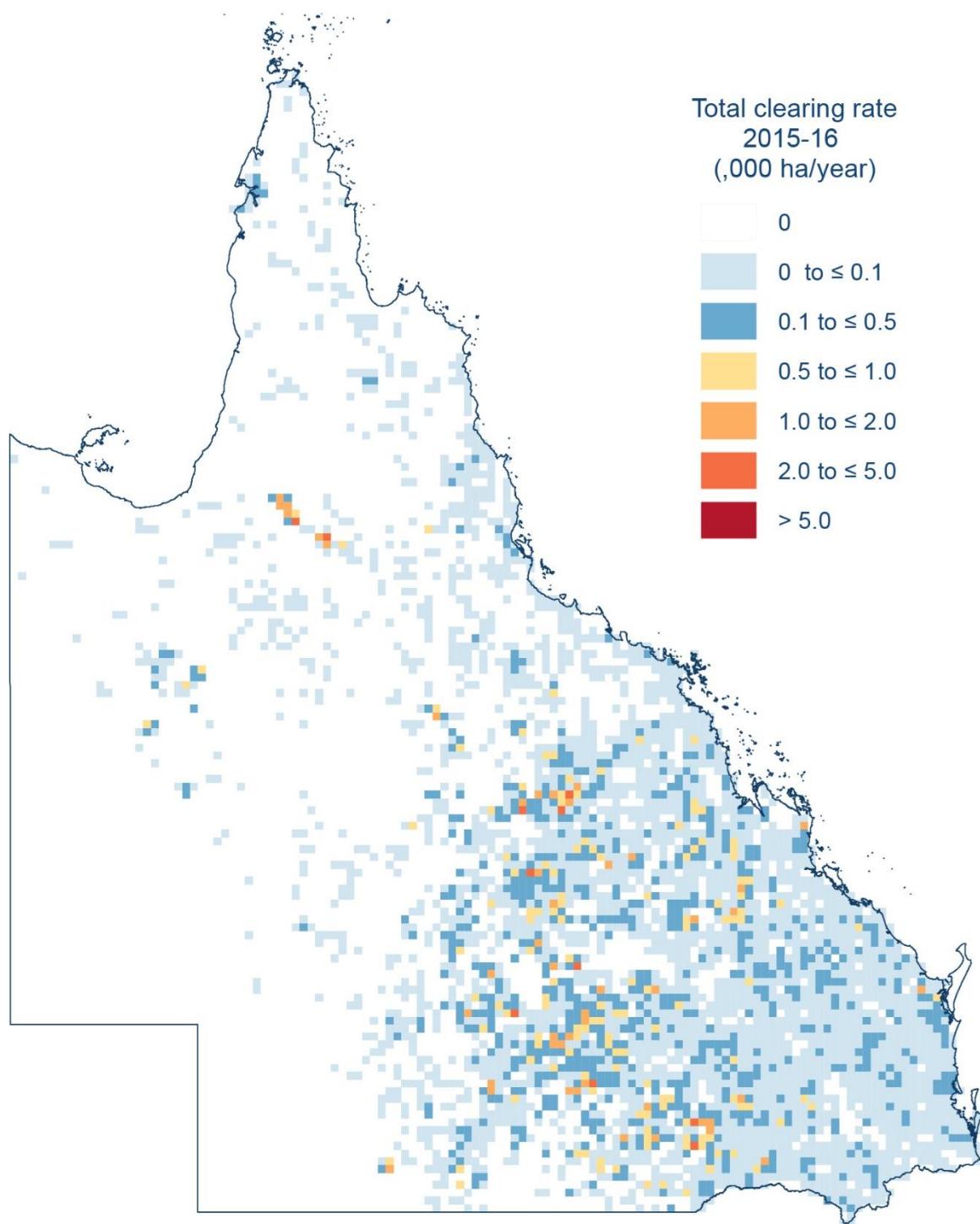
STATEWIDE WOODY VEGETATION CLEARING 2015–16

Figure 5: Woody vegetation clearing in Queensland 2015–16. Individual cell area = 17 500 hectares

The spatial distribution and intensity of woody vegetation clearing in Queensland for the 2015–16 period is shown in Figure 5.

For further details including definitions, methodology and statewide analyses, please refer to the 2015–16 SLATS Report at: <https://www.qld.gov.au/environment/land/vegetation/mapping/slats-reports/>

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