



# Native Vegetation Regulatory Map Landholder Evaluation

Final

**Client:** Department of Planning, Industry and Environment

**Date:** June 2021

# Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land on which we live and work and pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

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**Title photo: Melanie Pearce/LLS 2020**

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# Glossary

Allowable Activities	Allowable activities cover a range of routine land management activities associated with agriculture and other common practices in rural areas. Allowable Activities are set out under Schedule 5A of the LLS Act.
Category Explanation Report (CER)	A CER provides detailed information about the data layers applicable to a property. It explains the basis for inclusion of land in certain categories on the NVR map. A CER package includes an explanatory document about the data layers and accompanying detailed maps identifying the area covered by each of those layers.
Landholder	Means a person who is the owner of land or who, whether by reason of ownership or otherwise, is in lawful occupation or possession, or has lawful management or control of land as defined by s60D of LLS Act.
Land Management (Native Vegetation) Code 2018	Applies where clearing of vegetation on Category 2-regulated land. The Code facilitates different types of land management and clearing activities.
Map Review	Landholders who consider the NVR map incorrectly categorises their land can apply for a review of the map categories. A map review allows landholders to provide supporting information for further assessment of the categorisation and to potentially re-categorise their land.  The process for undertaking a map review, including the time to make a determination is specified in the LLS Act and LLS Regulation.
Native Vegetation Regulatory map (NVR map)	The NVR map is to designate areas of the State where Part 5A land management controls apply.  The NVR map displays 4 categories and excluded land: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» category 1—exempt (unregulated) land (blue)</li> <li>» category 2—regulated land (yellow)</li> <li>» category 2—vulnerable regulated land (orange)</li> <li>» category 2—sensitive regulated land (pink)</li> <li>» land excluded from the LLS Act (grey)</li> </ul> More details about the map categories are provided in Appendix A.
Property	Several parcels of land (whether held under the same title, different titles or different kinds of titles) that constitute or are worked as a single property as per the “ <u>landholding</u> ” definition under s60D of LLS Act.
Rural land	Part 5A (60A) of the Local Land Services 2013 Act defines Rural areas of the State as any area other than the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» urban areas of the State to which <i>State Environmental Planning Policy (Vegetation in Non-Rural Areas) 2017</i> applies</li> <li>» national park estate, State forestry land and other conservation areas.</li> </ul>
Transitional NVR map	The transitional NVR Map was published on 25 August 2017.  Two map categories and the land excluded from the operation of <i>Part 5A of the Local Land Services Act 2013</i> (LLS Act) are displayed on the transitional NVR Map. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» category 2—vulnerable regulated land (orange)</li> <li>» category 2—sensitive regulated land (pink)</li> <li>» land excluded from the LLS Act (grey).</li> </ul>

# Executive Summary

The NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) with NSW Local Land Services (LLS) (the agencies), have engaged Elton Consulting to evaluate stakeholder confidence regarding unpublished categories of the Native Vegetation Regulatory (NVR) map. This report presents the evaluation project findings and provides recommendations on release and resourcing of the NVR map.

## Overview

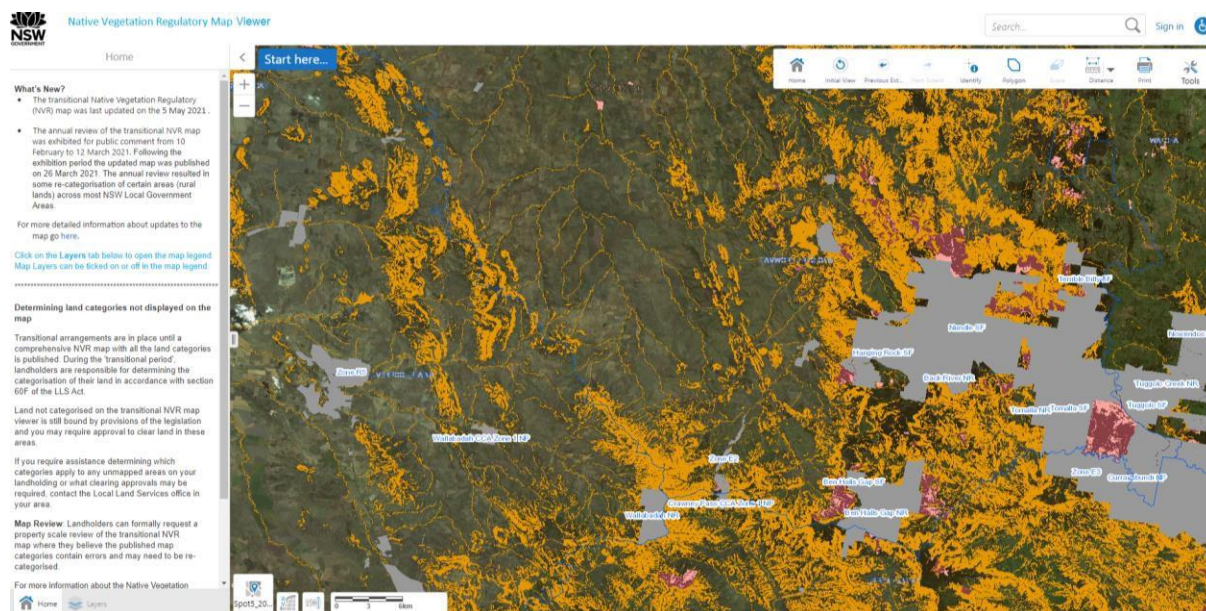
The [Local Land Services Act 2013](#) (the LLS Act) requires DPIE to prepare and maintain the NVR map. The NVR map outlines the different categories of rural land across NSW. All rural land is assigned a category in the NVR map, it covers 84% of the NSW land area. These categories determine what land management, including vegetation clearing, can take place under Part 5A the LLS Act.

At this stage only Category 2-vulnerable regulated land and Category 2-sensitive regulated land have been displayed on the Transitional NVR Map<sup>1</sup>. These categories, covering an area of 6% of NSW, are the most restrictive for land management. Land excluded from the operation of the LLS Act (called excluded land) is also displayed. Excluded land covers an area of 16% of NSW.

The remaining 78% of land in NSW is mapped as Category 2-regulated land and Category 1-exempt (unregulated) land. The mapping for these areas has been completed, is regularly maintained and is used by select LLS and DPIE staff for internal purposes, however Government has not made these layers publicly available.

Consequently, transitional arrangements have been in place for almost four years and in this time, landholders must self-assess their land categorisation. They bear the burden of risk for non-compliance for clearing on Category 2- regulated land where approval is required; or undertake unnecessary assessment on Category 1 – exempt land where no approval is required.

**Figure 1 Transitional NVR map (available online)**



<sup>1</sup> DPIE, <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/animals-and-plants/biodiversity/native-vegetation-regulatory-map>

## Evaluation purpose and objectives

This evaluation project responds to NSW Government commitments regarding release of the unpublished categories of the NVR map. This followed an audit<sup>2</sup> by the Audit Office of New South Wales of native vegetation management in June 2019 that determined that not releasing the NVR map has made it difficult for landholders to identify where land clearing can occur without approval, leading to regulatory concerns in the administration of the Biodiversity and Land Management Framework.

Further information on project purpose and scope is in [Section 1.6](#)

The audit concluded that present NVR map arrangements limit DPIE's ability to consult on, and improve, the accuracy of the map. The auditor made recommendations for the release of the map along with processes to gauge whether landholders are complying with conditions of approval and managing land set aside for conservation. Further recommendations were also made about adequacy of resourcing of the agencies.

The Minister for Agriculture and Western NSW and the Minister for Energy and Environment are committed to releasing the unpublished categories of the NVR map when satisfied that landholders have confidence in the map.

In delivering the evaluation project, the following objectives, agreed to by the agencies, have formed the basis for the approach and methodology:

- » To provide secure and conditional access to the draft NVR map to landholders or their agents where they are engaged in applying the land management framework.
- » To assess the extent of external customer (landholder) and stakeholder confidence in and satisfaction with the accuracy and effectiveness of the draft NVR mapping and associated products and services.
- » To assess the resourcing levels of both DPIE and LLS to deliver the draft NVR map to the public, including supporting processes such as map reviews.

## Evaluation methodology and delivery

The evaluation project was delivered in late 2020 and early 2021. COVID restrictions were considered when deciding upon the evaluation methodology and delivery.

Further information on evaluation methodology is in [Section 2](#)

Landholders were recruited for the evaluation project through a targeted Expression of Interest and consent process largely delivered by LLS staff. (See Appendix C: Landholder consent to participate form and preliminary project information). DPIE staff assisted with additional recruitment activities but were mostly focused on delivering the map packages for landholders who had consented to be part of the evaluation project.

When landholders agreed to take part in the evaluation project, they received a digital and/or a hard format copy of the draft NVR map for their property along with a communication package. Landholders who felt their map was inaccurate, then had the opportunity, under the LLS Act, to request a map review from DPIE. Landholder feedback was obtained through telephone surveys and in-depth interviews.

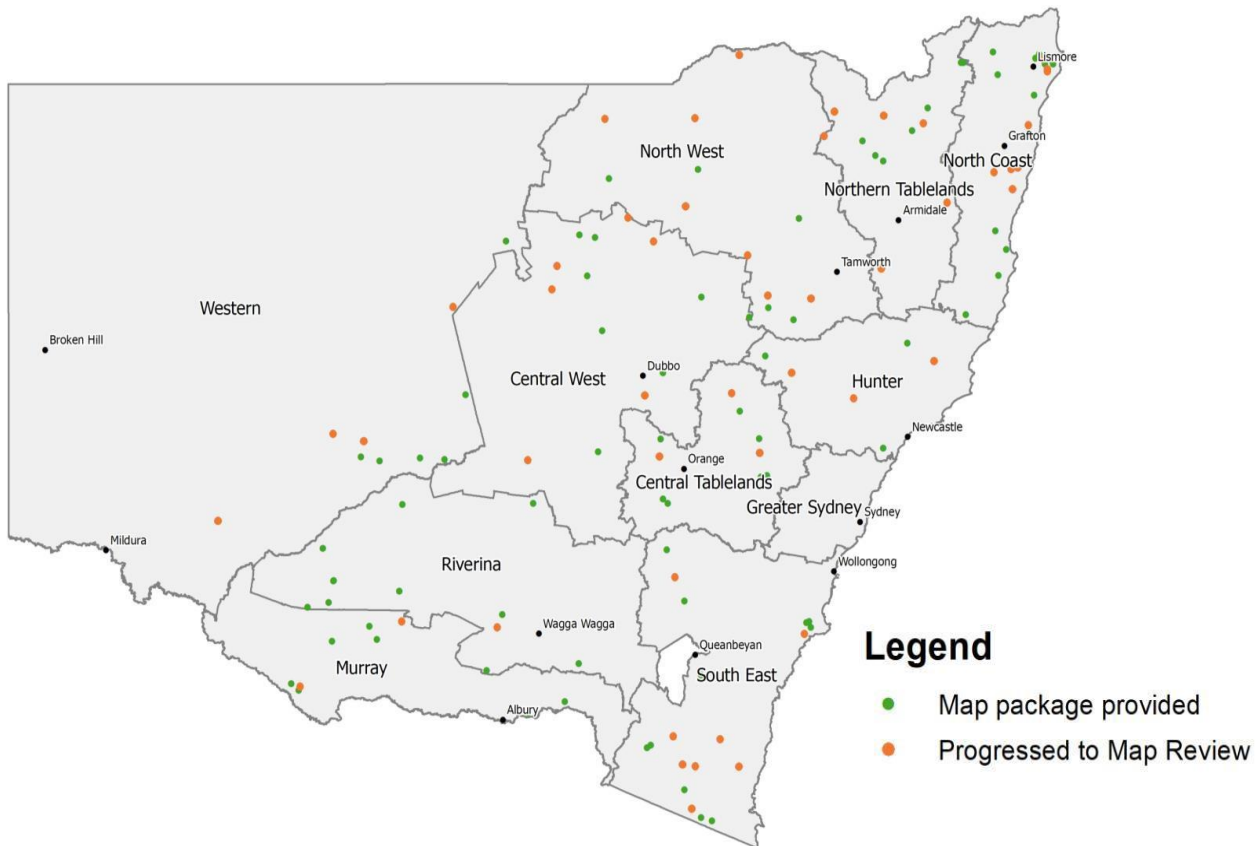
### Key project statistics

- » 96 landholders from 123 properties received a draft NVR map package between November 2020 to February 2021
- » DPIE prepared 23 category explanation reports.<sup>3</sup>
- » DPIE and LLS had discussions with 37 landholders where they requested further information on the map.
- » Map reviews on 51 properties were requested by May 2021
- » Map reviews for 48 properties were completed by May 2021
- » 83 phone surveys were undertaken over the evaluation research period
- » Of these 23 landholders took part in in-depth interviews for the evaluation

<sup>2</sup> Audit Office of New South Wales. (2019). *Managing native vegetation*. [online] Available at: <https://www.audit.nsw.gov.au/our-work/reports/managing-native-vegetation>, accessed 29/09/2020.

<sup>3</sup> Although 32 survey responses in the affirmative regarding accessing a category explanation report. It is possible that a few landholders were getting this report confused with the map package information.

**Figure 2 Map of properties participating in the evaluation project**



Feedback from landholders was sought regarding:

- » confidence in the accuracy of the unpublished categories of the NVR map and their value in supporting land management decisions
- » the usefulness of supporting materials and processes.

Online workshops were also held with agency staff to ascertain their perspectives of landholder satisfaction with the accuracy of the NVR map and associated processes. The workshops provided an opportunity to enquire about the adequacy of resources to deliver and maintain the NVR map.

Landholders were recruited to the evaluation project through a targeted Expression of Interest and consent process delivered by LLS staff. An effort was made to obtain landholder representation from each LLS region and across a diversity of rural enterprises.

Further information on landholder participation is in [Section 2.2](#)

The landholder recruitment process took longer than anticipated resulting in the project commencement encroaching on busy harvest and holiday seasons. Where landholder representation was low, agency staff undertook additional recruitment efforts.



## Key research findings

Based on feedback from landholders and agency staff involved in the evaluation project, the following research findings were identified:

Further information on key findings is in [Section 3](#)

### **Finding 1: Landholder participants are confident in the map's accuracy for Categories 1 and 2 (regulated land) on their property**

- » 75% of landholders surveyed were moderately to very confident in the NVR map's accuracy for Categories 1 and 2 (regulated land) on their property.
- » At least 50% of landholders in each of the LLS regions expressed some confidence in the NVR map.
- » Landholders along the NSW central region were most confident, while those along the NSW northern coast expressed least confidence.
- » Feedback from agency staff noted that complex topography and vegetation patterns, smaller holdings and heightened sensitivity to government regulation were factors in the lower confidence levels among landholders in the northern coast and tableland LLS regions.
- » A quarter of the survey respondents (21 out of 83) had some level of reservation about the accuracy of the NVR map. Common issues expressed through the survey, interviews and reported at the agency workshops were: general inaccuracy, capturing non-native vegetation but not historical uses, problems with aligning with the cadastral boundary and concerns that native vegetation wasn't being picked up well enough.
- » Increased ground truthing and map updates were identified by landholders to improve map accuracy.
- » Over half (57%) of landholders surveyed had no issues with any of the NVR map categories. A further 15% were concerned with Category 2 – regulated land only, while 19% were concerned with all categories.
- » Agency staff and interview participants noted that there is some confusion regarding how Category 2-regulated land is defined for the purposes of the NVR map.
- » All landholdings were offered a map review and were contacted by the case officers. The majority (60%) of landholdings did not request a map review by the conclusion of the research period, with general feedback indicating that the NVR Map provided was accurate.

### **Finding 2: Landholder participants feel the maps assist in land management decision-making**

- » 72% of survey participants felt the NVR map assists in understanding their obligations under the LLS Act.
- » Landholders identified the NVR map as an important tool in increasing the transparency and knowledge of regulatory requirements and land management opportunities for their property.
- » 64% of survey participants agreed that the NVR maps (soft and hard copy) provided were sufficient to inform land management decision making and most survey participants found the NVR map easy to use.

### **Finding 3: Landholder participants use the supporting information to interpret the map**

- » Most landholders stated that supporting information (fact sheets) were informative (80%) and useful in understanding how the NVR map supports land management (71%).
- » Landholders and agency staff both noted the value of direct engagement with each other in further clarifying the NVR Map.
- » Most landholders (88%) that received a category explanation report felt it was clear and easy to understand.
- » A few landholders and agency staff felt that the level of information was overwhelming, and it could be made more user friendly and written in plainer English.

### **Finding 4: Landholder participants understand how to access a map review**

- » 81% of landholders felt the map review process was easy to understand.
- » Landholders indicated that direct contact with the agencies was helpful during the review.

### **Finding 5: Landholder participants are generally satisfied with the map review process including timeliness**

- » A total of 51 map reviews were completed as part of the larger evaluation project (i.e. including research completed by agencies delivering the project). At the completion of the telephone surveys, 11 landholders had completed map reviews. Of these, nine landholders were satisfied with the review process, noting it was straight forward, prompt and achieved a good outcome.
- » Landholders and agency staff highlighted the importance of direct engagement in delivering a positive outcome and explaining any delay in a decision (beyond the 40 days).
- » Two landholders who were dissatisfied with the review process also expressed general unhappiness with any form of government mapping or regulation over their landholdings.
- » Requested map reviews of unpublished categories resulted in less than 5% change in land categorisation, and less than 1% change to the total land mapped for landholders taking part in the project.
- » Map reviews are seen as a natural justice pathway for landholders to address any concerns with their NVR maps, not just during the period when the map is on draft exhibition but in the long term.

### **Finding 6: Landholder participants are satisfied with interaction with agency staff**

- » Most surveyed landholders (86%) expressed strong satisfaction with communication from agency staff through all stages of the evaluation project, from initial conversations through to the review process.
- » Agency staff also reported satisfaction with timely information sharing and communications between the two agencies and with landholders.
- » Early, direct engagement was helpful to address common misunderstandings about the NVR map and to communicate the intent that agency staff were primarily available to help rather than regulate.

### **Finding 7: Landholders are confident in where to go to access advice and support regarding the NVR map and review process**

- » Nearly half of landholders surveyed had not previously engaged with or been aware of the NVR map. They expressed a desire for wider promotion of the NVR map and regulatory processes to support better understanding of its application and relevance to their decision making.
- » Following initial engagement in the research project, both landholders new to the process and those with an existing engagement with one of the agencies, expressed confidence in contacting LLS and/or DPIE if there was any future confusion or issues with the NVR map for their property.
- » Landholders indicated that if they wanted information on the NVR map they were nearly twice as likely to directly communicate with agency staff than use online channels.
- » Feedback from the evaluation research is that the release of the NVR map increased engagement and relationship-building between landholders and agency staff and improved operational delivery between DPIE and LLS.

### **Finding 8: Ability to meet deadlines for map delivery and statutory timeframes for map reviews**

- » Of the 48 map reviews completed during the evaluation project, 61% were completed within the 40 day timeframe designated by regulation, with an average completion time of 41 days.
- » Both landholders and DPIE staff acknowledged the existence of complex review cases which required additional time for consideration. It was also noted that the inclusion of holiday periods and availability of staff resourcing impacted timelines.
- » The research project was the first time DPIE had undertaken map reviews with landholders for the unpublished Category 1-exempt land and Category 2-regulated land. Staff noted lessons learnt and identified opportunities for process improvement.

**Finding 9: Importance of providing resources for early landholder engagement to support effective delivery of services including map review**

- » Agency staff noted demands on resources early in the NVR map rollout are expected to be high. A focus on landholder awareness and engagement, is critical for improved stakeholder confidence and satisfaction outcomes.
- » On-going collaboration between agency staff assisted in a consistent and efficient approach to landholders.
- » Resourcing is not a barrier to publishing the NVR map, although agency staff felt current levels of resourcing should be enhanced, and at the least, maintained.
- » Agency staff noted the evaluation project, even before findings were reported, was valuable in testing and improving internal processes and tools.

# Recommendations

The evaluation project has identified and confirmed the relative importance of the NVR map in providing certainty for landholders, proponents and government. A majority of surveyed landholders were confident in the accuracy of the draft NVR map and see it as a valuable tool for improved land use management and decision making.

Based on the key research findings, we have identified the following recommendations for the release of the NVR map and to support ancillary engagement and administrative processes:

1. Release the unpublished categories of the NVR map to provide certainty and transparency for stakeholders regarding their land management responsibilities and options.
2. Set and announce a date to publish the NVR map and end the transitional period. Precede this with a period where the draft NVR map published online. The draft NVR Map should be available for a minimum of 6 months to a maximum of 12 months, to support a shift from transitional arrangements. The Map Review process is available to landholders during the period of draft publication, and beyond when the map is published, as stipulated in the legislation (s60L LLS Act). This process will assist landholder confidence in the NVR map.
3. Prior to release of the NVR map unpublished categories, prepare:
  - a. Implementation plan that addresses release timing, method of release, staff capacity, training and resources for engaging with landholders and undertaking map reviews.
  - b. Communications and engagement plan encompassing:
    - Promotion and awareness of the LLS Act 2013 and the NVR map.
    - Review of map collateral including fact sheets and the website to ensure plain English terminology and to focus on issues of concern to landholders such as map updates.
    - Identification of direct engagement with agency staff through digital and face-to-face mechanisms
4. Identify and document processes to support streamlining and simplifying the map review process (noting that release is likely to increase the operational resource requirements for agency staff). This may include an initial interest form for landholders, prior to review assessment.
5. Maintain a NVR map project working group as an interagency operational forum to support communication, knowledge sharing and issue identification regarding the NVR map and land management framework.
6. Provide regular and ongoing communication and engagement on the Land Management Framework including the NVR map and Land Management Code. This supports informed land management decision making.
7. Undertake regular monitoring and evaluation of NVR map delivery to support ongoing improvements. An independent, comprehensive evaluation 5 years post publication would assist to maintain consideration of:
  - a. effectiveness and efficiency of map review process
  - b. stakeholder confidence
  - c. environmental outcomes achieved.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1. About this report

The Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) with NSW Local Land Services (LLS) – (the agencies), have engaged Elton Consulting to evaluate stakeholder confidence regarding unpublished categories of the NVR.

This report provides an overview of:

- » the evaluation purpose, objectives and scope (this section)
- » evaluation approach including methodology and participation (Section 2)
- » evaluation research findings (Section 3)
- » recommendations regarding publication and resourcing of the unreleased categories of the NVR map (Section 4).

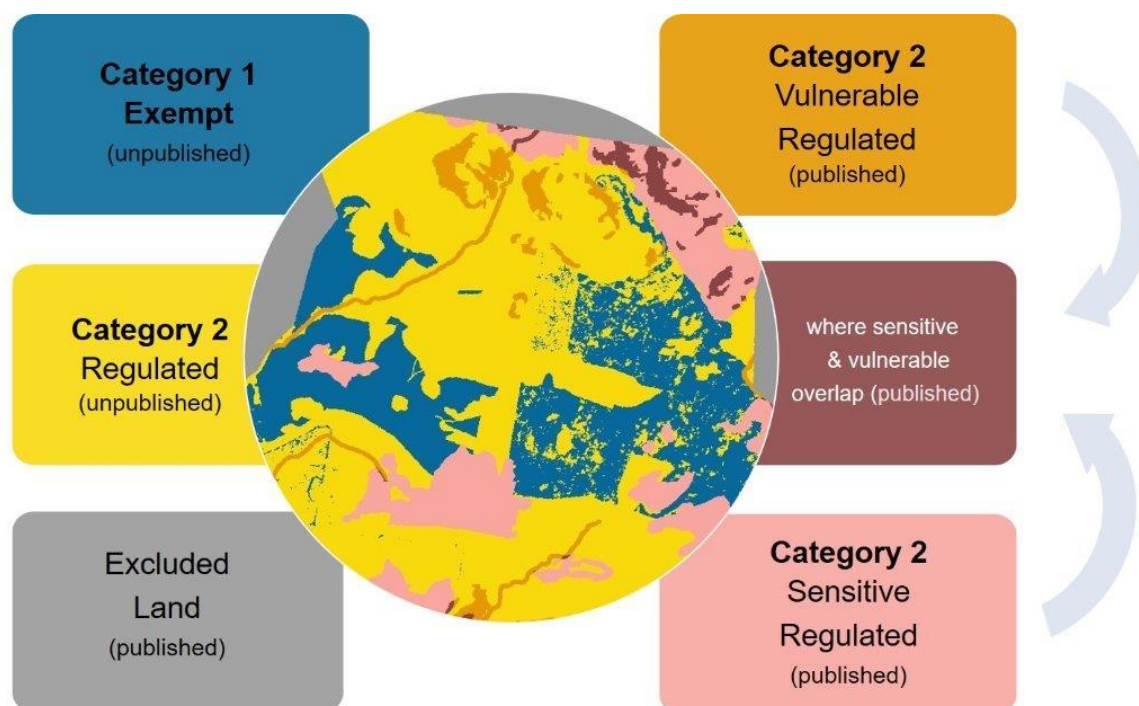
## 1.2. About the NVR map

Part 5A of the *Local Land Services Act 2013* (the LLS Act) requires DPIE to prepare and maintain the NVR map. The NVR map outlines the different categories of rural land across NSW. All rural land is assigned a category in the NVR map and covers 84% of the NSW land area. These categories determine what land management, including vegetation clearing, can take place under Part 5A the LLS Act.

The NVR map is the key tool that complements the *Land Management (Native Vegetation) Code 2018* (the Code), which sets out the circumstances by which landholders can clear native vegetation from their land holdings.

The NVR map displays four categories of land across NSW, as defined in the LLS Act, along with land excluded from the operation of the LLS Act. Category 1-exempt land, Category 2-regulated land, Category 2-sensitive regulated land, Category 2-vulnerable regulated land and Land Excluded under the *LLS Act*. See Appendix A: NVR map categories for a full explanation of the published and unpublished categories.

**Figure 3 NVR map categories**



At this stage only Category 2-vulnerable regulated land and Category 2-sensitive regulated land have been displayed on the Transitional NVR Map<sup>1</sup>. These categories, covering an area of 6% of NSW, are the most restrictive for land management. Land excluded from the operation of the LLS Act (called excluded land) is also displayed. Excluded land covers an area of 16% of NSW.

The remaining 78% of land in NSW is mapped as Category 2-regulated land and Category 1-exempt (unregulated) land. The mapping for these areas has been completed, is regularly maintained and is used by select LLS and DPIE staff for internal purposes, however Government has not made these layers publicly available. The unpublished categories are used by LLS as part of the assessment process and DPIE to support compliance.

Due to the partial, public release of the NVR map, transitional arrangements have been in place for almost four years. During this time landholders must self-assess their land categorisation. They bear the burden of risk for non-compliance for clearing on Category 2- regulated land where approval is required; or undertake unnecessary assessment on Category 1 – exempt land where no approval is required.

LLS staff can access all categories through the draft NVR map as an aid when determining the amount and location of regulated land to meet requirements of some parts of the Code, however the unpublished map categories are not shared with landholders.

An audit of NSW native vegetation management in June 2019<sup>4</sup> determined that not releasing the NVR map has made it difficult for landholders to identify where land clearing can occur without approval, leading to regulatory concerns in the administration of the Biodiversity and Land Management Framework.

The audit concluded that the current transitional arrangements also limit DPIE's ability to consult on and improve the accuracy of the map. The auditor made recommendations for the release of the map along with processes to gauge whether landholders are complying with conditions of approval and managing land set aside for conservation. Additional recommendations were made about adequate resourcing of the agencies to support delivery of the NVR map.

### 1.3. Evaluation overview

The evaluation project responds to the NSW Government commitments regarding the release of the unpublished categories of the NVR map. Specifically, the (former) Minister for Primary Industries, and (former) Minister for Lands and Water's commitment that the map "*will not come into effect until Ministers are satisfied that stakeholders have sufficient confidence in its accuracy.*"

In delivering the evaluation project, the following objectives have formed the basis for the approach and methodology:

- » To provide secure and conditional access to the draft comprehensive NVR map to landholders or their agents where they are engaged in applying the land management framework.
- » To assess the extent of external customer (landholder) and stakeholder confidence in and satisfaction with the accuracy and effectiveness of the draft comprehensive NVR mapping and associated products and services.
- » To assess the resourcing levels of both DPIE and LLS to deliver the draft comprehensive NVR map to the public, including supporting processes such as map reviews<sup>5</sup>.

The outcomes of this project will support government decision making and service considerations for the NVR map. This evaluation will provide advice to the NSW Minister for Agriculture, Minister for Energy and Environment, along with LLS and DPIE senior executive.

The agencies have agreed on the following considerations regarding this evaluation project:

- » Independent evaluation would be conducted to demonstrate stakeholder confidence and satisfaction with the NVR map and related products, services and processes, and to understand DPIE and LLS resourcing needs.

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<sup>4</sup> Audit Office of New South Wales. (2019). *Managing native vegetation*. [online] Available at: <https://www.audit.nsw.gov.au/our-work/reports/managing-native-vegetation>, accessed 29/09/2020

<sup>5</sup> The Map Review is a legislated process enabling landholders to have the map reviewed by DPIE.

- » Evaluation may consider the effectiveness, impact, appropriateness and efficiencies of the NVR map and map review processes.
- » Outcomes of the evaluation may be used to identify where imagery interpretation or spatial data sources could or should be improved. It may also be used to inform policy options, including regulatory amendments to assist landholders in the application of the land management framework.

## 1.4. Purpose

The project purpose is to provide for independent evaluation of landholder feedback and resource allocation for the implementation of the draft NVR map. The agencies agreed on a number of principles to guide the evaluation process, as provided in Appendix B. The focus of the evaluation process is the unpublished categories of the NVR map, namely:

- » Category 1-exempt land
- » Category 2-regulated land

In undertaking the evaluation, a key consideration was gaining feedback from landholders across NSW (representation from each of the LLS regions) and across a range of sectors. Landholders that were currently subject to an open compliance investigation were not considered for the evaluation project. Several employees of DPIE and LLS chose to include their own properties in the project, but their feedback has been excluded from report findings.

## 1.5. Objectives

In delivering the evaluation project, the following objectives, agreed to by the agencies, have formed the basis for the approach and methodology:

- » To provide secure and conditional access to the draft NVR map to landholders or their agents where they are engaged in applying the land management framework.
- » To assess the extent of external customer (landholder) and stakeholder confidence in and satisfaction with the accuracy and effectiveness of the draft NVR mapping and associated products and services.
- » To assess the resourcing levels of both DPIE and LLS to deliver the draft NVR map to the public, including supporting processes such as map reviews.

## 1.6. Scope

This evaluation is focused on landholder confidence in the draft NVR map's accuracy and satisfaction with supporting materials. It also considered whether levels of present resourcing are sufficient to support draft NVR map delivery, maintenance and review.

Participation in the evaluation involved landholders who have engaged with LLS or DPIE and are interested in undertaking land management measures on their property. Agreement to take part in the evaluation research was established through a formal consent process. LLS officers were asked to take note of why landholders chose not to be involved in order to collect anecdotal evidence of stakeholder sentiment and interest in the NVR map.

The approach and methodology of the research sought to achieve a broadly representative cohort of landholders across the NSW LLS regions. Figure 4 (next page) shows the distribution of LLS regions in NSW.

Key stakeholder groups, such as NSW Farmers, were not directly involved as part of the research, but landholders that identified as members of agricultural, environmental and regional development bodies formed part of the research cohort. A letter was sent to NSW Farmers inviting members to participate in the project but received no response. However, members participated through other pathways, such as LLS referral or Expression of Interest (EOI).

Figure 4 NSW Local Land Services regions





## 2. Evaluation approach

### 2.1. Research methodology

#### Overview

The evaluation project was initiated in September 2020, with landholders recruited from November 2020 to February 2021. The timing and methodology of the project was impacted by landholder summer harvest commitments, the January holiday period and COVID-19 social distancing measures.

Landholders were recruited for the evaluation project through a targeted EOI and consent process largely delivered by LLS staff. DPIE staff assisted with additional recruitment activities but were mostly focused on delivering the map packages and map reviews for landholders who had consented to be part of the evaluation project.

Landholders were screened ahead of participation to exclude those either currently or previously involved in compliance issues. Landholders who agreed to opt-in to the evaluation program through an EOI process, completed a consent form (See Appendix C: Landholder consent to participate form and preliminary project information).

They then received a NVR map package consisting of:

1. Landholder Evaluation Project Steps
2. Map 1A: Property Reference – with satellite image.
3. Map 1B: Property Reference – with topographic map.
4. Map 2: NVR Map – with satellite image (Showing all map categories)
5. The following five factsheets:
  - a. What is the NVR Map?
  - b. What is Unregulated land
  - c. What is Regulated land
  - d. Requesting a Category Explanation Report
  - e. Land categories and the Land Management Framework

Following delivery of the map packages, all landholders had the option of discussing their maps with the DPIE Mapping Team and/or LLS to review the maps in greater detail. Landholders were also given the option of

Any landholders that felt their mapped categories were inaccurate, could, under the LLS Act, request a map review from DPIE. Ninety-six landholders and 123 landholdings received a draft NVR map package between November 2020 and February 2021, with review requested for 51 properties. Forty-eight of these map reviews were determined by 18 May 2021. One landholder provided additional information and entered into a second map review that was also determined in this time frame.

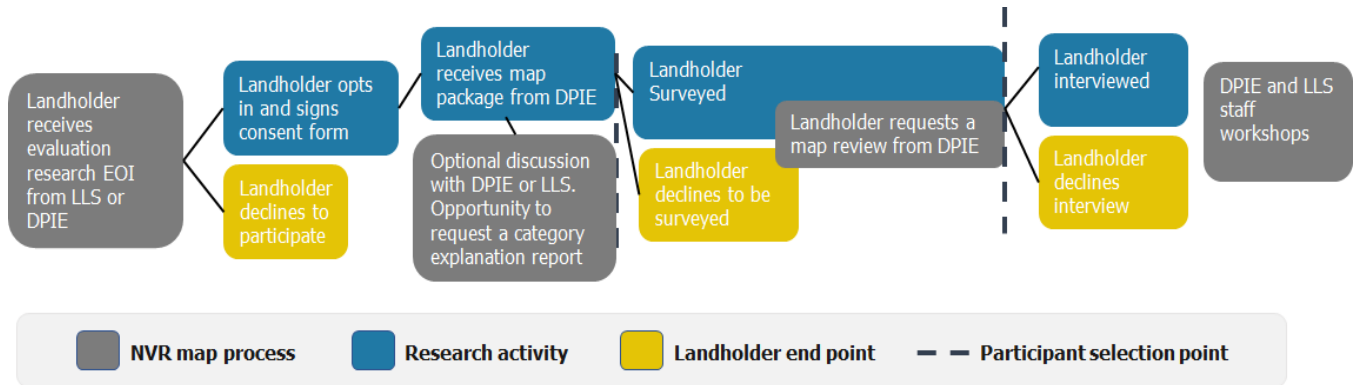
Feedback was obtained from landholders for the evaluation project through telephone surveys and in-depth interviews. From December 2020 to March 2021, 83 phone surveys were conducted for the project. Landholders surveyed for the project were geographically spread (across the LLS regions) and represented a range of land-use holding types, areas and geographies. Section 2.3 provides further details on landholders recruited for the project.

Of the landholders surveyed, 23 were selected, for in-depth interviews. Selection for interviews was based on ensuring distribution across the LLS regions and targeting landholders who had requested (and largely completed) a map review. Interviews took place in April 2021.

The evaluation research also involved two online workshops with DPIE and LLS staff in March 2021. Staff were involved in developing, distributing and reviewing the draft NVR map, including engaging directly with

landholders. Workshops provided an opportunity for agency staff to provide their perspectives of how internal processes and external engagement with landholders worked to support confidence in the draft NVR map. The workshops also discussed the adequacy of resources to deliver and maintain the NVR map if the unpublished categories were released more broadly. Figure 5 summarises the evaluation project research steps undertaken by LLS, DPIE and Elton Consulting

**Figure 5 Evaluation research flow**



## Research methods

Qualitative and quantitative research methods were used as part of the evaluation project. These are shown in the table below. Data collection tools have been provided in Appendix B.

**Table 1 Evaluation research tools**

Tool	Stakeholder	Purpose	Participation
<b>Phone survey</b>	Landholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Usability of the draft NVR map and supporting materials</li> <li>» Confidence with the draft NVR map and supporting materials</li> <li>» Participation in the NVR map review process</li> <li>» Experience of engagement relating to the draft NVR map.</li> </ul>	83 surveys
<b>In-depth interviews</b>	Landholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» What would improve their confidence in the NVR map and why</li> <li>» Confidence in supporting tools and/or review process.</li> <li>» Satisfaction with review timing, process and outcome</li> <li>» Usability of the draft NVR map and supporting materials.</li> </ul>	23 interviews
<b>Online forum</b>	LLS staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Test and confirm survey findings (DPIE September-October 2020 survey)</li> <li>» Discuss landholder perceptions of the draft NVR map</li> <li>» Discuss resourcing needs and capacity</li> <li>» Identify LLS perspectives on the key issues and opportunities for improvement.</li> </ul>	25 participants
<b>Online forum</b>	DPIE staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Discuss landholder perceptions of the draft NVR map</li> <li>» Discuss resourcing needs and capacity for map delivery and review</li> <li>» Identify DPIE perspectives on the key issues and opportunities for improvement.</li> </ul>	23 participants

## Indicators

The key qualitative indicators used to assess stakeholder confidence and resources are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2 Indicators**

Lines of inquiry	Indicators
<b>Landholder confidence in the NVR map unpublished layers and supporting materials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Landholder participants are confident in the NVR map's accuracy for Categories 1 and 2 regulated land on their property</li> <li>» Landholder participants can use the NVR map to inform land management</li> <li>» Landholder participants can use the supporting information to interpret the NVR map</li> <li>» Landholder participants feel that sufficient information has been provided</li> <li>» Landholder participants understand how to access a NVR map review</li> <li>» Proportion of landholder participants requesting a NVR map review</li> </ul>
<b>Landholder satisfaction and confidence in the NVR map review process</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Landholder participants are satisfied in the review process including timeliness</li> <li>» Landholder participants believe adequate justification for the outcome has been given</li> <li>» Landholder participants report receiving consistent information from agency staff</li> </ul>
<b>Landholder satisfaction with contact and support from LLS and DPIE regarding the map</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Landholder participants are satisfied with interaction with agency staff</li> <li>» Landholder participants are satisfied with accessing support from staff</li> <li>» Landholder participants are confident in where to go to access advice and support regarding the NVR map and review process</li> </ul>
<b>Adequacy of resources to deliver and maintain the NVR map</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» Ability to meet deadlines for map delivery and statutory timeframes for map reviews</li> <li>» Staff confidence in resourcing to deliver the map and supporting services.</li> </ul>

## Context to research findings

The targeted recruitment process meant that most landholders had an existing level of engagement with the agencies and/or the land management framework. It is likely that the evaluation research program therefore obtained feedback from a more informed and active cohort of landholders than if a more random recruitment process was trialled.

“

*Landholders who came through LLS were more engaged and educated. Those who weren't (came direct) got bogged down in cadastre problems and the purpose of the map.*

”

LLS staff member

Another consideration for the evaluation program is the impact of changes to the Koala State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) mapping that were released by the NSW Government during the research period. There were concerns that landholders might conflate these mapping reforms with the NVR map and LLS Act, particularly in northern NSW coastal regions. This concern is further discussed below under risks.

There were difficulties in getting landholders to take part in the research program. Potential reasons for the difficulty in recruiting landholders include:

- » Targeted promotion of the evaluation research program limited the reach of available landholders to those already engaged with LLS, DPIE or contacted through member organisations such as NSW Farmers.
- » As the consent and research process required several steps and occurred over a period of time, some people who had originally agreed to take part in the study were either too busy or uninterested by the time they had received their map package and were contacted to take part in the research survey.
- » A level of distrust in engaging with government including an unwillingness to have their property identified and mapped for the study.
- » Research timing across the 2020 – 2021 Christmas and school holiday period meant decreased staff resources and reduced access to landholders who were either away or busy with on-farm duties.
- » General landholder lack of time or interest due to harvest requirements and other on-farm activities.
- » The evaluation project occurred during significant periods of COVID-19 restrictions, leading to a general reduction in face-to face interactions and travel.

“ Landholders who would be interested potentially in the evaluation project but were too busy and didn't want to take on more processes/work. "Why be involved in more bureaucratic stuff if we don't need to.”

”

LLS staff member

There were relatively small numbers of participants recruited to the process in some of the LLS regions, however each region was still represented (See: Section 2.2, Figure 6 and Table 3).

The timeframe for evaluation project delivery was extended and modified to allow for greater recruitment of landholders and responded to external pressures including the summer holiday period and harvest season. The rate of landholder progress through map delivery and review meant that many landholders were surveyed or interviewed before having applied for or received the outcome of their map review. Nonetheless, this evaluation provides a snapshot in time of landholder sentiment and understanding towards the draft NVR map and review process.

## Risks

As part of the preparation for the study a review of potential risks to project delivery were identified. These were ranked according to likelihood and impact. A key concern was how landholder sensitivities regarding government regulation of land management on private property would impact both their participation and responses.

This concern was further exacerbated by the introduction and subsequent political debate in respect to the NSW State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP) for Koala Habitat Protection (Koala SEPP 2019) at the end of 2020. The Koala SEPP also involved a map, which was widely criticised. Key messaging with respect to the NVR evaluation process focused on clearly distinguishing between the two regulatory and mapping processes; however, some confusion and associated concerns were unavoidable and noted by agency staff.

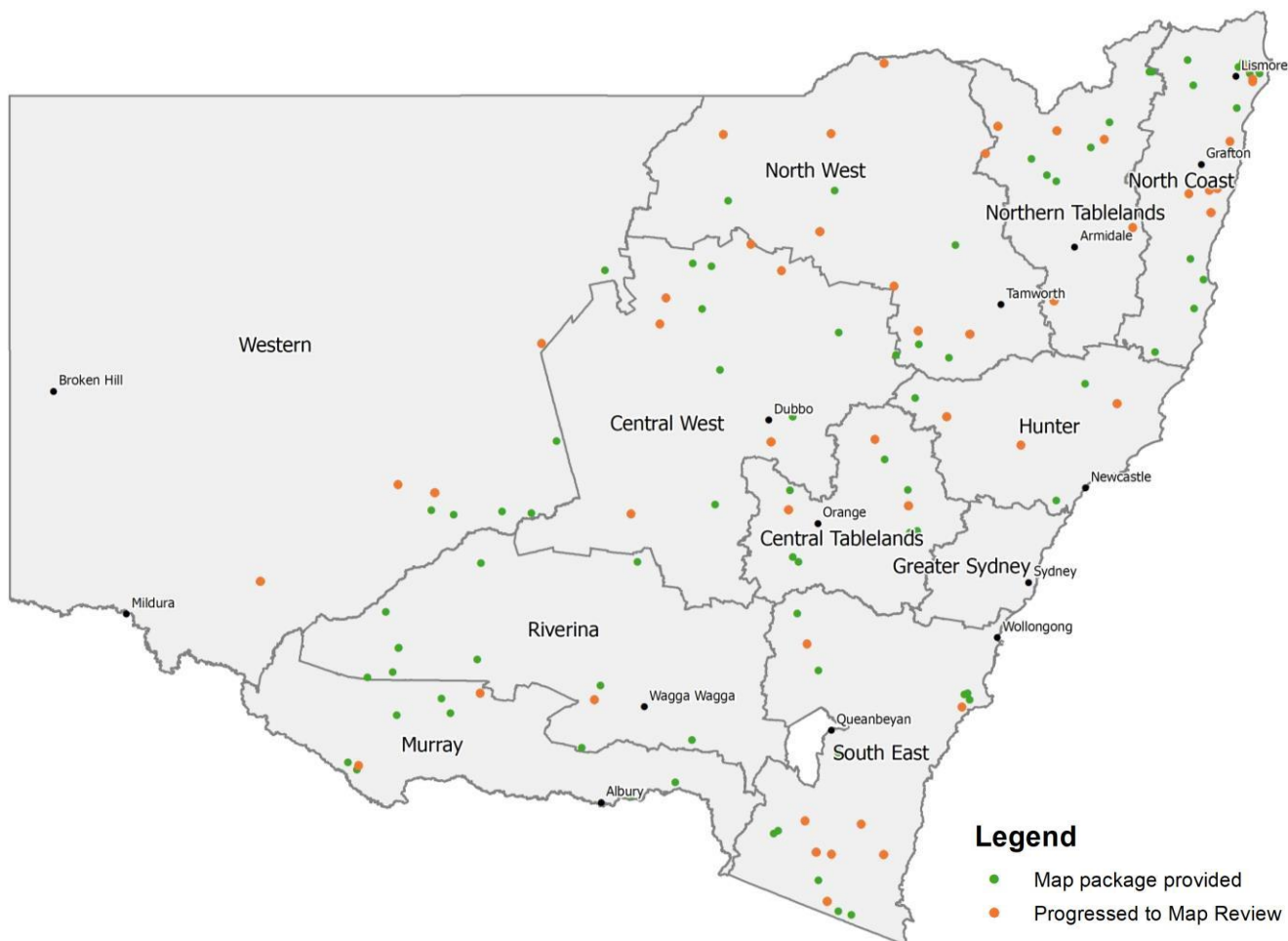
Other major risks considered as part of project design were uncertainty over Covid-19 limitations and self-selection bias as participants were not identified randomly but through an existing relationship with LLS and/or DPIE, such as past map review clients.

## 2.2. Landholder participation

### Landholders recruited

In total, 96 separate landholders (including two LLS staff members) were recruited to the evaluation project across 123 landholdings. Figure 6 illustrates the geographic spread of properties issued with a draft NVR map extract as well as the spread of properties which progressed to a map review during the evaluation project.

**Figure 6 Map of properties participating in the evaluation project**



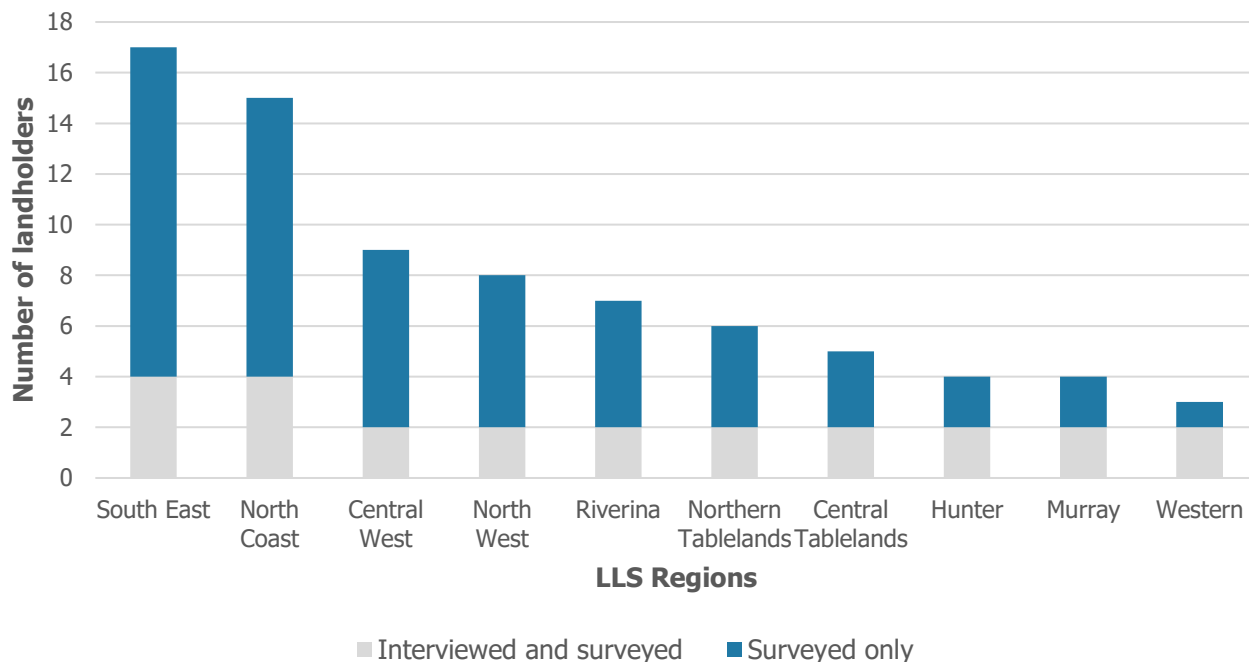
### Landholders surveyed and interviewed

Figures 7 to 10 provide a breakdown by LLS region, membership, property role and enterprise type of the key characteristics of the landholders who participated in the evaluation research.

In total, 83 phone surveys were conducted and 23 landholders were interviewed as part of the evaluation project. A further 13 landholders received map packages but did not provide formal feedback as they either declined to take part in the survey or could not be reached. The level of attrition can possibly be slightly attributed to the research program being held over the busy holiday period. Additionally, two landholders were LLS officers, and while surveyed, their feedback was not included in the survey data analysis.

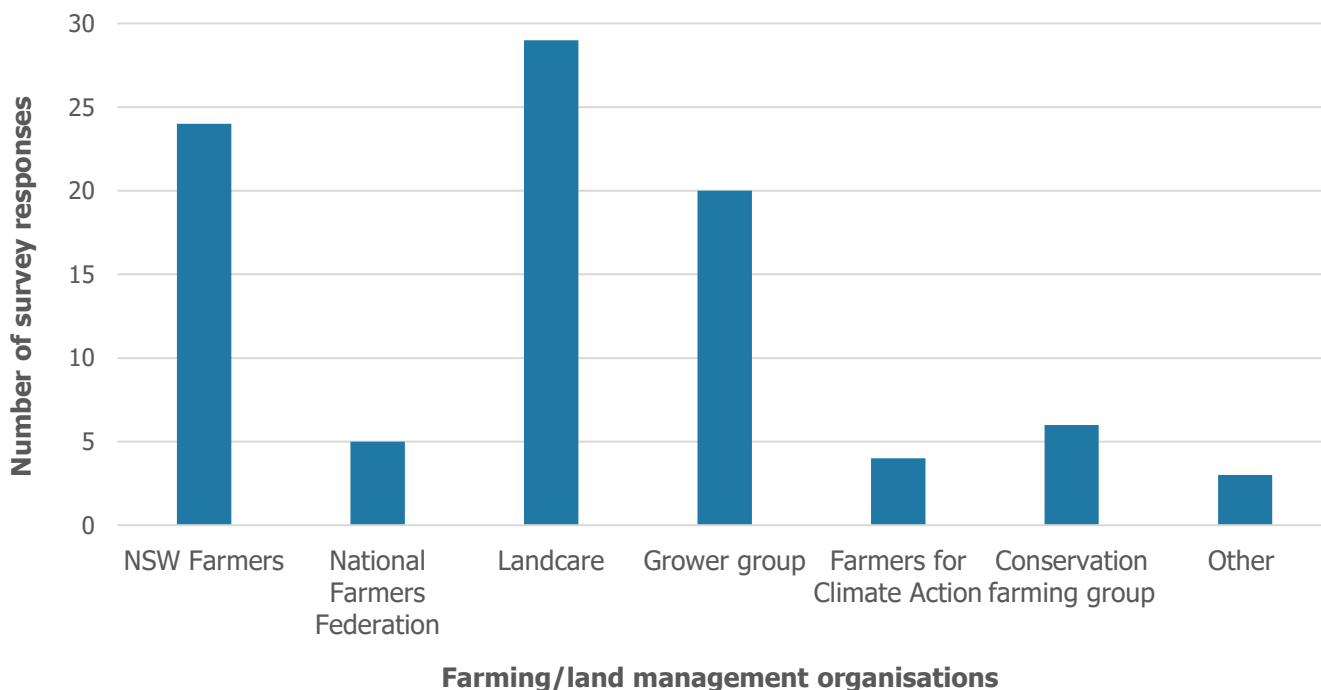
Figure 7 shows the distribution of research participants by LLS region. There was a higher level of interest and engagement amongst landholders in coastal areas as compared with Hunter, Murray and Western regions. It is noted that coastal areas are much more highly populated, with a greater density of (smaller) landholdings.

**Figure 7 Research participants by LLS region (n=83 respondents)**



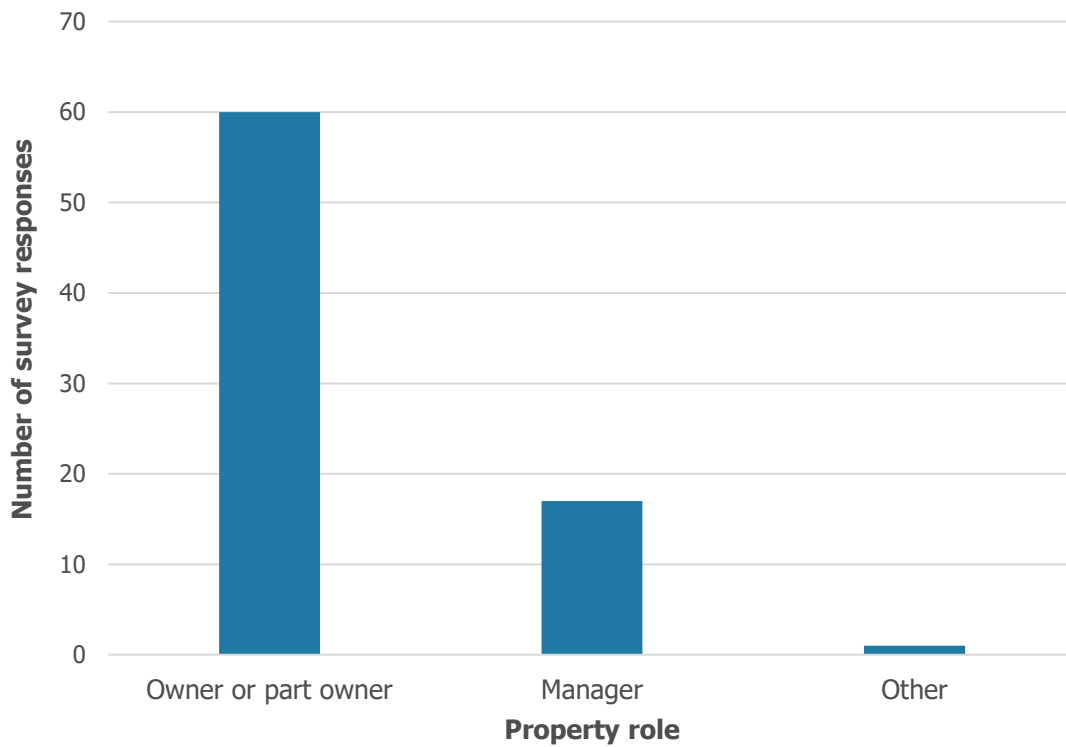
Survey participants were asked to identify whether they were members of farming or land management organisations (Figure 8). Landcare and NSW Farmers had the highest representation amongst participants.

**Figure 8: Survey response: Membership of farming and/or land management organisations (respondents could nominate more than one organisation)**



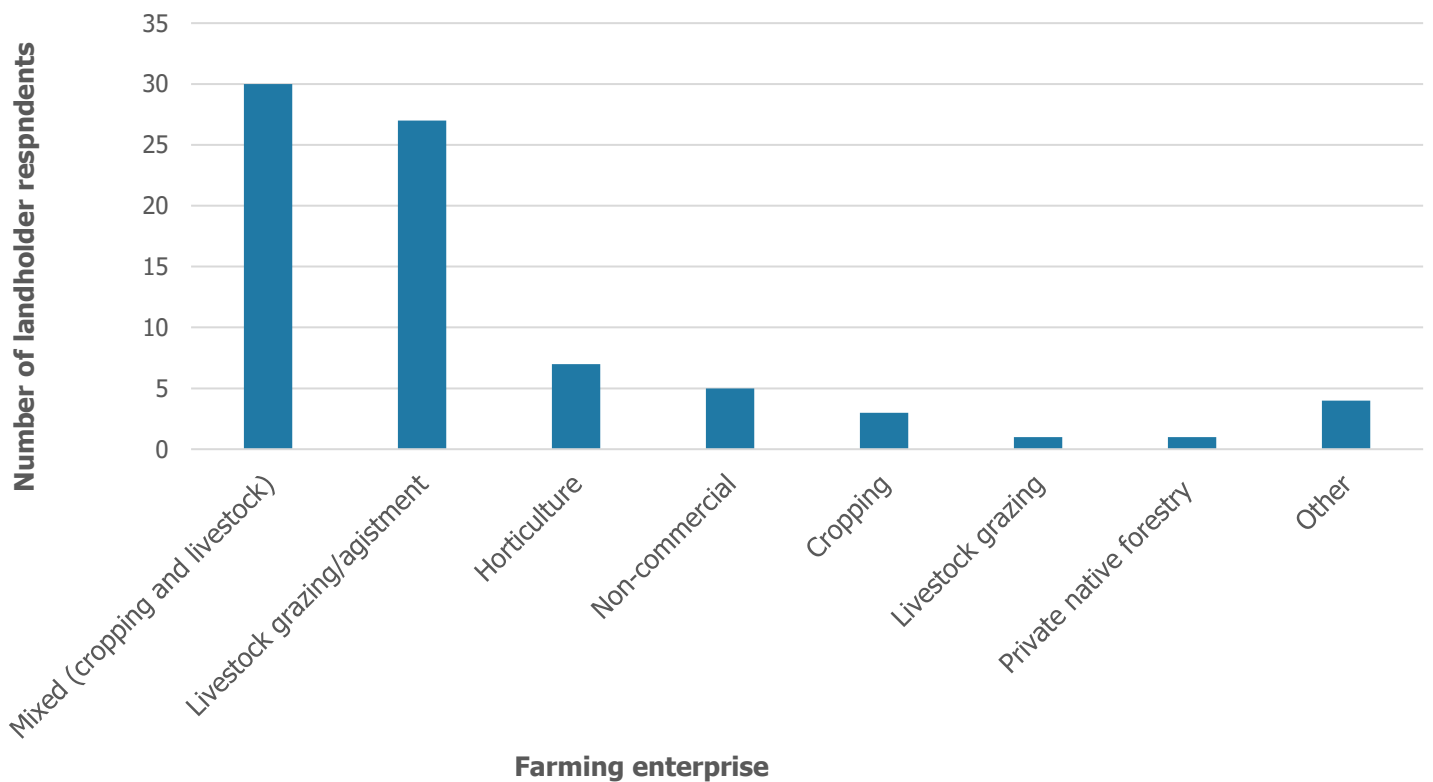
The majority of survey participants were owners or part owners of the property (Figure 9).

**Figure 9: Survey response: role on property (n=78 respondents)**



Survey participants largely identified as having mixed cropping and/or livestock on their properties (Figure 10).

**Figure 10: Survey response: agricultural enterprise type (n=78)**



## Map reviews undertaken

Table 3 shows the number and areas of NVR map extracts delivered to and map reviews requested by landholders for each LLS Region. Only 23 landholders requested a map review by the close of the evaluation research process, with 72 landholders satisfied with the categorisation of their properties as provided through the NVR map extract.

By the end of the extended project, 51 map review property requests were received and, as at 18 May 2021, 48 had been completed. One property was reviewed twice due to the provision of additional information, so 49 reviews were completed in this period<sup>6</sup>. Of these, the majority, 30 were completed within 40 days and the remainder were completed after 40 days. Table 4 shows the geographic spread of map reviews undertaken. This reflects both the proportion of landholders recruited to the project in these regions as well as the identified mapping issues understood by the project team in these locations (e.g. camphor laurel being identified as Category 2–regulated land).

**Table 3 Property statistics – Map extracts and reviews**

LLS Region	NVR Map Extracts		NVR Map Reviews			
	NVR map Extracts delivered	Sum of properties provided with NVR map (ha)	Map Review applications	Sum of area properties subject to MR (ha)	Map Review Determined (at 18-5-21)	Average of % Area of change from Cat 2 to Cat 1
Central Tablelands	10	12,959	3	2,913	3	2.1%
Central West	16	240,405	6	137,590	6	1.8%
Hunter	7	7,267	3	6,108	3	23.3%*
Murray	8	91,572	2	20,914	2	2.2%
North Coast	20	3,184	8	1,843	8	5.0%
North West	13	74,676	9	50,123	7	3.9%
Northern Tablelands	10	28,851	6	13,507	5	5.9%
Riverina	12	221,614	1	1,281	1	2.3%
South East	19	27,930	9	20,669	9	3.3%
Western	8	117,077	4	87,763	4	2.3%
<b>Grand total</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>825,535</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>342,711</b>	<b>48<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>4.8%</b>

\*Hunter Region change statistics were skewed by a single property. The property is 152 ha in size and has a 54% change in land categorisation.

<sup>6</sup> One landholder requested two map reviews.



Table 4 provides a breakdown of DPIE evaluation project interactions with landholders by LLS region. From this table, a majority (59%) of landowners did not request a map review during the evaluation research period.

**Table 4 Property Statistics – Map extracts, CER requested and no maps reviewed**

LLS Region	NVR Map Extracts	CER Requested	Post-map package discussion held	No map review required	Properties Reviews (# of properties)	Map Review Determined (as of 18-5-21)
Central Tablelands	10	5	2	7	3	3
Central West	16	1	4	10	6	6
Hunter	7	1	3	4	3	3
Murray	8	1	1	6	2	2
North Coast	20	3	6	12	8	8
North West	13	2	5	4	9	7
Northern Tablelands	10	1	5	4	6	5
Riverina	12	1	1	11	1	1
South East	19	7	9	10	9	9
Western	8	1	1	4	4	4
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>48*</b>

\*Note – 2 map reviews were undertaken on one property as additional information was supplied so a total of 49 map reviews were determined by 18-5-21.

Table 5 (see over page) provides a detailed breakdown of the map reviews completed to 18 May 2021. By area over 825,000ha of landholdings were provided with the opportunity for a map review as part of the evaluation project. In total, approximately 342,711 ha of the participating properties progressed to a map review. However, the areas nominated for review by the landholders were a significantly smaller portion of the properties.

The reviews of 48 of the 51 properties nominated review were completed by 18 May 2021. Of the total landholding area subject to a map review, there was a net 2.3% change in categorisation from Category 2–regulated to Category 1–exempt land. An average of 4.8% change in categorisation from Category 2 to Category 1 land by landholding resulted from map reviews. Taking into consideration the areas of all landholdings provided with a draft NVR map, the total percentage change in land represented in the project is less than one percent.

**Table 5 Map review statistics as of 18 May 2021**

<b>Total area of properties in project (ha)</b>	825,536
<b>Average area of properties (ha)</b>	6,944
<b>Largest property (ha)</b>	50,909
<b>Smallest property (ha)</b>	17
<b>Total area of properties applied for a Map Review (ha) – 51 properties</b>	342,711
<b>Total area of properties subject to a determined Map Review (ha) (Map Reviews for 48 Landholdings Determined as of 18 May 2021)</b>	333,314
<b>Average Number of Days Taken to Complete Map Review</b>	41 days
<b>Percentage of Map Reviews Completed within 40 Days</b>	61%
<b>Total area of Category 2-regulated land – pre-review (ha)</b>	225,530
<b>Total area of Category 2 -regulated land – post-review (ha)</b>	217,731
<b>Net area of change of Category 2-regulated to Category 1 exempt land (ha)</b>	7799
<b>Net Percentage Change of Reviewed land</b>	2.3%
<b>Net Percentage Change of all land participating in the project</b>	0.9%
<b>Largest change from Category 1 to Category 2 land</b>	5.5%
<b>Largest change from Category 2 to Category 1 land * Hunter Region data skews results - 54.4% change on small holding (152ha)</b>	54% *

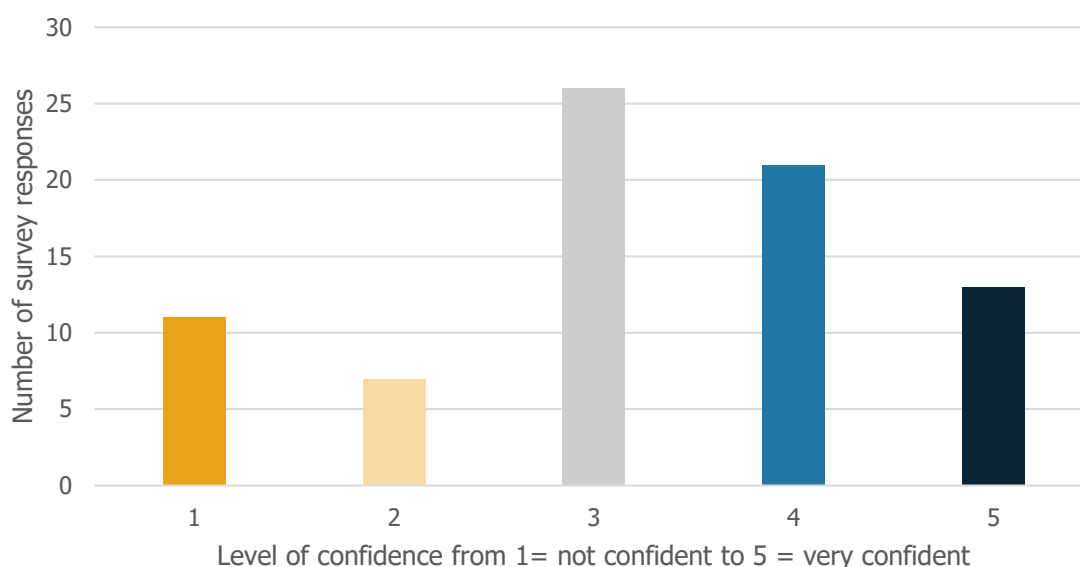
## 3. Evaluation findings

### 3.1. Landholder confidence in the map and supporting materials

#### Finding 1: Landholder participants are confident in the map's accuracy for Categories 1 and 2 (regulated land) on their property

Survey participants were generally confident in the accuracy of the mapping (75% responded moderately to very confident), shown in Figure 11.

**Figure 11: Survey response: landholder confidence in accuracy of unpublished map layers (n=78)**



Landholders who were confident in the accuracy of the NVR map felt that it reflected their understanding of their property and its uses. A few landholders with GIS capabilities noted that the NVR map corresponded well with their own mapping.

“

*I've got six maps, gosh, it corresponds to the terrain very closely, either myself or our contractors have walked all the land.*

”

LLS staff member

For those who were not confident, many had specific issues with how the categories had been identified on their property or with the regulations themselves. These included:

- » in some instances, landholders were concerned that non-native vegetation such as Camphor Laurel had been identified as Category 2—regulated land
- » that historical land uses and agreements had not been captured (for some, these issues were addressed through the map review process)
- » disagreement with the category layers identified in the legislation for example, PVP agreements
- » misalignment of the cadastral boundary.

“

*I don't think regulated land should include regrowth of camphor laurels, privet and coral trees.*

”

North Coast landholder

“

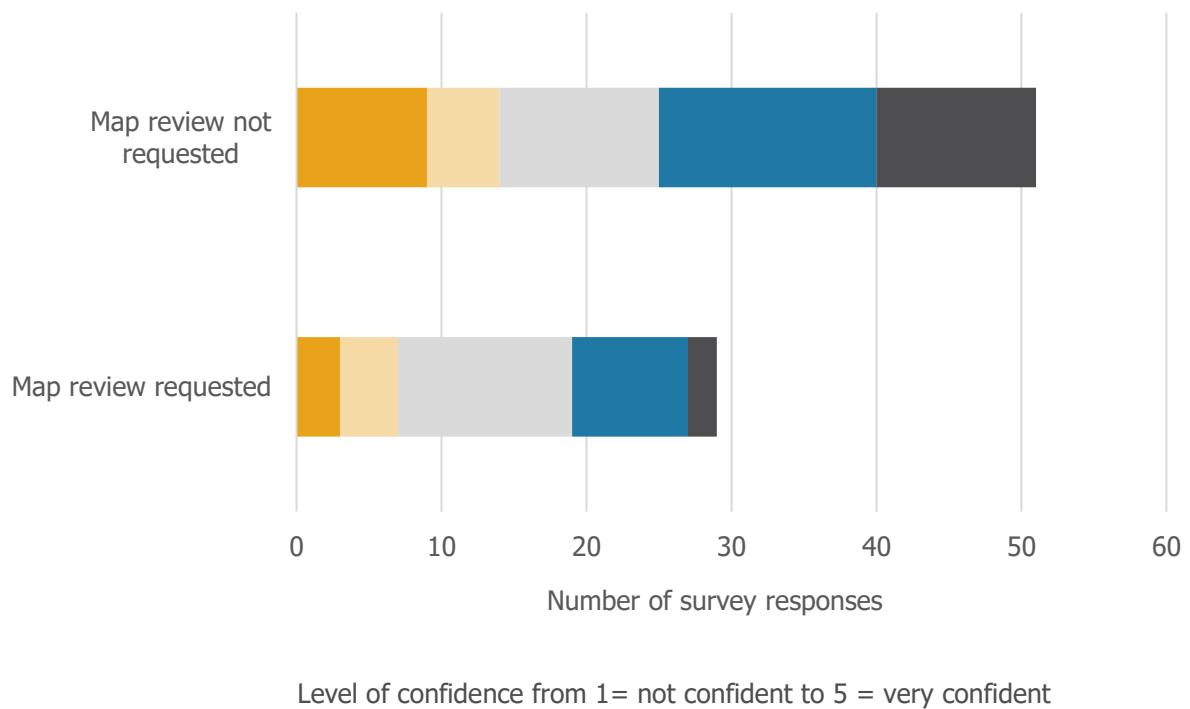
*I don't think it is accurate at this stage. At present I'm arguing that I need more category 1 blue/ exempt land on the property. Ultimately, they may do this too, but I haven't had a final reply yet.*

”

Northern Tablelands landholder

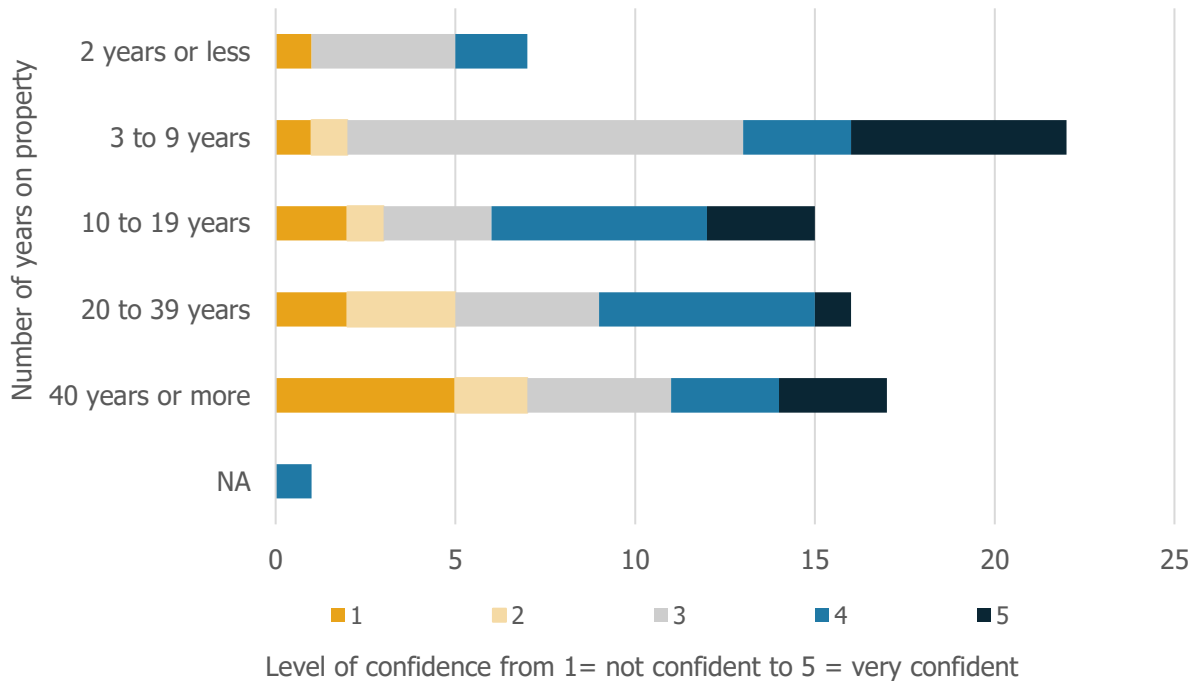
While survey results indicated that landholders seeking a map review were more likely to be more neutral and slightly less confident in the accuracy of the NVR map than landholders who did not seek a map review, the difference was not highly significant. (see Figure 12 below). Levels of confidence in the accuracy of the NVR map following a map review are discussed further in section 3.2.

**Figure 12: Survey response: Comparison in landowner confidence in accuracy of unpublished map layers if requesting a map review or not (n=80)**



Landholders who had been on the property the longest had least confidence in the accuracy of the mapping (see Figure 13). However, a majority of landholders in this bracket were still moderately to very confident in the accuracy of the NVR map.

**Figure 13 Survey response: Landholder confidence in accuracy of unpublished layers by years on property (n=83)**



The type of enterprises that landholders had on their properties did not seem to have a significant impact on their levels of confidence in the NVR map (see Figure 14).

**Figure 14: Survey response: Landholder confidence in accuracy of unpublished layers by enterprise type (n=83)**

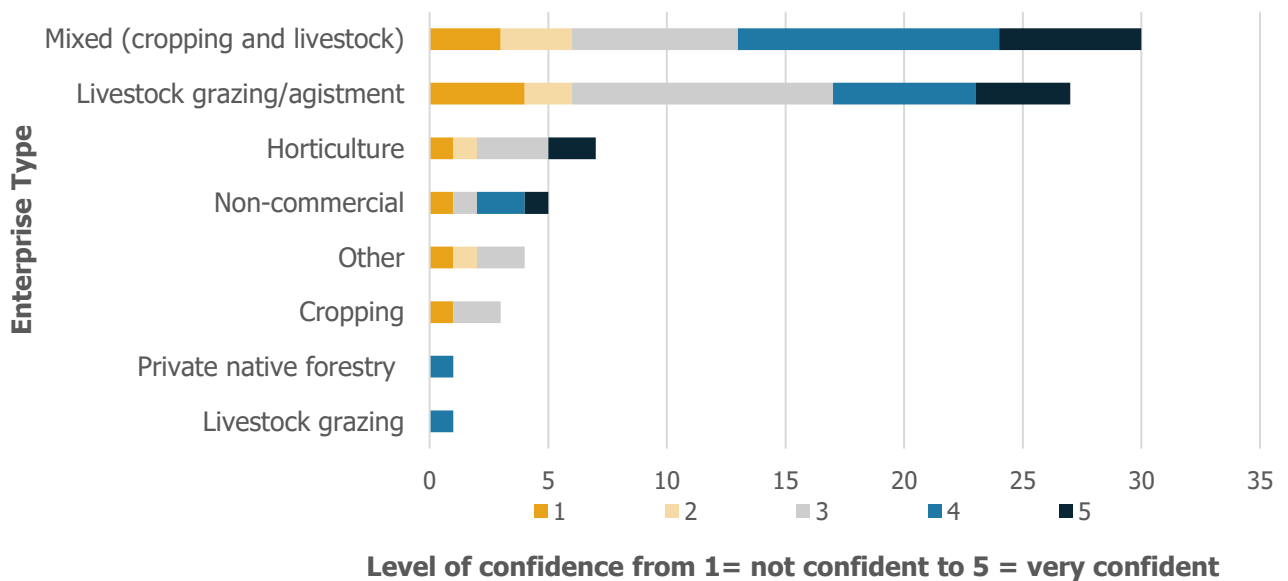


Figure 15 shows confidence in mapping across LLS regions. As with previous graphs, the majority of regions expressed confidence in accuracy of the mapping, with NSW central region landholders expressing most confidence in the accuracy of the mapping. In contrast, landholders within the north coast LLS Region expressed least confidence in the mapping.

**Figure 15 Survey response: Landholder confidence in accuracy of unpublished layers by LLS region (n=78)**

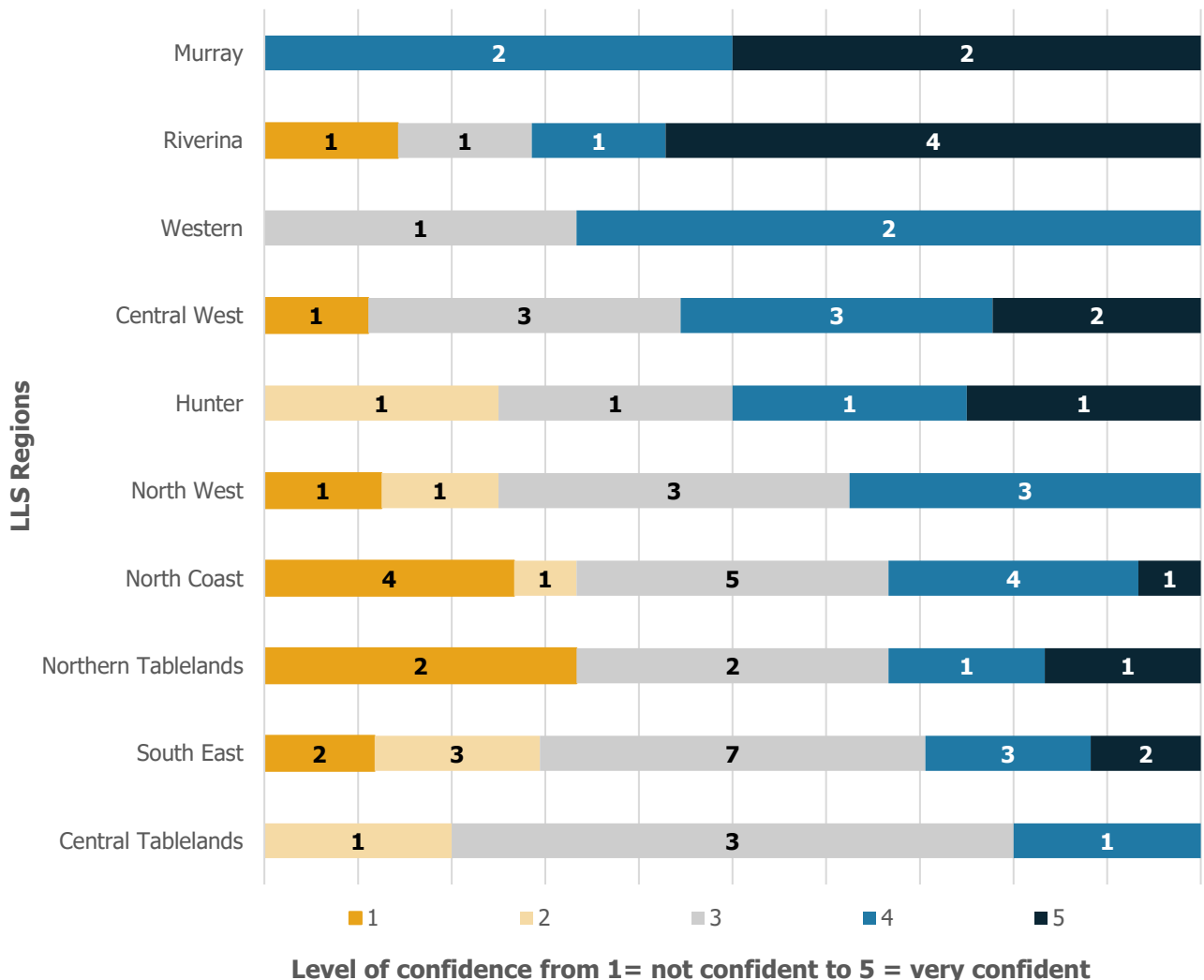


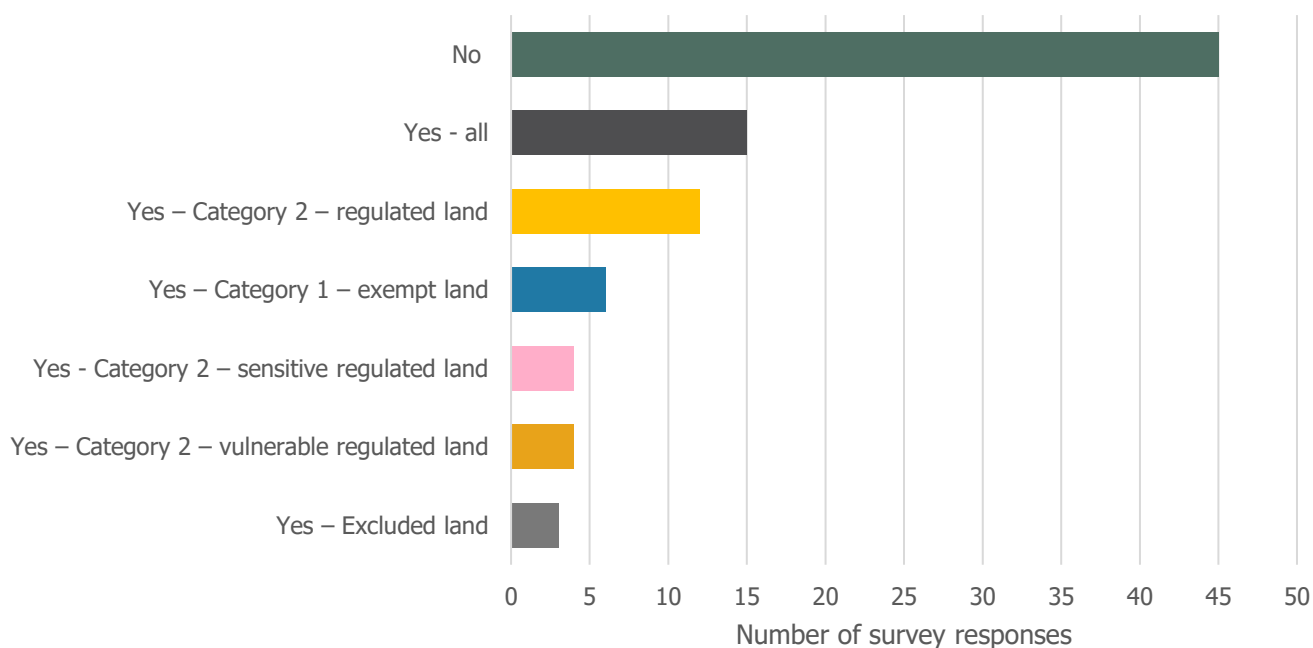
Figure 16 (see over page) identifies that a majority of survey participants (58%) had no concerns with any of the NVR map categories. Of the options provided in the survey, the highest percentage of concerned participants identified all categories (19%) and Category 2—regulated land (15%).

Category 2—regulated land was also the subject of most map reviews. This may largely be because other categories are in the public realm and it is unlikely landholders will be concerned with Category 1—exempt land given clearing vegetation is not regulated on this land.

Additionally, the environmental values and constraints (e.g. streams and slopes) captured in Categories 2 vulnerable and sensitive regulated land are well understood by landholders whereas some landholders (in the detailed interviews) expressed the opinion that land identified Category 2—regulated land is potentially productive land and should be categorised exempt.

Survey and interview findings indicate, while most landholders are comfortable with the NVR categories, a few expressed a desire for further information on how Category 2—regulated land is defined (and what it includes/captures). In addition, a small number of landholders were strongly concerned that inaccuracy of cadastral boundaries impacts the accuracy of the NVR map.

**Figure 16: Survey response: Any landholder concerns regarding NVR map categories (respondents could choose more than one)**



“

*I think there should have been more work on what each category really means, and what you can/can't do in each category. I've had LLS people tell me 'oh that's alright you can do that in cat2 direct drill but they neglect to tell you can't spray it' so there's got to be more explanation of the do's and don'ts of each category – better explanation around the allowable activities.*

”

Northern Tablelands landholder

**Finding 2: Landholder participants feel that the maps assist in land management decision-making**

Generally, landholders felt the NVR map categories assist with land management planning, particularly if the map confirmed their understanding of the vegetation on their property. Some landholders, however, expressed general concern and a lack of awareness about what the Land Management Code and NVR map means, including a lack of familiarity with the land management framework.

72% of survey participants felt the NVR map assists in understanding their obligations under the LLS Act, shown in Figure 17 (see over page). Interviewed participants also expressed views that the NVR map supported decision making on their property. Newer landholders felt the NVR map is an important tool to understand the regulatory requirements and land management opportunities regarding the property. For those familiar with the land management framework, it was felt access to the NVR map enabled them to continue with their land management in an informed manner. One landholder voiced concern that DPIE or LLS have access to this information, while landholders do not.

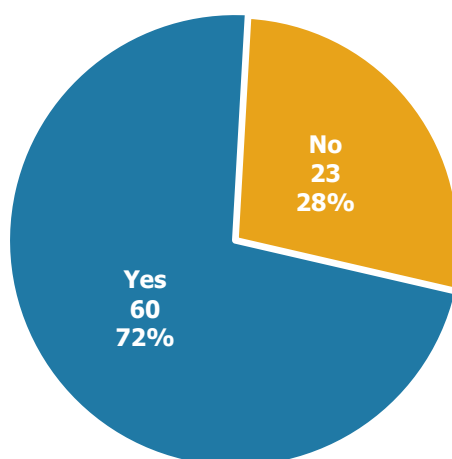
“

*We're new to this farming thing; we weren't aware, so understanding the categories better, was the reason we got the map. We're about to do a big macadamia plantation. The process has also led on to better knowledge of where I can do that, and better connection with the LLS.*

”

North Coast landholder

**Figure 17 Survey response: Does mapping assist you in understanding your obligations under the LLS Act (n=83)**



“

*I understand quite well what the limitations are regarding what I can do on our property now with the level of detail.*

”

Hunter landholder

Agency staff further noted that in discussions with landholders both before and during the evaluation project, a number expressed interest in accessing the draft NVR map and having a clearer understanding of their regulatory requirements.

“

*I have been engaging with customers who had a strong desire to see the maps, even before knew about the project while new landholders were keen to be involved once they heard about it.*

”

LLS staff member

“

*Landholders familiar with the transition NVR map were excited to see the unpublished categories. The majority of landholders were happy to see them come about. People want certainty about those things.*

”

LLS staff member

Survey participants (28%) that felt the NVR map did not support an understanding of LLS Act obligations. The reasons for expressing this view were:

- » A broader lack of understanding about the NVR map categories and the legislation itself. These landholders wanted wider promotion of the NVR map and regulatory processes to support better understanding of its application and relevance to their decision making.
- » A view that they already understand the environmental values of the property and what they can and can not do with the land
- » Others landholders disagreed with what is permissible under certain categories.



“

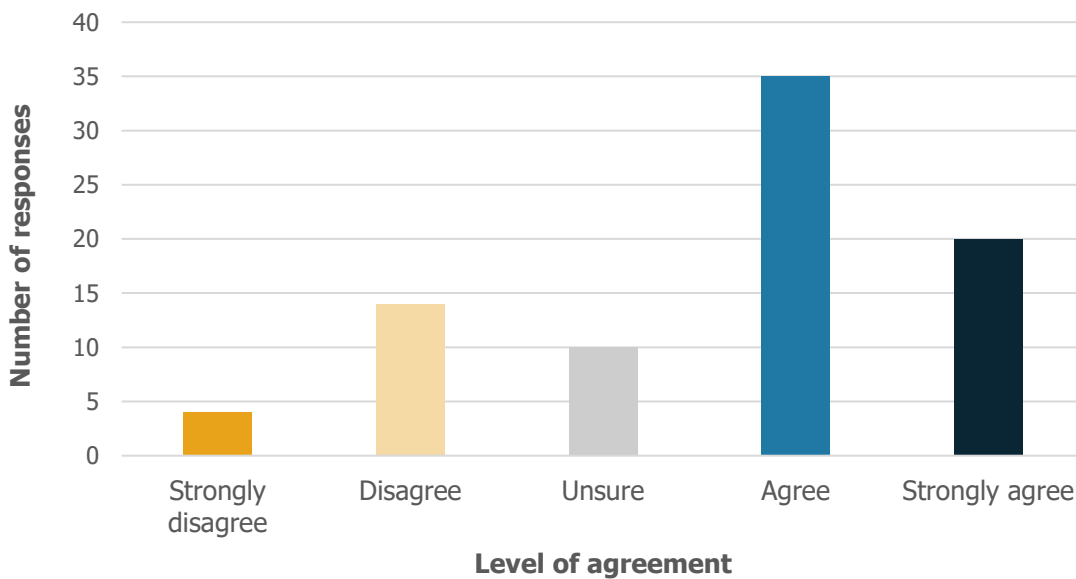
*No its not helpful because most of what is yellow I wouldn't do anything stupid with, I wouldn't be altering it.*

”

Central Tablelands landholder

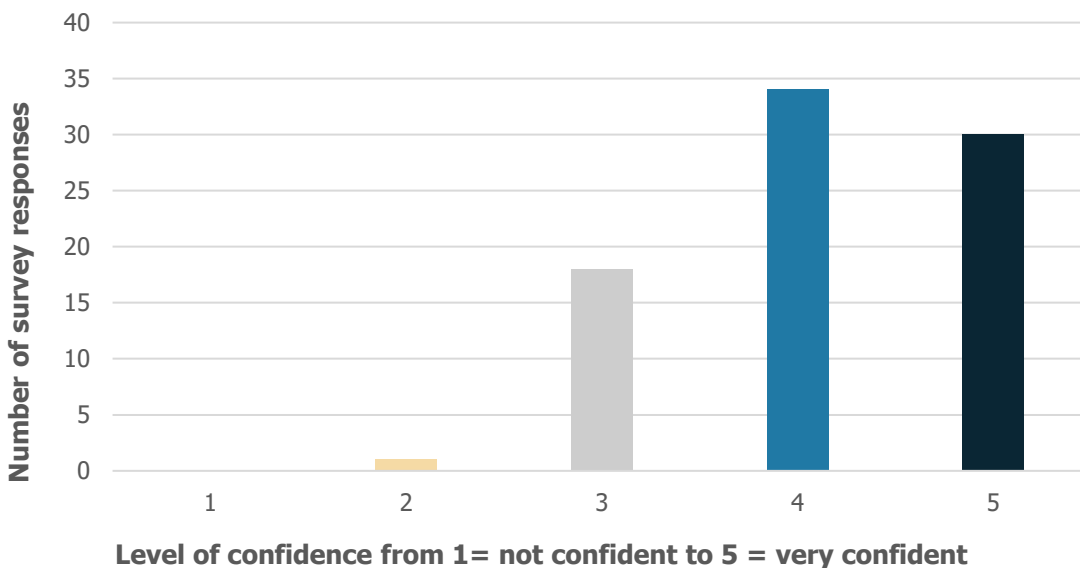
Figure 18 illustrates that 64% of survey participants agreed the number and type of maps provided were sufficient to inform land management decision making.

**Figure 18 Survey response: Landholder views whether number and types of NVR maps support land management decision-making (n=83)**



In addition, most survey participants found the NVR map easy to use (see Figure 19). A higher resolution map, available online as well as the ability to zoom in and out of their map was identified as further helpful information resources by landholders.

**Figure 19: Survey response: ease of use of the NVR map (n=83)**



### Finding 3: Landholder participants use the supporting information to interpret the map

Most landholders were satisfied with the supporting information and found it useful in interpreting the maps. Figure 20 shows the fact sheets were generally viewed as informative and help to improve understanding of the NVR map. Many who read the documentation felt that the material was valuable. Nearly all of the interview participants were appreciative of the information and direct contact with agency staff. They felt the fact sheets and the category explanation report were comprehensive, clear and useful.

“

*Found it very helpful, all of the supporting information, didn't find anything in the package that was not useful, quite happy about it, applies across all fact sheets, category explanation, and discussions.*

”

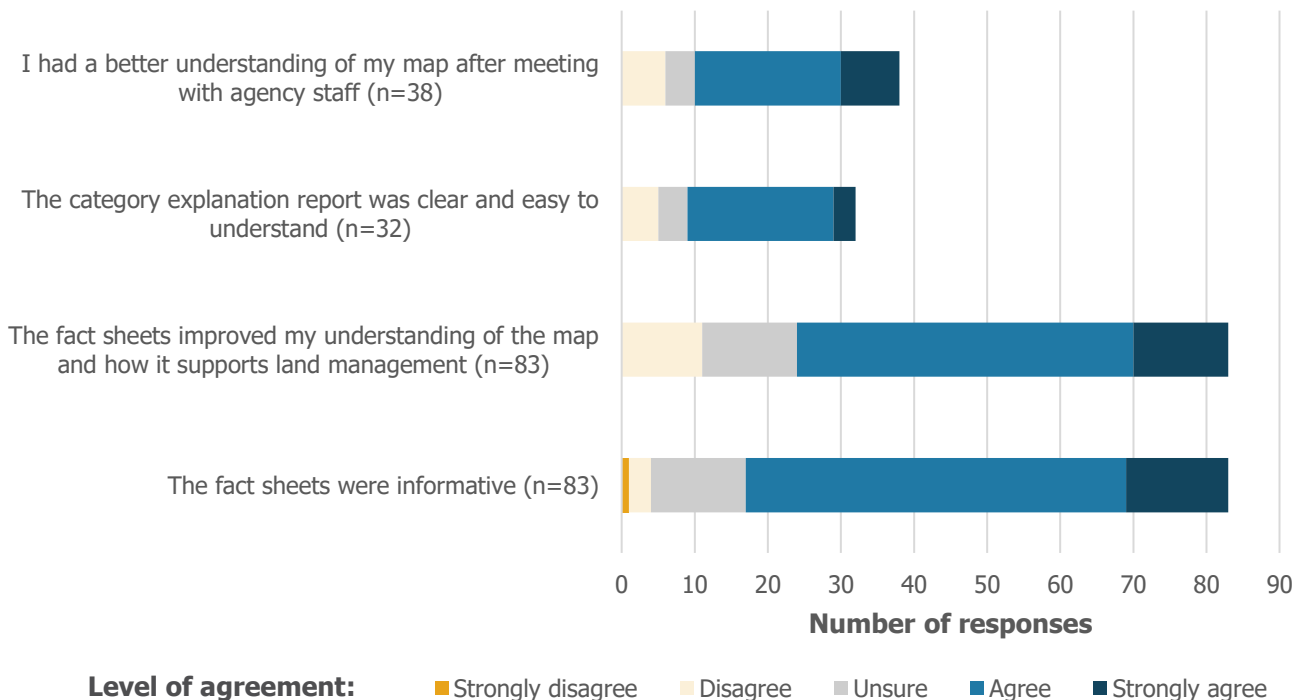
Central West landholder

Agency staff did note, however, that the material could be improved by being written in user friendly 'plain English'. LLS staff highlighted that landholders appeared overwhelmed by the sheer amount of information and confused about other data on the maps (such as cadastre and council zoning). The opportunity to speak directly with landholders was helpful to further explain how the LLS regulation and NVR maps should be interpreted for individual properties.

The one or two interviewed landholders who were not as positive about the supporting information tended to not have used read the material as they felt that there was too much information was provided and it was difficult to find the specific information they were seeking.

Of the 32 survey participants who stated that they had received a category explanation report, despite DPIE only tabulating that they had sent out 23 reports, 88% felt this document was clear and easy to understand. In addition, landholders indicated that discussions with agency staff were an important tool to provide further clarification regarding the NVR map. Agency staff reiterated the value of speaking with landholders directly to explain the NVR map and its categories.

**Figure 20: Survey response: information and engagement**



A few landholders commented that the terminology and information describing the categories (particularly Category 2–regulated land) should be more user friendly to support interpretation. Feedback from the evaluation was for supporting material and legislation to better communicate both the environmental values on the land and provide guidance on allowable activities within those areas. One or two interviewed landholders expressed an underlying distrust of government and dislike of any form of regulation impacting their ‘right’ to manage their property. In this context, the term ‘regulated’ in Category 2 – regulated land was viewed with high suspicion and antagonism.

“

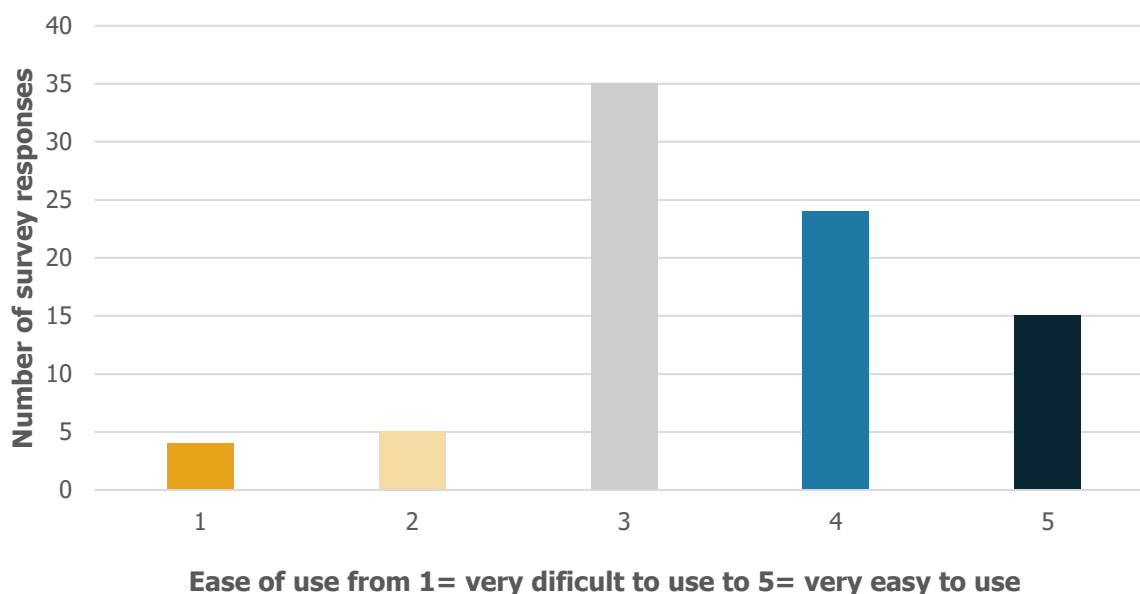
*I understand the map when I look at it, but how that translates to what I can do on the ground is not entirely clear, I have to go to the other information. Category 1 is clear but you’ve really got to delve into the background info for category 2 – you can’t just work it out on your own bat.*

”

Central West landholder

Those survey participants who had accessed the published NVR map online generally found the online tool easy to use, shown in Figure 21.

**Figure 21: Survey response: Ease of using the NVR online map (n=83)**



In general, the material provided to landholders was sufficient both to inform land management decision making and interpret the NVR map (see Figures 20 and 21 above). From interviews, landholders expressed the view that this understanding was particularly enhanced by discussions with agency staff.

From the evaluation it appears that engaged landholders understand where to look and can interpret the NVR map, with the assistance of the supplementary information. Landholders new to the process may need additional assistance to interpret NVR map materials. All landholders that nominated engagement with agency staff, felt this was highly useful to support understanding of the NVR map for their property.

When prompted, survey participants suggested the following to assist with interpreting the NVR map:

- » on site and face to face meetings including regular and open consultation and engagement with LLS and/or DPIE as well as designated appointments
- » a published map
- » wider promotion and awareness raising
- » greater descriptions and information on how to interpret categories
- » website and information on how to access the map online

- » additional mapping elements including contour, accurate pinpoints and interactive elements
- » notification on map updates
- » guidance for landholders on how to ask questions.

When prompted, survey participants suggested the following additional fact sheets detailing:

- » how categories are defined
- » what the regulations mean and a breakdown of permitted activities, particularly on regulated land such as how it has been identified and what is not permitted
- » detail regarding the NVR map categories, their differences and examples
- » land manager obligations
- » how to extract map layers and other capabilities of the program
- » how to access a map review and options for when you disagree with the map.
- » drainage lines
- » information on boundary fences.

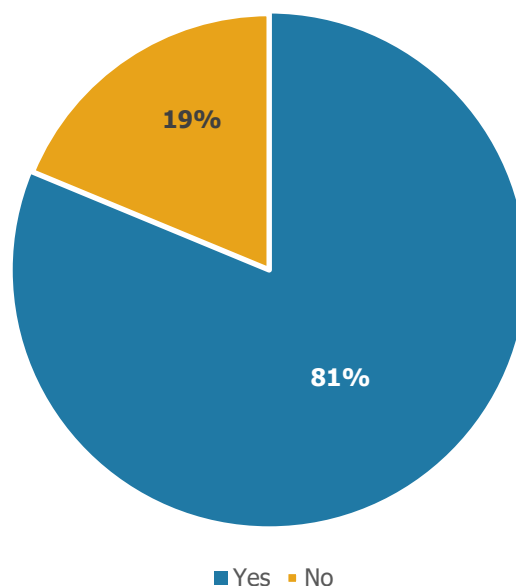
## 3.2. Landholder satisfaction and confidence in the map review process

Thirty-two survey participants requested a map review prior to the commencement of the research activities. Of these, 11 landholders had completed the review process before undertaking the phone survey. A further 14 landholders completed a map review before being interviewed. Landholders sought map reviews where elements of their NVR map were deemed inaccurate. Further information regarding map review outcomes is detailed in Section 3.4.

### Finding 4: Landholder participants understand how to access a map review

Landholders surveyed were generally aware of how to access a map review. It should be noted that these landholders are already familiar with the agencies and are engaged with the NVR process. Landholders indicated that direct contact with the agencies was helpful during the review. Most landholders surveyed and interviewed who sought a map review felt the application process was easy to understand (see Figure 22).

Figure 22 Survey response: Ease of map review application process



### Finding 5: Landholder participants are satisfied in the map review process including timeliness

Generally, landholders were satisfied with the map review process. Both landholders and agency staff identified map reviews as a relatively uncomplicated and free pathway to address any concerns about land classifications.

“

*Map reviews provide a natural justice pathway for landholders, that they are free and accessible, not just during the period when the map is on draft exhibition but to change the maps in the long-term.*

”

DPIE staff member

Accessing, discussing and receiving the map review was considered relatively straight forward, prompt and achieved a good outcome. Nine interview participants noting that they received an outcome they were happy with.

Most felt:

- » their perspectives and evidence had been considered in the map review process
- » the streamlined process to obtain a map review was satisfactory, particularly for those landholders who had completed a map review prior to the Evaluation Project
- » the reviews were completed in a timely manner
- » the outcome of their review was mostly satisfactory.

Landholders who had applied for a map review expressed strong satisfaction regarding the process to seek a map review. These landholders described the meeting and communication with the map review team as a good opportunity to explain their concerns regarding the NVR map.

“

*It was simple and, as expected, even during COVID – we had a link up over the phone, the guys were in Orange and it all worked easily.*

”

North Coast landholder

At the time of being surveyed, 11 survey participants had completed their map review, with the majority satisfied with the process as shown in Figure 25. Most interview participants expressed trust and confidence in the map review process should one be required.

“

*I know it is inaccurate now, but I trust the process to update it.*

”

Riverina landholder

“

*I think the system is working, as long as the reviews work.*

”

North Coast landholder

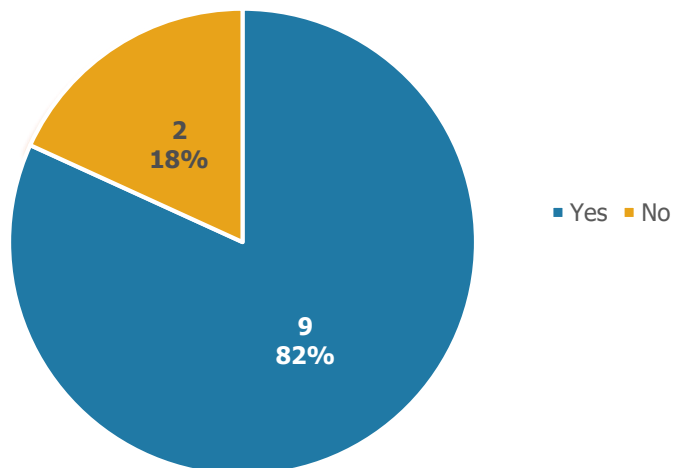
Comments from the two landholders who remained unsatisfied reflect personal concerns regarding the NVR regulations and its impact on their property.

A landholder expressed concern that, while they were happy with the amendment to the map on their property, there is a risk that neighbouring properties will have similar issues with Category 2–regulated land and/or the cadastre.

Most landholders expressed satisfaction with the timeliness of their map review, with only two indicating dissatisfaction with the process (see Figure 23).

A small number of landholders were awaiting the outcome of their review at the time of interview. One landholder, whose review process had not been achieved in the statutory time period, was satisfied that additional time had been taken for the review process due to the complexity of the review. This reflected agency feedback that landholders were comfortable waiting for their review when they understood the reason for any delay and communication was open.

Figure 23 Survey response: map review process satisfaction (n=11)



“

*I'm satisfied. I'm relieved it's an ongoing process and if we find something that's not quite right they will look at it again.*

”

South East landholder

“

*The outcome is probably what it has to be, I would have liked a little bit more blue, but my personal desires aren't really part of that.*

”

North Coast landholder

Most landholders felt the revised maps were sufficient to communicate the outcome of their review. Additionally, landholders noted the value of engaging with agency staff throughout the map review. Agency staff also noted the benefit of information sharing and regular communication throughout the review.

Two dissenting landholders felt the process that insufficient information was provided to justify the outcome and sought greater clarification. They remained in dispute with the map review team regarding categorisation of their lands.

“

*The documents look like they have been written by the lawyers – hence making it confusing for landholders – not prepared to change the terminology to make it more user friendly.*

”

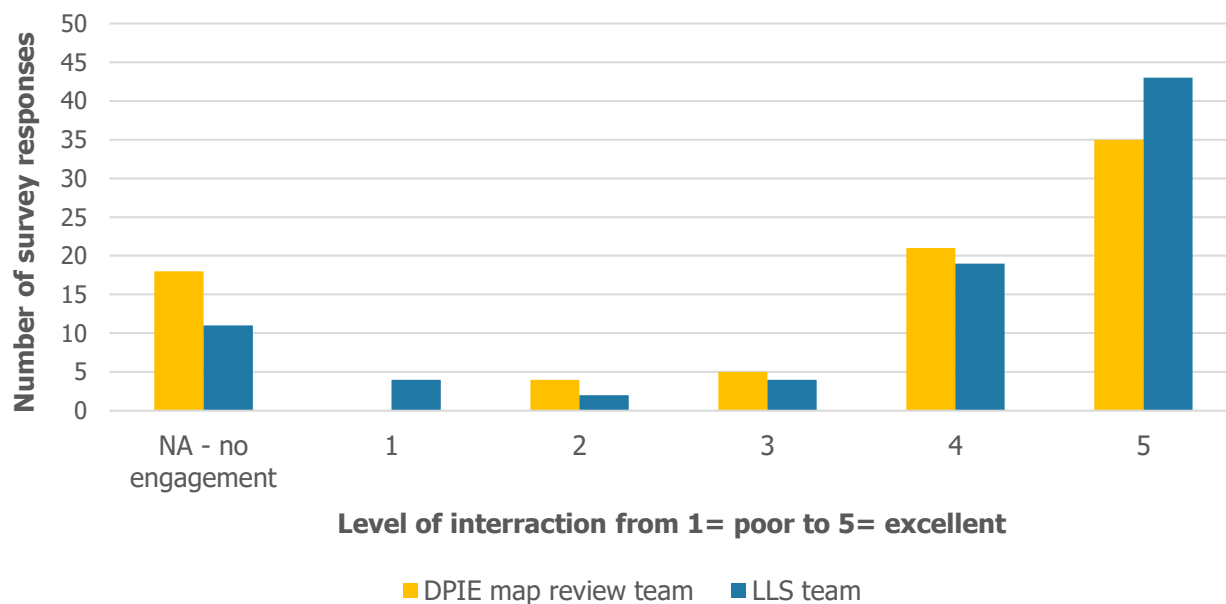
Hunter landholder

### 3.3. Landholder satisfaction with contact and support from the agencies

#### Finding 6: Landholders participants are satisfied with interaction with agency staff

Landholders expressed strong satisfaction with the communication from agency staff through all stages of the evaluation project, shown in Figure 24. This included initial engagement and discussions as well as map review conversations.

Figure 24 Survey response: engagement with agency staff (n=83)



Interview participants felt listened to and helped by agency staff. Agency staff were described as professional and having done a good job.

“

*Yes. Reading the background, the various aspects, and had a discussion with an official which clarified all. Having someone to talk to was super useful.*

”

Hunter landholder

“

*LLS are magic they are such a fantastic organisation to have behind you, explained lots of things, they came out to the property and walked around, having the mapping was really useful, they were surprised when I called out things on the map, the combination of LLS and the map worked perfectly.*

”

North Coast landholder

Agency staff also reported satisfaction with timely information sharing and communications between the agencies and to landholders. They reported that landholders preferred direct virtual engagement rather than written correspondence. This meant that discussions did not need to be done face to face, saving time and money on travel costs.



“

*Landholders we engaged preferred the opportunity for direct and personal discussion over phone or email for common misunderstandings about the map, rather than group communication.*

”

DPIE staff member

“

*Talking with landholders meant we were able to build rapport and communicate that we are here to help rather than regulate.*

”

DPIE staff member

A couple of landholders felt communication was inconsistent regarding certain elements of the NVR map and allowable activities in Category 2 – regulated land. But most landholders felt that early engagement with agency staff strongly supported interpretation of the NVR map for their property.

“

*Great talking to people face to face online, it was better to have a two way conversation than just the info pack.*

”

North Coast landholder

“

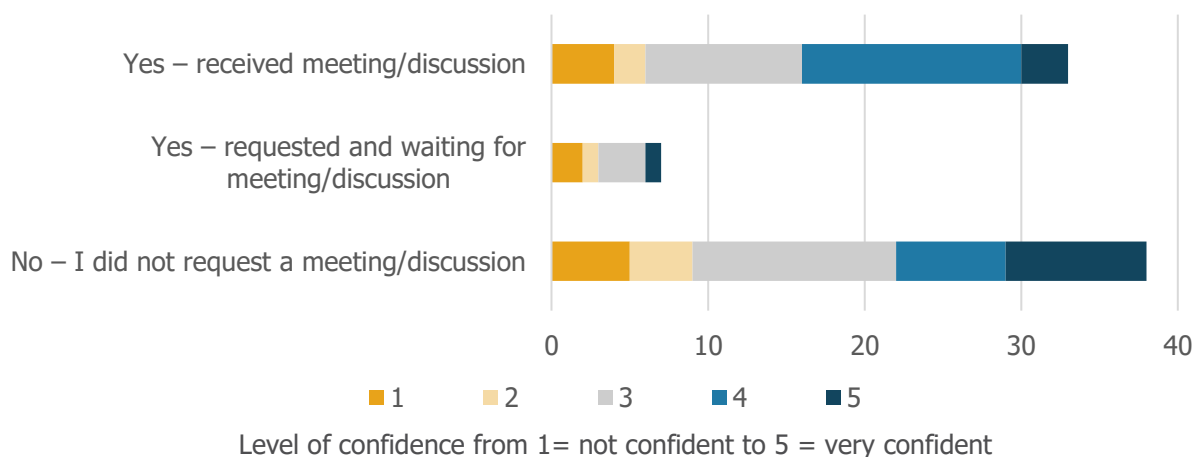
*I do think if you're coming in stone cold, any paperwork is confronting for farmers, you do need local people to talk them through, eg Local LLS.*

”

South East landholder

Just over half of survey participants (51%) accessed or sought to access a meeting with DPIE and LLS to interpret their map, shown in Figure 27. Of the 49% who did not access the meeting most were satisfied with their map. However, there were 5 survey participants who were not at all confident with the accuracy of the mapping but did not take up the offer of a discussion with agency staff or request a map review.

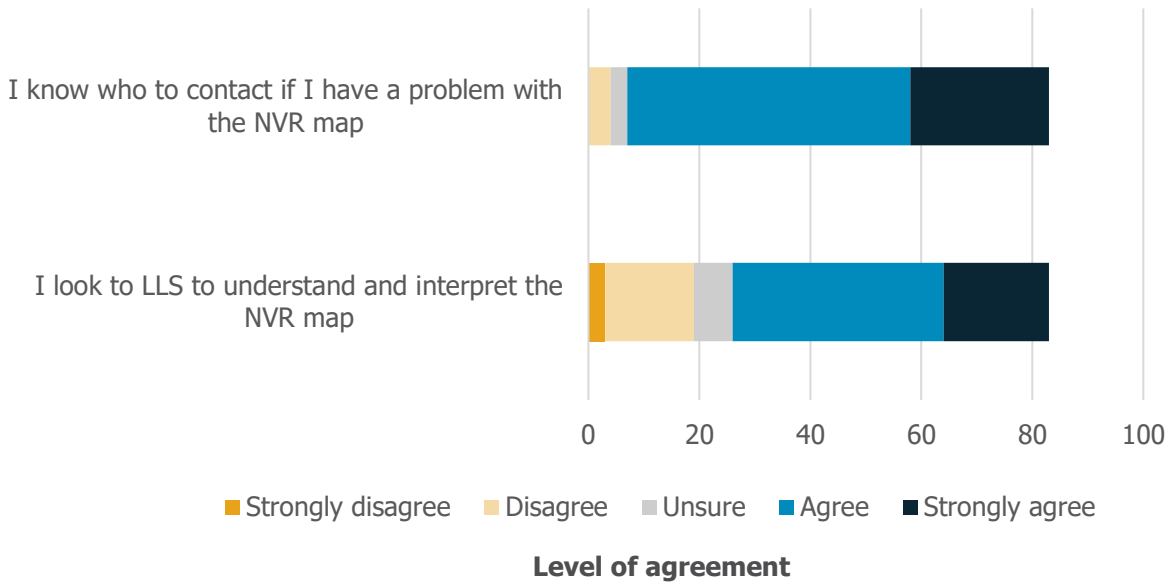
**Figure 25: Survey response: Landowner confidence in accuracy of unpublished map layers by discussion requested or not (n=83)**



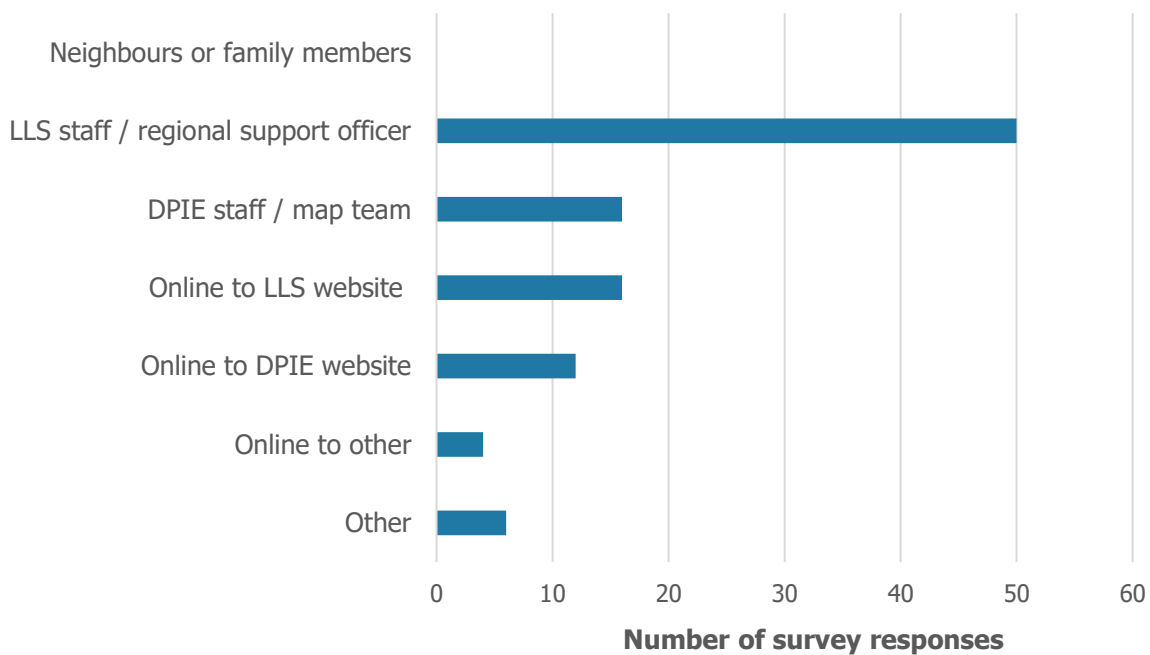
**Finding 7: Landholders are confident in where to go to access advice and support regarding the NVR map and review process**

Figures 26 and 27 demonstrate that agency staff are an essential source of information for landholders using the NVR map. Again, it is worth noting many landholders recruited to this process had a level of engagement with LLS or DPIE previously and this may result in a bias as to where landholders seek advice. However, even landholders new to the process felt confident in knowing where to go to get further information. In addition, those landholders without existing relationships expressed satisfaction in the new engagement and relationship with agency staff.

**Figure 26: Survey response: accessing advice and support (n=83)**



**Figure 27: Survey response: where to seek more information about the NVR map (respondents could choose more than one response)**



### 3.4. Adequacy of resources to deliver and maintain the map

#### Finding 8: Ability to meet deadlines for map delivery and statutory timeframes for map reviews

Of the 49 map reviews completed during the evaluation project, 61% were completed within the 40 day timeframe designated by regulation, with an average completion time of 41days.

Both landholders and DPIE staff identified some of the landholdings as being complex. These cases required additional time to support a thorough assessment, which was in the interest of both parties. Each case determined after the 40 day period was approved by DPIE. In addition, the legislation permits DPIE to make a map review decision after the 40 days, although the application is 'deemed refused' after this period.

It is also worth noting this project was the first time DPIE had undertaken map reviews with landholders regarding Category 1–exempt land and Category 2–regulated land. Both DPIE and LLS staff identified key learnings from the evaluation period that they felt would support more efficient and effective delivery of the review process in the future. Specifically, process bottlenecks have been identified and are now able to be addressed, such as single person dependencies in the team.

“

*This was the first time that teams worked in the Cat1/2 space – it was a pressure test for processes – much achieved and much learned.*

”

DPIE staff member

DPIE staff further noted that a few complex cases influenced the ability to meet identified timeframes. Positively, these cases have tested and improved DPIE’s capacity to deal with similar issues in future and identify areas for improvement. Both agencies recommended using these cases as future learning opportunities as part of a training package that would support knowledge and skill sharing between the organisations.

LLS staff noted that the DPIE map review team was “quick, responsive and helpful”. They saw it as one of the key positives of the evaluation project.

Table 6 highlights key statistics regarding map reviews completed in the evaluation project. Of particular note is the small proportion of property amended through the review process (4.8%). Further discussion on the map reviews complete is provided in Section 2.2.

**Table 6 Map review outcomes**

<b>Average Area of property reviewed (ha)</b>	6944
<b>Average percentage of property area reviewed changed from Category 2 to Category 1</b>	4.8%
<b>Average days to complete</b>	41
<b>Percentage of Map reviews completed within 40 days</b>	61%

Providing additional training for staff to support the future roll out of the NVR map was supported by both agencies.

#### Finding 9: Importance of providing resources for early landholder engagement to support effective delivery of services including map review

Feedback highlighted the need for sufficient resources to support effective delivery of NVR map services and review. This included the range of tasks associated with preparing, updating, reviewing, communicating and engaging with landholders as part of the NVR map delivery.

Agency staff felt providing resources early in the NVR map rollout, with a focus on landholder awareness and engagement were critical to support improved outcomes in relation to stakeholder confidence and satisfaction. This reflects the strong satisfaction landholders expressed regarding their engagement with agency staff.

A secondary benefit of the evaluation project was the collaboration between agency staff, presenting a consistent approach to landholders. There was some suggestion a working group representing both agencies could be maintained to simplify processes, workflows and ensure the feedback loop is complete.

“

*It would be valuable to retain the regular communication between our teams.*

”

LLS staff member

Further to the engagement provided, it was suggested the review process could be improved through a streamlined request form prior to formal notification of a review. This would provide the agencies with an opportunity to contact the landholder in advance and ensure all information required for the review was available and to address any confusion or misunderstandings.

“

*It would be good to create a guide for landholders that helps them provide information to support a review, as there are numerous ways the map can change e.g. information or evidence about past clearing vs use of the code or on ground assessments.*

”

DPIE staff member

On a number of occasions, agency staff noted a conversation with landholders either resolved the matter entirely or substantially reduced concerns around the review process and the areas requiring a review. In addition, the ability to discuss issues with landholders online or over the phone improved efficiencies. In this instance, reviews could be targeted and conducted efficiently.

Staff from both agencies did not see resourcing as a barrier to publishing the NVR map, although a few noted concerns if current levels of resourcing were not maintained or enhanced. In addition, many felt internal processes and tools had been tested and improved through the evaluation project, providing some level of confidence should the NVR map be published in full. Many also expressed the importance of clarifying roles and maintaining communications between the agencies to do so.

“

*We would like more training and clarity around the transitional arrangements including landholders' use of these to determine category 1 and 2 and how this may impact the map categories.*

”

DPIE staff member

Feedback across both workshops felt that additional cross-agency training and education as well as opportunities to foster knowledge sharing would assist in future collaboration to deliver the NVR map.

“

*I am concerned that LLS will be relied upon very heavily if the maps are released – we do not have the time or staff to provide a large level of help. Nonetheless, I do not want resourcing to prevent the release of the maps but EES needs to make sure they are prepared*

”

LLS staff member

## 4. Conclusion and recommendations

The evaluation project has identified and confirmed the relative importance of the NVR map in providing certainty for landholders, proponents and government and is a valuable tool for improved land use management and decision making.

The [Recommendations](#) detailed in the Executive Summary have been identified based on the findings of this report.

### Recommendation 1:

Release the unpublished categories of the NVP map to provide certainty and transparency for stakeholders regarding their land management responsibilities and options.

#### Based on:

#### **Finding 1: A majority of landholder participants are confident in the map's accuracy for Categories 1 (exempt) and 2 (regulated land) on their property**

In general, most landholders felt that the NVR map accurately identified how NVR categories should be applied to their properties. Of those that expressed concern about categorisation of their properties the following issues were identified:

- » Concerns about accuracy relating to previous agricultural land use, LLS updates not reflected in the maps, cadastral issues and significant native vegetation not identified as regulated land.
- » Uncertainty and disagreement regarding the definition of Category 2 – regulated land.
- » Distrust of government regulation and general concern that land management framework has increased restrictions on land use.

#### **Finding 2: Most landholders surveyed felt the map and associated categories were useful to inform land management**

The evaluation findings identified that landholders felt the updated mapping helped them to understand their obligations under the Local Land Services Act. This correlates with LLS and DPIE staff feedback noting that transitional arrangements and the lack of published categories have increased uncertainty and a lack of transparency for landholders in undertaking land management measures. Agency staff also noted difficulty in enforcing provisions of the Act as a proportion of landholders remain unaware of their regulatory responsibilities.

There was feedback from agency staff that landholders were eager to gain access to the draft NVR map.

### Recommendation 2:

Set and announce a date to publish the NVR map and end the transitional period. Precede this with a period where the draft NVR map published online.

The draft NVR Map should be available for a minimum of 6 months to a maximum of 12 months, to support a shift from transitional arrangements. The Map Review process is available to landholders during the period of draft publication, and beyond when the map is published, as stipulated in the legislation (s60L LLS Act). This process will assist landholder confidence in the NVR map.

#### Based on:

#### **Finding 4: Landholder participants understand how to access a map review**

Participants reported that they understood how to access a map review. The evaluation process concluded before most of the map reviews were concluded. In total, eleven survey participants and a further 15 interview participants had completed their map reviews at the time research was conducted. Of these, the majority found the application process easy to understand and were relatively happy with the outcome.

Agency staff felt early engagement with landholders was a critical aspect of the strong factor in landholder satisfaction with the review process.

### **Finding 5: Landholder participants are satisfied in the map review process including timeliness**

Both the landholder evaluation process and agency staff feedback generally concurred that existing processes are working well with respect to review processes. Landholders were generally comfortable with waiting additional time for a decision if reasons were provided clearly and information communicated openly. Both landholders and staff acknowledged the value of increased time to review complex matters.

#### **Recommendation 3:**

Prior to release of the NVR map unpublished categories, prepare:

- a. Implementation plan that addresses release timing, method of release, staff capacity, training and resources for engaging with landholders and undertaking map reviews.
- b. Communications and engagement plan encompassing:
  - Promotion and awareness of the LLS Act 2013 and the NVR map.
  - Review of map collateral including fact sheets and the website to ensure plain English terminology and to focus on issues of concern to landholders such as map updates.
  - Identification of direct engagement with agency staff through digital and face-to-face mechanisms

#### **Based on:**

### **Finding 3: Landholders found the supporting information and engagement valuable in interpreting the map**

In general, landholders evaluated, found the supporting information and engagement with agency staff to be valuable in understanding both interpreting the map and understanding the NVR map review process. There were requests however for terminology and information associated with category definitions and map development to be more user friendly. This includes clarification regarding how the maps will be used and updated in the future, including concerns about privacy with respect to an online resource.

Most evaluation participants who had used the online tool felt it was relatively easy to use. It should be noted that landholders engaged through this project largely had a good understanding of the land management framework and had previously engaged with either LLS or DPIE. Most evaluation participants therefore had a base level of understanding about the NVR map and categories, as well as a relationship with LLS.

Given this targeted evaluation selection process, it is interesting that, close to half of the landholder participants, were not previously familiar with the NVR map. Awareness raising and promotion were identified by staff and landholders as important in releasing the draft NVR map. They also identified a small number of additional information resources to support improved understanding and interpretation of categories.

### **Finding 6: Landholder participants are satisfied with interaction with agency staff**

Agency staff were cognisant of the diverse level of engagement and interest in the NVR map. They identified the need to ensure that engagement approaches regarding publication of the draft NVR map should cater to this diversity whilst also making use of the NVR map as simple as possible.

Providing an avenue for early and direct engagement with landholders rather than relying on written information as an important part of the roll out of the unpublished NVR map categories. It provided an opportunity for agency staff to deal with any minor misunderstandings, build rapport and communicate to landholders about their intent to help rather than regulate.

Although the evaluation and review cohort are a small sample, there were a proportionally higher number of evaluation and review participants from the North Coast LLS region. It is a regional area with a relatively higher population, small holdings and a diverse topography leading to complexity in categorising land. It will be necessary to ensure resources reflect the needs of individual areas.

#### **Recommendation 4:**

Identify and document processes to support streamlining and simplifying the map review process (noting that release is likely to increase the operational resource requirements for agency staff). This may include an initial interest form for landholders, prior to review assessment.

#### **Based on:**

#### **Finding 8: Ability to meet deadlines for map delivery and statutory timeframes for map reviews**

It is noted regulatory requirements for reviews to be completed in 40 days were met in 60% of cases. Agency staff also noted the release of the unpublished categories (particularly in respect of Category 2 – regulated) was likely to lead to an increase in reviews. As such, additional resourcing once the unpublished categories were released would be required.

#### **Recommendation 5:**

Maintain a NVR map project working group as an interagency operational forum to support communication, knowledge sharing and issue identification regarding the NVR map and land management framework.

#### **Based on:**

#### **Finding 9: Importance of providing resources for early engagement with landholders to support effective delivery of services including map review**

Both landholders and agency staff strongly appreciated early engagement in supporting beneficial outcomes in interpreting map categories and in navigating the review process.

Early and direct informal engagement with landholders was beneficial in helping landholders feel confident that they can communicate why they feel the NVR map is inaccurate. Being able to discuss issues upfront provided an opportunity to efficiently explain any misconceptions about the map rather than go back and forth chasing information on forms and by email.

Agency staff noted the value of increased collaboration in effectively supporting landholders and providing a consistent message to landholders. This was particularly beneficial for landholders interpreting the NVR map and throughout the review processes. Maintaining a strong operational relationship between the two agencies was seen as an important aspect of on-going project delivery and improvements to the NVR map.

#### **Recommendation 6:**

Provide regular and ongoing communication and engagement on the Land Management Framework including the NVR map and Land Management Code. This supports informed land management decision making.

#### **Based on:**

#### **Finding 7: Landholders are confident in where to go to access advice and support regarding the NVR map and review process**

The evaluation project identified that a cohort of landholders remain unfamiliar with the LLS Act and the NVR map. Up to half of the surveyed landholders, despite interacting with their local LLS agency staff, had not previously engaged with the NVR map. The evaluation process provided an opportunity to increase awareness of the land management regulatory framework and increased knowledge in how it is being managed.

On-going promotion and communication of the Government's land management framework is strongly encouraged at regular intervals post the release of the unpublished categories to maintain awareness of the NVR map.

## Evaluation next steps

In addition to the findings related to the objectives of the evaluation process, the research provided additional feedback that was considered in the recommendations.

Agency staff noted the evaluation project has provided important feedback on landholder confidence regarding the unpublished NVR map categories and resourcing levels. It has also provided an opportunity to informally assess landholder awareness of the Government's land management framework as well as supported improvements in agency collaboration and process delivery. It is strongly recommended that the agencies establish a regular (minimum five yearly) comprehensive evaluation process, beyond annual reporting of performance benchmarks.

If the unpublished categories of the NVR map are released as recommended, future evaluation processes can be carried out without requiring active and targeted recruitment by agencies. It is further recommended that the evaluation process be carefully timed to minimise overlap with key seasonal activities and holiday periods.

### **Recommendation 7:**

Undertake regular monitoring and evaluation of NVR map delivery to support ongoing improvements. An independent, comprehensive evaluation 5 years post publication would assist to maintain consideration of:

- effectiveness and efficiency of map review process
- stakeholder confidence
- environmental outcomes achieved.



# Appendices

- A. NVR map categories
- B. Agreed project principles
- C. Landholder consent to participate form
- D. Data collection tools

# NVR map categories

Map Colour	Map Category	Description	
Grey	Land Excluded from the LLS Act	<p>The LLS Act defines parts of the State where land is excluded from the operation of Part 5A of the LLS Act. These areas include state forests, national park estate, Lord Howe Island and certain conservation areas across the State.</p> <p>Urban areas of the state to which <b>State Environmental Planning Policy (Vegetation in Non-Rural Areas) 2017</b> applies are also excluded from Part 5A of the LLS Act. These areas include a range of metropolitan local government areas as well as a number of land zones contained within Local Environmental Plans such as residential, commercial, industrial, recreation and environmental zones.</p>	
Blue	Category 1 - exempt (unregulated) land	<p>This category displays land that can be cleared without requiring approval under Part 5A of the LLS Act. It generally includes land assessed as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>land cleared (or significantly disturbed or modified in the case of grasslands or other non-woody vegetation) at 1 January 1990</li> <li>land lawfully cleared between 1 January 1990 and 25 August 2017</li> <li>land containing, low conservation value grasslands or groundcover</li> <li>and/or native vegetation identified as regrowth in a property vegetation plan under the Native Vegetation Act 2003</li> <li>biodiversity certified land to which Part 5A of the LLS Act applies.</li> </ul>	
Yellow	Category 2 - regulated land	<p>This category displays land where clearing is regulated and can only be carried out in accordance with Part 5A of the LLS Act, using allowable activities and the Land Management Code. It generally includes land assessed as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>land not cleared of native vegetation at 1 January 1990</li> <li>land unlawfully cleared since 1 January 1990</li> <li>land with existing conservation obligations including remedial directions</li> <li>areas mapped as category 2 – regulated land because of specific criteria stipulated in the LLS Act or LLS Regulation.</li> </ul>	
Orange	Category 2 – vulnerable regulated land	<p>This category displays land where clearing is regulated and can only be carried out in accordance with Part 5A of the LLS Act. The definition of native vegetation on this land includes dead and non-native plants. Use of allowable activities and the Land Management Code may be restricted. It generally includes land assessed as;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>steep (18 degrees or over) or highly erodible lands</li> <li>protected riparian land</li> <li>special category land</li> </ul>	<p><b>Brown</b></p> <p>Where Category 2 vulnerable regulated and Category 2 sensitive regulated map layers overlap – they are shown on the NVR map as brown</p>
Pink	Category 2 – sensitive regulated land	<p>This category displays land where clearing is regulated and can only be carried out in accordance with Part 5A of the LLS Act. Use of allowable activities is restricted and use of the Land Management Code is not permitted. It generally includes land assessed as;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Land the Environment Agency Head reasonably believes includes certain coastal wetlands, certain rainforests, core koala habitat, certain high conservation grasslands, certain critically endangered entities,</li> <li>land subject to a range of private land conservation agreements or certain incentive agreements or covenants,</li> <li>land that meets other environmental criteria listed in the legislation.</li> </ul>	

# Agreed project principles

EES and LLS will work together to plan and deliver communications, landholder consultation and evaluation of the draft comprehensive NVR map.

The version of the draft comprehensive NVR map used for this process must reflect the requirements of the current legislation, including availability of the landholder map review process.

The release and consultation process must provide reasonable opportunity for landholders to review the draft comprehensive NVR map and provide feedback, noting that:

- » the draft map categories do not have regulatory effect and transitional arrangements continue
- » the draft map will not automatically have regulatory effect after six months
- » landholders can seek map reviews if they consider the map for their property not to be accurate
- » Government will continue to waive the cost for processing map reviews
- » landholders can use the draft mapping as a reasonable defence for any clearing activities undertaken on draft Category 1 – Exempt land
- » the draft map can be used to estimate proportion of regulated land for a given landholding in order to use the Code.

Discussion on the utility and performance or any other aspect of draft maps provided to landholders are done so on a without prejudice basis.

# Landholder consent to participate form



Planning,  
Industry &  
Environment



Local Land  
Services

## Landholder Evaluation of the Native Vegetation Regulatory Map

### Introduction

#### What is the purpose of the map evaluation?

The Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) and Local Land Services (LLS) - (the agencies) invite you to participate in an evaluation process for the Native Vegetation Regulatory (NVR) Map.

The NVR Map was partially released in 2017 and transitional arrangements have been in place since. The Government is now seeking targeted community feedback before considering release of the remaining regulated and unregulated land map categories.

The agencies have engaged Elton Consulting as an independent researcher to work with landholders to:

- evaluate landholder understanding and confidence in the proposed remaining categories identified in the **NVR Map for their landholding**; and
- determine if map delivery and support resources provided by the agencies meet landholder needs.

The evaluation process is designed to obtain feedback across a broad range of landholder & landholding settings and key stakeholder groups. The evaluation process will be offered to a representative number of landholders across all NSW LLS regions. If the evaluation process is oversubscribed, we will contact you for consent to keep your details on file for participation in any future evaluation projects.

#### What will I receive as part of the map evaluation process?

If you wish to participate in the evaluation process you will be provided with a package of information containing:

- a map of your landholding displaying unpublished and published NVR map layers. **This is only available to map evaluation participants.**
- a factsheet package about the NVR Map plus additional factsheets about land management and allowable activities.

You may also request a **free category explanation report** detailing what all the NVR map layers mean on your landholding. Customer service staff will be available to speak to you about your map if you required.

## Will the map evaluation process help me make informed decisions about land management activities?

Currently landholders need to make decisions based on the Local Land Services Act without the benefit of NVR mapping for all land categories. As a map evaluation participant, you will have access to updated mapping and information to assist your decision making when planning your future land management activities.

## What if I wish to comment on or ask for a review the mapping?

If you believe the mapping is incorrect you may have a free map review. This means you can provide information that may result in changes to the map.

If you need further advice about what the NVR mapping means for you, staff from the DPIE Map Review Team and LLS will be available to assist you.

## What do I need to do to support the evaluation process?

By participating in the project, you agree to Elton Consulting contacting you to undertake a short phone **survey**. You may also be asked to take part in a brief telephone interview to expand on your responses.

All survey responses or information you provide to Elton Consulting will be treated as confidential and you will not be identified to either government agency.

## What happens when the map evaluation process has been finalised?

When the map evaluation process is finalised, Elton Consulting will prepare a final report for Government. The report will not provide identifying information about the participants. The agencies will use the report to make recommendations to Government about future access to the final comprehensive NVR Map and the capacity of agency resources to support delivery of map services for landholders.

## Privacy

The agencies are collecting your full name, postal address, email, contact number and landholding details.

The agencies are collecting this information to provide you with the map evaluation information package and/or map review package. This personal information will also be shared with Elton Consulting to support the evaluation process. We will not disclose your personal information to anyone else, unless you have given consent, or we are required to do so by law.

Participating in the evaluation process is voluntary.

You have the right to access personal information that the agencies hold about you. You also have a right to request that the agencies update or amend this information. If you want to access or correct your personal information, contact the agencies using contact details below.

## I need more information – Please contact us

- **NVR Map Review Team:** email: [map.review@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:map.review@environment.nsw.gov.au) phone: 02 6360 9000
- **Local Land Services:** email: [slm.info@lls.nsw.gov.au](mailto:slm.info@lls.nsw.gov.au) or contact your [local LLS Office](#)

# Native Vegetation Regulatory Map

## Consent to Participate in Independent Evaluation of the Map

Full Name:	Click to enter text
Postal Address:	Click to enter text
Email:	Click to enter text
Contact Number:	Click to enter text
Landholding Details	
Address:	Click to enter text
<a href="#">Click to find my LLS Region:</a>	Click to enter text

PLEASE LIST LOT/SECTION/DP INFORMATION FOR YOUR LANDHOLDING ON PAGE 4  
(This information is required so we can prepare maps for your specific landholding)

I would like to volunteer as a participant in the independent evaluation process assessing accuracy of the Native Vegetation Regulatory (NVR) Map and landholder acceptance and understanding of the NVR Map.

By signing this form, I understand and acknowledge that:

1. I will receive the NVR Map package covering all NVR map categories applicable to my landholding. (the package includes the NRV Map of my landholding and fact sheets about the NVR Map. I can also request a category explanation report and further information about the map and the map review process from the agencies).
2. I will participate in the map evaluation process by providing feedback to Elton Consulting via surveys or one-to-one discussions.
3. My personal details and property information will be provided to the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment and Local Land Services for delivery of the map evaluation information package and/or map review package and to enable Elton Consulting to carry out its evaluation process.
4. Any feedback I provide in response to the Elton Consulting evaluation process **will not** be provided to the agencies in any form that will reveal my identity at any time including in the delivery of a final report.
5. While using the maps provided, I will ensure that any land management activities I undertake are in accordance with the Local Land Services Act 2013.

**Signature:** Click to enter text

*Typing your name here constitutes a signature for the purpose of this form or add an e-signature.*

**Date:** Click to enter a date

Communication preferences:

**I prefer to be contacted in the first instance via:**

Email  Phone  Australia Post

**I wish to receive my NVR Information package and Map package via:**

Email (link will be provided to download large maps)  
 In hard copy via Australia Post;  
 Both  
 Other – we will contact you

**I prefer to be contacted to complete a phone survey:**

in the daytime  in the evening

Please return your completed form to [map.review@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:map.review@environment.nsw.gov.au)

This information is required so we can prepare maps for your specific landholding.  
 You will only be provided maps for the Lots specified below.  
 You will not be able to see mapping on neighbouring properties.  
 If you are unsure about what your Lot details are, they can be found on your Rates Notice.

Lot No:		Section No:		Deposited Plan (DP) No:	
1	Click to enter text	30	Click to enter text	59	Click to enter text
2	Click to enter text	31	Click to enter text	60	Click to enter text
3	Click to enter text	32	Click to enter text	61	Click to enter text
4	Click to enter text	33	Click to enter text	62	Click to enter text
5	Click to enter text	34	Click to enter text	63	Click to enter text
6	Click to enter text	35	Click to enter text	64	Click to enter text
7	Click to enter text	36	Click to enter text	65	Click to enter text
8	Click to enter text	37	Click to enter text	66	Click to enter text
9	Click to enter text	38	Click to enter text	67	Click to enter text
10	Click to enter text	39	Click to enter text	68	Click to enter text
11	Click to enter text	40	Click to enter text	69	Click to enter text
12	Click to enter text	41	Click to enter text	70	Click to enter text
13	Click to enter text	42	Click to enter text	71	Click to enter text
14	Click to enter text	43	Click to enter text	72	Click to enter text
15	Click to enter text	44	Click to enter text	73	Click to enter text
16	Click to enter text	45	Click to enter text	74	Click to enter text
17	Click to enter text	46	Click to enter text	75	Click to enter text
18	Click to enter text	47	Click to enter text	76	Click to enter text
19	Click to enter text	48	Click to enter text	77	Click to enter text
20	Click to enter text	49	Click to enter text	78	Click to enter text
21	Click to enter text	50	Click to enter text	79	Click to enter text
22	Click to enter text	51	Click to enter text	80	Click to enter text
23	Click to enter text	52	Click to enter text	81	Click to enter text
24	Click to enter text	53	Click to enter text	82	Click to enter text
25	Click to enter text	54	Click to enter text	83	Click to enter text
26	Click to enter text	55	Click to enter text	84	Click to enter text
27	Click to enter text	56	Click to enter text	85	Click to enter text
28	Click to enter text	57	Click to enter text	86	Click to enter text

# NVR Map Evaluation

## Project Steps

### 1 Landholder Invitation

- Local Land Services (LLS) Staff will invite you to opt into the evaluation project and provide an introduction and consent form about the project.
- If you wish to participate, you should complete the consent form and return it to the Map Review Team via email: [map.review@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:map.review@environment.nsw.gov.au)
- Landholders will be selected to participate within set evaluation subscription limits.

### 2 Map Package

- Planning Industry & Environment (DPIE) staff will provide you with a package including Draft NVR Maps for your landholding and factsheets.
- The agencies will check in with you shortly after the package has been sent to ensure you have received your package, understand the content and assist you with the next steps of the process.

### 3 CER and Map Reviews

- We encourage you to have a discussion with the DPIE Mapping Team & LLS to talk about the maps in detail.
- You can request category explanation report for detailed information about the categories displayed on your landholding.
- You can request a map review if you believe the map categories for your landholding are inaccurate.

### 4 Landholder Survey

- Elton Consulting will contact you to conduct a phone survey about your confidence and satisfaction with the NVR Map.
- Elton Consulting may also contact you to also participate in an optional detailed interview about the NVR Map. (detailed interviews will be limited).

### More Information

If you have any enquires about the evaluation process you can contact us at anytime:

DPIE at: [map.review@environment.nsw.gov.au](mailto:map.review@environment.nsw.gov.au) or on 02 6360 9000 and LLS at: [slm.info@lls.nsw.gov.au](mailto:slm.info@lls.nsw.gov.au)



# Data collection tools

## Survey

#	Question
	<p><b>Introduction</b></p> <p>Hi my name is [NAME] and I'm calling from Jetty Research. We have been employed by the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) and Local Land Services (LLS) to undertake independent research into landholder understanding and confidence in the Native Vegetation Regulatory Map. You may know it as the NVR Map.</p> <p>Are you [Name]?</p> <p>[If no, ask when [name] will be back and arrange callback]</p> <p>[If Yes] You have previously agreed to take part in a phone survey as part of the research process. Would you have time to do the survey this afternoon/evening? It will take no more than 10 minutes.</p> <p>[If Yes] All survey responses you provide to us will be treated as confidential and you will not be identified to either government agency.</p> <p>[No] When would it be more convenient to contact you?</p>
1.	<p><b>Can I please confirm a few details, before we start?</b></p> <p><i>Information from consent form</i></p>
2.	<p><b>Are you a member of any of the following farming, and/or land management organisations?</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. NSW Farmers</li> <li>2. National Farmers Federation</li> <li>3. Landcare</li> <li>4. Grower group (please list)</li> <li>5. Farmers for Climate Action</li> <li>6. Conservation farming group (please list)</li> <li>7. Other (please list)</li> </ol>
	<p><b>Landholder typology</b></p> <p>Before we talk about the NVR map we have a couple of questions about your landholding and your role as a landholder.</p>
3.	<p><b>What is your role on the property? (Single response/SR)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Owner or part-owner</li> <li>2. Leasee</li> <li>3. Manager</li> <li>4. Other (please describe)</li> </ol>
4.	<p><b>How many years have you lived on or managed the property?</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Free text</li> </ol>

#	Question
5.	<p><b>What kind of farming enterprise do you have? (Multiple Response/MR: Prompt and identify all that are applicable)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cropping</li> <li>2. Cropping – broadacre irrigation</li> <li>3. Horticulture including viticulture</li> <li>4. Livestock grazing/ agistment</li> <li>5. Mixed (cropping and livestock)</li> <li>6. Plantation forestry</li> <li>7. Private native forestry</li> <li>8. Intensive animals</li> <li>9. Non-commercial (including nature conservation) (please describe) _____</li> <li>10. Other (e.g. carbon farming, renewables etc.) _____</li> </ol>
6.	<p><b>In an 'average' year, how much of the income generated from your property is your main source of income? (SR, Prompted)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Most (i.e. 75 - 100%)</li> <li>2. Some (50 – 75%)</li> <li>3. Limited reliance (main income from stable off farm work or assets)</li> </ol>
	<p><b>Base knowledge of NVR mapping</b></p> <p>Before we get to asking about the NVR map you recently received, I have some questions about your familiarity with the NVR Map before participating in this research.</p>
7.	<p><b>Before receiving the NVR map of your property, had you seen the published NVR map online or in a conversation with LLS? (if no recollection, prompt: the one with pink, orange and grey layers or categories)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Yes</li> <li>2. No (go to Q10)</li> </ol>
8.	<p><b>What is your level of satisfaction in using the published NVR Map for land management decisions on a scale of 1-5, where 1 is not at all helpful and 5 is very helpful?</b></p> <p><b>1 Not at all helpful</b></p> <p><b>2</b></p> <p><b>3</b></p> <p><b>4</b></p> <p><b>5 Very helpful</b></p>
9.	<p><b>Can you briefly explain why you gave this answer?</b></p>
10.	<p><b>How easy do you find the online map viewer to use on a scale of 1-5, where 1 is very difficult to use and 5 is very easy to use?</b></p> <p><b>1 Very difficult to use</b></p> <p><b>2</b></p> <p><b>3</b></p> <p><b>4</b></p> <p><b>5 Very easy to use</b></p>
	<p><b>Satisfaction with map</b></p> <p>Great, I now have some questions about the NVR map of your property you've recently received (the one with blue and yellow categories).</p>

#	Question
11.	<p><b>What is your level of confidence in the accuracy of the NVR Map categories regarding vegetation on your property on a scale of 1-5, where 1 is not at all confident and 5 is very confident?</b></p> <p><b>1 Not at all confident</b></p> <p><b>2</b></p> <p><b>3</b></p> <p><b>4</b></p> <p><b>5 Very confident</b></p>
12.	<p><b>Can you briefly explain why you gave this answer?</b></p>
13.	<p><b>Do you have any specific concerns about any of the NVR map categories? Identify all that are of concern. (Prompted, MR)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Yes – Category 1 – exempt land</li> <li>2. Yes – Category 2 – regulated land</li> <li>3. Yes – Category 2 – vulnerable regulated land</li> <li>4. Yes - Category 2 – sensitive regulated land</li> <li>5. Yes – Excluded land</li> <li>6. Yes - all</li> <li>7. No <i>skip next question</i></li> </ol>
14.	<p><b>What are your concerns about this category/ those categories? Interviewer to record 3 or more concerns</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.</li> <li>2.</li> <li>3.</li> </ol>
15.	<p><b>How easy did you find it to use the NVR map on a scale of 1-5, where 1 is very difficult to use and 5 is very easy to use?</b></p> <p><b>1Very difficult to use</b></p> <p><b>2</b></p> <p><b>3</b></p> <p><b>4</b></p> <p><b>5 Very easy to use</b></p>
16.	<p><b>Does the updated mapping help you understand your obligations under the Local Land Services Act?</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Yes</li> <li>2. No (Briefly explain)</li> </ol>
<p><b>Engagement and supporting materials</b></p>	
17.	<p><b>Did you request and receive a category explanation report? (SR, prompted)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Yes – received</li> <li>2. Yes – requested and waiting for report</li> <li>3. No – I did not request a category explanation report</li> </ol>

#	Question																																				
18.	<p><b>Did you request and have a discussion with LLS or DPIE to interpret your map? (SR, prompted)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Yes – received</li> <li>2. Yes – requested and waiting for meeting/discussion</li> <li>3. No – I did not request a meeting/discussion</li> </ol>																																				
19.	<p><b>How much do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?</b></p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Strongly Agree</th> <th>Agree</th> <th>Unsure</th> <th>Disagree</th> <th>Strongly Disagree</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>The number and type of maps in the information package were sufficient for my land management decision making</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>I look to LLS to understand and interpret the NVR map</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>The fact sheets were informative</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>The fact sheets improved my understanding of the map and how it supports land management</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>I know who to contact if I have a problem with the NVR map</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Strongly Agree	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	The number and type of maps in the information package were sufficient for my land management decision making						I look to LLS to understand and interpret the NVR map						The fact sheets were informative						The fact sheets improved my understanding of the map and how it supports land management						I know who to contact if I have a problem with the NVR map					
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20.	<p><b>(Continuation of Q19 - Ask only if Q17=yes)</b> The category explanation report was clear and easy to understand</p>																																				
21.	<p><b>(Continuation of Q19 – Ask only if Q16=yes)</b> I had a better understanding of my map after meeting with LLS/DPIE</p>																																				
22.	<p><b>What information or service would assist you to interpret the NVR map? Interviewer to record [unprompted]</b></p> <p><b>Q22a Would you like any additional fact sheets? Prompt: What would be more helpful for you?</b></p>																																				
23.	<p><b>Where would you go to find out more about the NVR map? Unprompted – tick any that apply</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Neighbours or family members</li> <li>2. LLS staff / regional support officer</li> <li>3. DPIE staff / map team</li> <li>4. Online to LLS website</li> <li>5. Online to DPIE website</li> <li>6. Online to other (please specify)</li> <li>7. Other (please specify e.g. legislation)</li> </ol>																																				
<b>Confidence in map review process</b>																																					
24.	<p><b>Have you requested a Map Review with DPIE? (SR)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Yes</li> <li>2. No (go to Q29)</li> </ol>																																				
25.	<p><b>Was the map review application process easy to understand? (SR)</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Yes</li> <li>2. No</li> </ol>																																				

#	Question
26.	<p><b>Has the Map Review with DPIE been finalised?(SR)</b></p> <p>1. Yes 2. No (go to Q29)</p>
27.	<p><b>Were you satisfied with the map review process? (SR)</b></p> <p>1. Yes 2. No – Why?</p>
28.	<p><b>Did you receive your map review determination in the advised timeframe? (SR)</b></p> <p>1. Yes 2. No (how late?)</p>
<b>Customer service</b>	
29.	<p><b>How would you rate your interaction with the DPIE map review team on a scale of 5, where 1 is poor and 5 is excellent? [If they did not talk with any DPIE staff just note – NA]</b></p> <p><b>1 Poor</b> <b>2</b> <b>3</b> <b>4</b> <b>5 Excellent</b></p>
30.	<p><b>How would you rate your interaction with the LLS team on a scale of 5, where 1 is poor and 5 is excellent?</b></p> <p><b>1 Poor</b> <b>2</b> <b>3</b> <b>4</b> <b>5 Excellent</b> <b>666 – NA (did not talk to LLS)</b></p>
<b>General</b>	
31.	<p><b>Is there anything else you would like to say about the updated NVR map, the information package or the map review process?</b></p>

Thanks so much that's the end of the survey – the Department of Planning greatly appreciates your feedback.

(ISO and conclude)

# Interview template

*Hello I'm XX from Elton Consulting calling about the Native Vegetation Regulation (NVR) Map research project. Am I talking with [stakeholder name]? I understand you have agreed to participate in a further interview about the process. Is now a good time, the series of questions may take up to 30mins.*

*Voicemail - Hello this is XX from Elton Consulting calling about the NVR mapping. I am calling to arrange a suitable time for a follow-up discussion. I will try you again later today, otherwise you may contact me on xxx"*

*NB Interview participants to be provided with summary information about the project and what participation involves in advance of the interview. Participants will have received their property's Comprehensive NVR map from DPIE.*

Many thanks for agreeing to take part in an interview today. We greatly appreciate your time.  
[interviewer/participant introductions].

The Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE) with NSW Local Land Services (LLS), have engaged Elton Consulting to provide an independent evaluation of stakeholder confidence regarding categories 1 and 2 of the Native Vegetation Regulation (NVR) Map. These categories have not been publicly released but we understand that you have seen them as part of this research project.

Your feedback will be used to inform the report which we will be preparing for the Department. All feedback will be treated as confidential and you will not be identified or attributable in our report. We'll be taking notes of our discussion today, to capture detailed quotes. Are you okay for me to proceed? If there is any question you would prefer not to answer just let me know and we can move on. You can withdraw from the interview at any time or contact me afterwards if you'd like to alter any of your responses. [seek verbal consent to proceed]

#	Question
4.	<b>Confirm interviewee details (property name, address, LLS region, map review undertaken etc)</b>
5.	<b>How familiar are you with the NVR Map?</b> <i>Prompt regarding use of the map, regulatory function and map purpose – have you used it previously?</i>
<b>These next questions relate to the identification of category 1 and 2 on the NVR maps.</b>	
6.	<b>How confident are you in the accuracy of the draft categories (yellow and blue) in relation to your property on a scale of 1 to 5? (1 being not at all confident and 5 being highly confident)</b>
7.	<b>What is the main reason for feeling/ not feeling confident about the accuracy of the map?</b> <i>Prompt specific categories</i>
8.	<b>Are there aspects of how the categories have been defined that you think could be improved?</b> NB - If it appears that the stakeholder is really not happy and no changes to how the categories are developed or applied, it may be useful to ask that directly, <b>Is there anything that can be changed about how the categories are developed or applied that would increase your confidence?</b>

#	Question
9.	<b>Is your map, with the new categories, helpful in making land management decisions on your property? Why/Why not?</b>
	<b>Thank you for that feedback. The next questions relate to information and support provided with the draft maps</b>
10.	<b>Did you use the supporting information to interpret the map? if yes, what was most useful? What wasn't useful? If no, why not?</b> Prompt: fact sheets, category explanation report, discussions with DPIE/LLS
11.	<b>What other sort of information or support would be helpful in using the NVR Map?</b>
12.	<b>How would you rate your understanding of the how the NVR map was produced (i.e. map method) on a scale of 5, where 5 is excellent and 1 is poor?</b>
13.	<b>What is your understanding of how the NVR Map is updated?</b>
A.	<b>We understand you have undertaken a map review and would like to ask you a few of questions about that process.</b>
14.	<b>Why did you request a map review?</b>
15.	<b>On a scale of 1 to 5, where 5 is highly satisfied and 1 is not at all satisfied, how satisfied are you with the review process in terms of:</b> » Clear review process (i.e. understanding of how to make a review application and what information you need to provide) » Timeliness of review » Information and support provided on the review process <b>How did you find the map review process?</b> <i>Prompt: application, discussion and/or outcome</i>
16.	<b>What outcome did you receive in regard to the review?</b>  <b>Were you satisfied with this outcome? Why, why not?</b>
17.	<b>Do you have any additional information you would like to provide regarding the map review process?</b>
18.	<b>Do you feel you received adequate information regarding how the map review was conducted and how the outcome was reached? Why/ why not?</b>

#	Question
B.	<b>We understand that at this point you have NOT undertaken a map review.</b>
19.	<b>Do you plan to seek a map review on your property?</b> » Yes » No
16a	<b>How confident are you that the Map Review process will produce a fair outcome?</b>
<b>Final comments</b>	
20.	<b>Is there anything else you would like to say about the updated NVR map, the information package or the map review process?</b>

Thank you for your feedback today, a summary report will be sent to the Department however all of your individual feedback today remains confidential.



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