

# Land Notes

## Natural Resource Management

### REHABILITATION OVERVIEW

Rehabilitation is the treatment of a degraded or disturbed area to a pre-determined standard. It is required wherever there has been a change in the landscape, or which is causing degradation. It may be required where there is active erosion, or where the use of the land is no longer desired.

Ideally, land should be rehabilitated to a level that has the same capability as before degradation occurred. In a lot of cases, this will not be practical due to the costs and extent of work involved. In all cases, however, rehabilitation must be carried out at least to the extent where no further degradation is occurring (in other words, the area must be stabilised).

When considering rehabilitation, it is important to prioritise areas on the basis of potential degradation. Areas that are actively eroding should be treated before considering areas that may look unsightly, but are stable. For example, a gully may be unsightly, but not eroding.

Freshly deposited sediment on the other hand, may not look severe, but is an indication of active erosion that should be treated as a priority.

There is no point rehabilitating an area if the cause of the problem remains.

For rehabilitation to be effective, it must go hand in hand with general improvements in planning and management.

Treatment of the cause may result in the area stabilising naturally, and will certainly influence the type and scale of works required. Subsequent stabilisation works are likely to be cheaper, and less prone to failure.

The cost of rehabilitation can be reduced if stabilisation works are carried out as soon as possible. If areas are left bare for any length of time, erosion will increase and weeds will colonise very quickly. Once this occurs, costs of rehabilitation escalate, with annual applications of herbicide and annual slashing, as well as continuing costs for erosion control works.

One way to avoid this situation is to include the rehabilitation of disused sites when planning new works. For example, if a new section of road is being constructed, the rehabilitation of the old one should be included in the same contract, or scope of works.

**Prevention is always better than cure.**

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