

## Response ID ANON-4EM2-EKYS-M

Submitted to **Native vegetation issues paper**

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### Your details

#### 1 What is your name?

**Name:**

Don McFarlane

#### 2 Can we publish your response?

Yes, you may publish my response in full

#### 3 What is your email address? (optional)

**Email:**

[REDACTED]

#### 4 What is your postcode? (optional)

**Postcode:**

[REDACTED]

#### 5 Do your views officially represent those of an organisation?

No, these are my personal views

**If yes, please specify the name of your organisation.:**

#### 6 Which of the following best describes the group or person you represent?

Private citizen

**If other, please specify.:**

#### 7 Which of the following best describes the sector you represent?

Environmental / NRM

**If other, please specify.:**

#### 8 Are there specific parts of your submission that you want to keep confidential?

**If yes, please outline which specific parts of your submission must be kept confidential and explain why. :**

### A State native vegetation policy

#### 9 Referring to the proposed policy objective statements below, how well do you support each one in guiding our development of a policy?

**Objective 1 matrix - Objective 1:**

Strongly supported

**Please explain in the text box below.:**

Management needs to be consistent over the long term and not oscillate between successive governments, while recognising the need for adaptive management as conditions and our understanding changes. The gradual withdrawal of funding for the management on public lands especially can cause deterioration which is not clear and therefore is not accountable. This requires an agreed system of monitoring as is outlined later

**Objective 2 matrix - Objective 2:**

Strongly supported

**Please explain in the text box below.:**

Given the size of WA, its low population and modest tax base, management has to be strategic. We still rely on historical maps (e.g. Beard) that need to be updated using modern methods. Without good data and understanding of vegetation composition, cover, structure and function (e.g. response to climate, fire, grazing) it is hard to be strategic.

**Objective 3 matrix - Objective 3:**

Supported

**Please explain in the text box below.:**

While it is important to conserve unique and threatened communities, almost 80% of the vegetation species in the south west are endemic to the region. There is a case for large scale management rather than concentrating most resources on those most at risk and which may be very expensive to retain in a rapidly drying climate. A triage approach has been adopted in many parts of the world and may be applicable in Western Australia.

**10 What opportunities are presented by the development of a State Native Vegetation Policy focused on how government manages vegetation?**

**Please provide your answer in the text box below.:**

Hopefully the policy will raise public awareness of the unique nature of Western Australia's vegetation heritage. Attendance at the Wembley workshop was mainly by elderly people of Anglo heritage. Young and multicultural groups need to be better represented and this will only come about by community education of values, risks and opportunities. Government will only fund nature conservation efforts through its agencies if the community understands what they do and can achieve with resources. There appears public support for national parks and nature reserves but funding for their management is minimal and in further decline on a per hectare basis as more land is added. 92% of land in WA is managed by the Crown so protection and management of native vegetation is mainly a government role, although private landholders and grazing leaseholders' roles are important.

**Better information**

**11 How do you use native vegetation data within your sector? (Choose as many options as you require)**

For baseline information for monitoring

If you have chosen 'other', please specify:

**12 Which of the following elements of better information provision would be most relevant to your sector? (Choose as many options as you require)**

Cost saving

If you have chosen 'other', please specify:

**13 What other opportunities are presented by improved information and improved access to information?**

**Please provide your answer in the text box below.:**

Vegetation threat management needs to be based on an agreed understanding of what the current and future threats are to its extent and condition. Current emphasis seems to be on the threats of the past, especially clearing, grazing by livestock and dryland salinity which were the major threats in the latter half of the 20th Century. Current and future threats are climate change, inappropriate fire regimes and grazing by feral animals as stations are de-stocked.

No government agency has the role of identifying and quantifying these individual and cumulative threats. Therefore their management is not being resourced strategically. We get caught by surprise when parts of the jarrah forest die (e.g. 2010/11 summer) or Banksia woodlands thin (e.g. Gnaragana Mound, Kings Park) when we should be anticipating such events or responding in a coordinated manner. The medium and long-term impact of intense bushfires are largely unknown. This requires good functional knowledge of vegetation types.

There are large data sets on vegetation reflectance (Landsat and Sentinel) and structure (radar). The state needs to use these in a coordinated manner as outlined in the WABSI report at: <https://wabsi.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/Remote-Sensing-Technologies-Project-Report.pdf>

**Better regulation**

**14 Which of the following elements of better regulation would be most important to your sector? (Please rank your top three)**

Rank better reg elements - Improved protection for native vegetation:

2

Rank better reg elements - Ensuring development is sustainable:

3

Rank better reg elements - Streamlined regulation for cost saving:

Rank better reg elements - Clearer requirements for business certainty:

Rank better reg elements - Improved assessment timeframes:

Rank better reg elements - Transparent, evidence-based decisions:

1

Rank better reg elements - Improved compliance and enforcement of unauthorised clearing:

Rank better reg elements - Equitable treatment of all proponents:

**Rank better reg elements - Confidence in the regulatory system for all stakeholders:**

**Rank better reg elements - Other:**

**If you selected Other, please provide further information.:**

**15 What other opportunities are presented by better regulation?**

**Please provide your answer in the text box below.:**

Regulation seems to focus unduly on clearing for which controls were progressively made more stringent in the past 15 years. Chronic loss of vegetation due to multiple causes seems to have gone on under the radar while the limited amount of state resources has focused on yesterday's threat. Where are the links to climate change mitigation and adaptation in this issues paper? If the state is to meet its zero net emission target by 2050 then there needs to be new regulations to achieve this outcome.

**A bioregional approach**

**16 Which of the following elements are the most important to you/your sector? (Please rank your top three)**

**Rank bioregional elements - 1. Transparent outcomes and objectives:**

**Rank bioregional elements - 2. Leveraging local knowledge:**

**Rank bioregional elements - 3. Strategic and innovative approach to conflicting interests:**

**Rank bioregional elements - 4. Clear targets and thresholds:**

3

**Rank bioregional elements - 5. Planned approach to dealing with cumulative impacts:**

**Rank bioregional elements - 6. Effective monitoring and evaluation framework:**

1

**Rank bioregional elements - 7. Supporting public-private partnerships for conservation:**

2

**Please explain in the text box below.:**

We don't yet have a good understanding of what we have, how it is changing (especially because of climate change), how or whether programs are being effective and whether they will be overwhelmed by forces beyond our control. Under such circumstances it is difficult to be sure that investments will produce lasting benefits.

**17 What other opportunities are presented by a bioregional approach?**

**Please explain in the text box below.:**

**18 What concerns are presented by a bioregional approach, for your sector?**

**Please explain in the text box below.:**

**Other initiatives**

**19 What initiatives do you think would work best to improve native vegetation outcomes in your region?**

Pricing, incentives and markets (e.g. biodiversity banking, offsets, carbon farming etc), Nature-based or cultural tourism

**Please explain in the text box below.:**

Relying on people's goodwill is less effective than having a financial incentive to do the right thing. Because only 8% of the state is privately owned so this will only go so far. A number of covenanting schemes were during the NHT 1, 2 and NAP funding years. Some of these covenants are about to expire. A project to evaluate their effectiveness is needed, and their renewal if they have resulted in native vegetation being retained and / or improved compared with equivalent remnants that were not covenanted at that time.

**20 What else could be done to improve the management of native vegetation to arrest the decline of native vegetation extent and condition?**

**Please provide your answer in the text box below.:**

Private sector, NGO and federal government investments should be sought for retention and management of native vegetation if the state government is unable to manage its vast estate. If the state withdraws funds as other funds are added (i.e. cost shifts) this will be ineffective so there needs to be transparency and accountability.