

Response ID ANON-4EM2-EKWV-N

Submitted to **Native vegetation issues paper**
Submitted on **2020-02-09 12:48:57**

Your details

1 What is your name?

Name:

Judith Harvey

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:

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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?

Other

If other, please specify.:

recently retired government scientist, member of several community environmental organisations

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. :

no

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:

Opposed

Please explain in the text box below.:

Much more focus needs to be given to our unique vegetation which has no voice (apart from a few dedicated advocates) compared with the social, economic and cultural voices in our community. Our natural environment has been here for millions of years and once cleared cannot be restored or offset. There is no option of 'balance in the highly cleared Swan Coastal Plain and Avon Wheatbelt Bioregions

More resources need to be assigned to the 'voice' of the environment; more botanists, zoologists, ecologists, conservation land managers other on-ground support.

Objective 2 matrix - Objective 2:

Supported

Please explain in the text box below.:

Conservation is the key here as our native vegetation and the life depending on it cannot be adequately restored due to its complexity above and below the land

surface. It is so susceptible to invasion from non-native species when disturbed and this increases its vulnerability to fire. Native vegetation is an invaluable asset for all Western Australians and must be protected for its important biodiversity and ecological functions.

We are only just beginning to learn about benefits to medicine (e.g. amazing properties of jarrah honey), agriculture (tubers and fruits) and the arts (fiber and timber).

Objective 3 matrix - Objective 3:

Strongly supported

Please explain in the text box below.:

We don't even fully know what is at risk as we don't know the extent and composition of all our vegetation communities or distribution of rare and uncommon species. Much more detailed survey, mapping and systematic analysis is needed. There is a huge backlog of taxonomic research needed. Unlike other states we have many more undescribed species and not enough botanists to sort out the taxonomy. Already we have lost so much through over clearing and poor land management. It is imperative that all remaining vegetation be conserved on the Swan Coastal Plain and protected in the Avon Wheatbelt.

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.:

The development of this policy is long overdue and presents an opportunity to protect our unique and globally recognized asset, our native flora and vegetation communities. Specifically, systematic and comprehensive vegetation mapping at a scale of between 1:100,000 and 1:10,000 is essential to underpin clearing applications, mining and monitor long term changes due to the rapid climate change, and short-term changes due to dieback and fire. Enable easy assessment and acquisition of land for conservation by the Government and promote conservation of vegetation by private landholders. A comprehensive Policy will guide allocation of resources to better manage the conservation estate including the involvement of volunteers and community groups.

Better information

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

To plan for conservation, For baseline information for monitoring, Other

If you have chosen 'other', please specify:

I have been involved in site-based surveys, verifying the digital capture of the state-wide vegetation map. This is useful to understand the regional variations in Vegetation Associations but is erroneously used to assess clearing applications as it is intersected with remnant vegetation layer which is at a much finer scale. Monitoring changes in vegetation is very complex as many factors are at play: weather, climate, time since fire, disease, and disturbance (promoting spread of weeds).

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

Evidence-base for decisions, Other

If you have chosen 'other', please specify:

We have a very rich native plant diversity that is evolutionary ancient and globally recognised. This presents huge challenges to systematically document species distribution, response to disturbance (including rapidly changing climate), habitat and ecology (relationships with fauna, soil microbes and nutrients). A well-coordinated data storage system is needed to receive and distribute this information to ensure costs and time are saved and there is all the evidence easily available on which to base sound transparent decisions and policies. We need stronger and more binding laws to protect all remaining native vegetation as too much has already been cleared.

In regard to collecting data we need integrated ground level surveys carried out over several visits but mainly in spring. These include quadrat-based surveys of all species and their dominance. Cover values are integral in describing the vegetation community and enabling the data to feed into the vegetation mapping process.

This is also an extremely important opportunity for the State Government to enhance native vegetation particularly in areas of the state where there has been extensive economic development which has resulted in excessive clearing.

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

Please provide your answer in the text box below.:

Integration of all the past and future flora and vegetation surveys from across all relevant government agencies, consultants and community groups such as the Wildflower Society's Plant Survey Program (WSWAPSP) is urgently needed. The WSWAPSP has been surveying vegetation for over 30 years according to an established method.

The survey data needs to feed into a process which includes remote sensing (soils and geological maps) to produce more detailed vegetation maps on which sound decisions can be made.

Also, the integration of information collected by consultants and government about the characteristics, distribution and vulnerability of rare and uncommon species would save time, enhance our understanding and hopefully prevent extinctions.

Another opportunity from improved information systems is cost savings through better processes, lack of duplication and sharing of information across

departments

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:

1

Rank better reg elements - Ensuring development is sustainable:

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:

2

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

3

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.:

Addressing past impacts of clearing and ensuring future developments avoid clearing whatever the cost. The intrusive economic values of our natural environment need to be quantified and considered.

A wider appreciation of the values of native vegetation and an ability to highlight where information is deficient

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:

1

Rank bioregional elements - 2. Leveraging local knowledge:

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

2

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:

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

Please explain in the text box below.:

All the above are important. setting target requires substantial additional knowledge.

Develop an integrated approach through the WA Terrestrial Biodiversity Institute where DBCA Science, environmental consultants, vegetation scientist from the various universities, community groups such as the Wildflower Society Plant Survey Program are involved in planning, survey and analysis.

Use funds from mining royalties, offsets and fines from illegal clearing and taking of flora.

17 What other opportunities are presented by a bioregional approach?

Please explain in the text box below.:

As the current bioregional areas are based on the state-wide vegetation map (1:250,000. 1:1,000,000 and 1:3,000,000) prepared by John Beards and his associates, this is a good basis on which to build finer scale maps. It also aims to represent Pre- European vegetation associations

In past years only minor changes to these boundaries have been proposed. These Bioregions have been a good basis for DBCA biological survey programmes e.g. Pilbara, Nullarbor and Avon Wheatbelt and many expert biologists are associated with each or many Bioregions. Bioregions are broadscale and should just be used for broadscale strategic planning.

The alarming issue is that at the moment these regional vegetation layers (at a scale of 1:250,000) are intersected with fine scale (~1:10,000) remnant vegetation layer producing misleading and inaccurate values of how much of each vegetation type remains and hence how much may be impacted by development. We need to get much better vegetation maps to know how much of each community is left and where are the highest priorities for conservation and management. Setting clearing thresholds according to Bioregions would consider the existing proportion of remnant vegetation for example the Avon Wheatbelt and the Swan coastal plain have been severely cleared and thresholds should not allow further clearing.

A stricter approach to assessing and protecting all Threatened and Priority ecological communities

A more refined classification is needed to inform local planning decisions. vegetation condition can only be assessed at the local scale and repeated over time.

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

Please explain in the text box below.:

Scaling down the regional vegetation mapping which govern the Bioregional mapping to issues on the ground which require more detailed mapping and condition assessments.

Applying blanket clearing thresholds across a whole Bioregion may disregard small pockets of uncommon or poorly conserved vegetation. This is where vegetation maps at the scale of remnant vegetation maps is needed.

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), Pastoral diversification, Private land management

Please explain in the text box below.:

I consider all of WA to be my 'Region'.

Encouraging conservation of native vegetation on private land is a high priority. Measures such as Land for Wildlife (recently largely dismissed by DBCA), encouraging covenants on private land (also getting very limited support from DBCA).

Making the general public aware of the uniqueness and amazing characteristics of WA native vegetation and flora.

Offsets do not seem to be working in areas such as the Swan Coastal Plain where Banksia woodlands, Carnaby's Cockatoo habitat and nesting trees are being cleared and off set with marginal banksia communities. These woodlands cannot be restored due to the complex below ground ecosystems. these communities and most of WA's remaining native vegetation should be protected from further clearing. We need to learn from Aboriginal land management practices as they have maintained the health of our vegetation for thousands of years, although the highly fragmented nature of this makes.

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.:

Better policies that;

Encourage and provide incentives for the conservation on private property through Land for Wildlife and private covenanting.

Coordinating past and future surveys by Government, Consultants, industry and community conservation groups.

Implement Bush Forever recommendations for the Perth Region

Explicitly recognize the importance of biological corridors and the importance of roadside vegetation, which in some areas represents the last remnants of native vegetation in the area as well as providing the only habitat for some threatened species.

Prevent further clearing of native vegetation in the Avon Wheatbelt and Swan Coastal Plain

Understand the cumulative impacts of multiple threats.

Examine the effectiveness of Off-sets. These do not appear to be successful and are often an easy option for developers.

Adjust the tax system as it seems apparent that a developer can clear vegetation and then claim their costs as losses if the land is not sold over a period of time

Upload a document

21 If you would like to upload a document to support your submission, please upload it here.

Upload document 1 here.:

No file was uploaded

Please describe which question(s) document 1 relates to. :

Upload document 2 here.:

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