

## Response ID ANON-4EM2-EKGP-Y

Submitted to **Native vegetation issues paper**

Submitted on **2020-01-28 16:44:37**

### Your details

#### 1 What is your name?

Name:

Ella Maesepp

#### 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?

Yes, I am authorised to submit feedback on behalf of an organisation

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

Katanning Landcare

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

Community / Non-government organisation

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:**

Supported

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

I am a little concerned about the definition of the word 'balance' used here. If it means equal (as often balanced does), I would not like to see a State vegetation policy that puts economic development as of equal (balanced) importance to environmental and cultural values. I think it is important that environmental values are prioritised - not necessarily exclusively, but should be given a heavier weighting.

**Objective 2 matrix - Objective 2:**

Supported

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

Consideration at the landscape scale can sometimes miss locally important values. Will there be allowance within such a strategic system for a patch of bush (for example) that may not be considered 'important' at a landscape scale yet is highly valued at a local level to be given fair viewing? Ecological function and biodiversity are important key focii.

### Objective 3 matrix - Objective 3:

Supported

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

However, these at-risk vegetation types were once perfectly OK - but being subject to threatening process over time has made them at-risk. We need to be careful that whilst protecting unique and at-risk vegetation, we don't allow seemingly expansive or healthy vegetation to slide into the at-risk category because insufficient effort has been put into addressing active key threatening processes on those.

### 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 objective and intent of the State Policy must be very very clear and correct, and weighted towards environmental outcomes. If we get this right, it could mean that native vegetation is afforded excellent consistent management, and is given an environmental value, or 'voice', that allows it to stand up against competing landuses and resourcing demands.

However, if this policy places economic development, business interests or other potentially threatening processes at an 'equal' (or even higher!) value than that of environmental or cultural values, then the policy becomes an effective tool in allowing the continuation of clearing or other threatening process.

It is also critical that the Policy strongly acknowledges climate change and the management of such as an important part of vegetation management. Impacts from climate change, such as changed rainfall patterns and the intensification of wildfires, are negative impacts, and the Policy should be able to be used to drive the reduction in exploitation of fossil fuels and other carbon emissions. The role of native vegetation as a means of sequestering atmospheric carbon should also be included (not just as offsets to new projects, but for reversing existing emissions).

### Better information

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

To plan for conservation, To plan for restoration, 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)

Evidence-base for decisions, Other

If you have chosen 'other', please specify:

As a Landcare Group, we actively seek to protect and improve native vegetation within our area. Being able to access information about extent and condition supports our planning for conservation actions. It also helps us to better educate the community members and farmers we work with about native vegetation value. As a group with extensive environmental, agricultural and local knowledge, improved access to information about what permits are being applied for / granted allows us to make meaningful contributions to the decision making process, and help manage community responses.

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

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

We need to have better public access to information around:

- \* What applications for clearing have been made (pending decision) so that the community can be aware and meaningfully comment on them.
- \* Which clearing permits have been approved (active) so that the community can easily check if observed clearing is lawful or needs reporting.
- \* More public education about what consists 'native vegetation' under definition, as well as what constitutes clearing or unlawful activity. There is a high level of misunderstanding amongst landholders about these sometimes confusing parameters.
- \* How Government is valuing a certain vegetation type, remnant etc so that we can more effectively tailor Landcare projects with greater chance of resourcing.

If the State holds better information about the extent of fragmentation, biodiversity loss, remnant condition etc, we perceive that decisions on management activities will better encompass the environmental values, which are often lost under 'hard' data such as economics, business costs and timeframes.

### 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:**

3

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

2

**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.:**

I am highly concerned from the language in this section of the Issues Paper, and the options presented in Question 14 (above) that the focus here is on improving opportunities for business and economic development, not on ensuring the protection and enhancement of WA's native vegetation.

Within this section, I'd like to see more public information about successful prosecutions of unlawful clearing, a publicly accessible list of active clearing permits and a system of community reporting (like litter reporting) for suspected illegal clearing. At the moment, there is a cowboy attitude to clearing - "they'll never know", "they don't prosecute anyone anyway" and all these little bits of clearing are adding up in an already heavily fragmented landscape.

I'm also hoping that better regulation will assist with managing other threats to native vegetation, such as weeds, salinity etc - and direct more focus and resourcing to them.

## **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:**

3

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

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

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

2

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

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

1

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

Again, I am concerned that much of the wording is around how to streamline processes for industry and development rather than about how a regional approach will allow us to best protect native vegetation, prioritise key threatening process for action and place worth on native vegetation.

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

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

I would hope that this would allow local people to include their visions and aspirations for their native vegetation to be included.

I hope that this will allow the identification, and therefore prioritisation for action, of key threatening processes upon the native vegetation to be locally set. eg salinity in the Avon Wheatbelt IBRA region is a huge concern, not so much in the Northern Kimberley. Tackling roadside vegetation reserves adjacent to agricultural land offers a range of opportunities, but of course these are relevant in the farming regions more so than the highly populated Swan Coastal Plain. Scale will also be important. Where there is very little of a vegetation type, the minimum size remnant to be considered 'important' for protection may be smaller than perhaps commonly accepted. Also in highly fragmented landscapes that consideration should be made too.

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

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

I am concerned that a regional approach will allow for some 'convenient' ranking of environmental and cultural values - it may be attractive to lower the value of native vegetation in areas where there is potential for high value economic activity, and vice versa. The question as to how these standards and ranking will occur, and how flexible they are will be critical.

## 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), Private land management

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

Sequestering carbon as a response to climate change offers huge opportunities for agricultural areas such as ours, who have a need for diversified business income coupled with existing willing and engaged farmers who have land that they want to revegetate as part of good land management practice. Accelerating the establishment of new areas of native vegetation through carbon farming, offsets etc will have myriad other benefits too, including reduced erosion, improved soil health, improved aesthetics, and human health benefits.

With a majority of land in our region being held by primary producers, they are an integral part of native vegetation management. However, improved resourcing for them to undertake their stewardship role is required, as is education about the legislative requirements.

### 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.:

There is ongoing misunderstanding about the current native vegetation clearing laws, particularly the exemptions. Far more effort needs to be put into communicating these complex rules, and the penalties for non-compliance (plus that prosecutions do occur) - TV / radio campaigns (exactly how wide are you allowed to clear for a fence line???), extension officer visits etc need to be implemented repeatedly.

Environmental values need to be ranked very highly in assessments. I was shocked to read in the discussion paper that in the last 15 years over 600,000 ha of WA had been cleared. Even though compared to the size of WA it may not seem a lot, in real numbers it is - it's the equivalent of a small country (actually it's 37.5 Liechtenstein's, or a third of the size of Fiji or Wales)! The clearing on the Swan Coastal Plain banksia woodlands, although relatively 'small' in hectares has been visually and ecologically huge. I think we need to be a lot stricter in WA about where and when we allow clearing to occur, to protect vegetation as well as for promoting an image of environmental care and value within our community.

The issues paper also doesn't identify enough about managing threatening processes, such as weeds, livestock grazing, feral animals, salinity and climate change. These need to be discussed, resourced and prioritised. Partnerships with NGO's such as Landcare or Greening Australia aren't readily identified either, they are sort of assumed with the private land partnerships.

## Upload a document

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

#### Upload document 1 here::

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

#### Upload document 2 here::

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Please describe which question(s) document 2 relates to. :