

Response ID ANON-4EM2-EKXT-M

Submitted to **Native vegetation issues paper**

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Your details

1 What is your name?

Name:

Sharon Munro

2 Can we publish your response?

Yes, you may publish my response in full

3 What is your email address? (optional)

Email:

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4 What is your postcode? (optional)

Postcode:

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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.:

Western Suburbs Regional Organisation of Councils

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

Government body

If other, please specify.:

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

Government

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.:

Support the need for a balance between environmental, social, economic, and cultural outcomes. However, there needs to be provision for ecological and economic sustainability outcomes as often economic and environmental values conflict.

Objective 2 matrix - Objective 2:

Supported

Please explain in the text box below.:

The State Native Vegetation Policy must include not only clearing/removal of vegetation, but also pruning of vegetation to ensure consistency and avoid duplication. Currently the Swan and Canning Rivers Management Regulations 2007 – Part 4 Permits, requires a permit for pruning vegetation within the Swan Canning Riverpark Development Control Area (DCA), and if removing vegetation, a Native Vegetation Clearing Permit is required. Thus we have duplication of requiring two approvals from two different departments, using two different pieces of legislation.

A state bioregion approach is also supported.

Objective 3 matrix - Objective 3:

Supported

Please explain in the text box below.:

One of the proposed policy objectives is to maintain and improve biodiversity. To reduce delay and duplication, the work undertaken by the WALGA Local Biodiversity Strategies and the Department of Planning's Bush Forever work should be heavily utilised. These initiatives already mapped the numerous vegetation complexes, their distribution, and the targets on hectares that should be protected. This work can assist with the development of this policy.

There is a need for clearer direction on bushfire management and native vegetation, in particular, how LGA act on DFES advice to remove vegetation, or reduce fuel load, which is often contradictory to DBCA advice to not remove vegetation. A capable LGA can play a role in achieving a compromise between the two agencies, but that needs to be acknowledged and supported by DFES and DBCA to deflect public criticism.

Support the protection of at risk native vegetation, which is being prioritised at a state and federal level. However, other native vegetation also requires protection. This vegetation is becoming at risk due to accelerating conservation issues such as climate change and lack of management. Agree that a bioregion approach is needed.

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.:

A state native vegetation policy will be most beneficial if it consolidates and supersedes previous policies. There are a number of conservation policies and plans that are not being enforced, such as the Bush Forever Policy. For the Native Vegetation In Western Australia policy to be effective it must be the primary policy, otherwise it will add another layer of complexity and confusion when trying to utilise multiple policies to protect native vegetation.

Some opportunities presented but the development of a State Native Vegetation Policy include:

1. Provide a framework for local governments to make decisions that affect native vegetation.
2. Support local governments to conserve and expand native vegetation across their boundaries, particularly the conservation of significant trees on private land.
3. Provide clear guidelines for protecting native vegetation and give an indicator of the value of vegetation types and areas.

Natural areas provide ecotourism opportunities and a sense of place for the community. To achieve this we must ensure there is adequate opportunities to view panoramic features, such as the Swan and Canning River and the Swan Coastal Plain, but while viewing points and sense of place is embedded in good land use planning principles, there is no policy supporting this principle with regards to vegetation management. The Native Vegetation policy provides an opportunity to provide guidance and parameters to maintaining public views. This is an issue in the Swan Canning Riverpark Development Control Area (DCA) where pruning is not allowed for such a benefit.

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, To inform applications to clear or impact vegetation, For baseline information for monitoring, Other

If you have chosen 'other', please specify:

Weed control works to protect areas of native vegetation.

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, Timeliness of assessments, Evidence-base for decisions

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.:

Support biodiversity at a regional scale and provide data for community education that helps them appreciate the value of biodiversity that native vegetation provides. Improved information and access to information also supports assessment and biodiversity management.

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:

2

Rank better reg elements - Streamlined regulation for cost saving:

3

Rank better reg elements - Clearer requirements for business certainty:

Rank better reg elements - Improved assessment timeframes:

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

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.:

Opportunities presented by better regulation include:

1. clear understanding of requirements and processes.
2. Improved access to resources.
3. Improved decision making.
4. Support for local government attempts to protect local biodiversity and retain trees.
5. Provision of clearer standards and ability to ensure correct procedures are undertaken when clearing is required.
6. Allow for enforcement of infringements where unlawful damage and vandalism to native vegetation has occurred.

There can sometimes be confusion on which department needs to be consulted when seeking advice on vegetation removal, and includes the assessing government officer. A recent example is submitting a clearing permit impacting on a TEC and needing clarification on whether discussions are needed with DBCA (as the TEC custodian) or DWER (providing the clearing permit), or both. A one stop shop could address this, if properly resourced.

Clear timeframes are important, even the introduction of a "stop the clock" mechanism is acceptable if made transparent to all parties. Timing is particularly important for activities dictated by budgets or seasonal constraints.

The environment isn't stagnant, with climate change and fire changing the composition of the ecosystem. In some locations native colonising plants are acting like weeds smothering plants that would normally thrive by natural succession. *Typha orientalis*, *Acacia xanthina* and *Acacia rostellifera* are plants showing this tendency. Exemptions need to be made in these cases for the purpose of effective weed control and reduced workload for DWER staff

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:

Rank bioregional elements - 4. Clear targets and thresholds:

3

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:

Please explain in the text box below.:

17 What other opportunities are presented by a bioregional approach?

Please explain in the text box below.:

Improved cooperation between land managers in cross boundary collaboration and unification of goals and targets when dealing with native vegetation.

If the policy incorporates an approval process for removal of native vegetation, then it can become a powerful tool for better protection of native assets at both large and small scales. For example, better protection of native vegetation on private properties, particularly during the development stage where all vegetation is

cleared before sale. It would help protect large areas of canopy cover and mature trees.

Offsetting should include the funding, in lieu of land, if no suitable equivalent vegetation can be located. Funding could be provided for rehabilitation and revegetation of existing conservation areas within the region. For example the Darling Range Regional Park is currently underfunded and lacks a management plan. Funds could be used to address this issue.

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

Please explain in the text box below.:

The thresholds need to be clearly identified and enforced, with offsets targeted within each bioregion.

Dividing the state into biodiversity regions for the purposes of target setting and offsetting is supported, but the definition of "bioregion" is critical. It needs to align closely with local biodiversity. Is there consideration to use vegetation complexes as a measure, as used in WALGA Local Biodiversity Strategies and the Department of Planning's Bush Forever?

The Environmental Protection Act, which encompasses offsetting, is currently under review. There needs to be consistency with offsetting across this policy and the EP act.

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), Aboriginal land management, Pastoral diversification, Nature-based or cultural tourism, Private land management, Other

Please explain in the text box below.:

Regular reporting on the cumulative impacts to vegetation communities.

Environmental management of all remnant natural areas.

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.:

Existing data on native vegetation needs to be collated and made readily available.

Conflicting regulations and policies need to be considered as they can cause serious impacts on and contribute to native vegetation condition decline. For example, fire management regulations.

Cumulative impacts need to be considered and reported on at regular intervals. As such, an effective reporting system must be implemented with a dedicated 'follow up' system to check that action has been taken (and, in some cases, will continue to be taken) to mitigate or decrease impacts on native vegetation.

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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