

Aboriginal Heritage Review – Discussion Paper/Document

My name is Miranda Farmer and I hold a Post-Graduate Diploma in 'Natural & Cultural Resource Management'. With the specialisation in Traditional Ecological Knowledge bases throughout the country and more specifically the state of Western Australia.

One of the first jobs I held after leaving University halfway through a Degree in Anthropology, was as a Permits Officer for the Aboriginal Affair Planning Authority, of which Cedric Wyatt was CEO of at the time (early 1990's). So I have a very good and extensive knowledge of the Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972.

During my tertiary and professional working journey's I've helped set up the Heritage Unit at the South West Aboriginal Land and Sea Council with fellow Noongar's and Traditional Owners; as well as being contracted to submit more extensive Environmental & Cultural Impact studies throughout the city with the Metropolitan Redevelopment Authority (Optus Stadium & New Perth Stadium Trust).

One of my recent roles was as an Aboriginal Lecturer in the 'Masters of Heritage' at the University of Western Australia and as a 'Research Associate' (Environmental Sciences) at Curtin University.

1. The first real red flag in this particular document is the 'Managing Land Use Proposals' no#5. I am aware of the fact that the myriad of land use proposal applications are the largest in the country significantly; and used to be handled and processed according to the Act by the former Department of Aboriginal Affairs, no longer operating in Western Australia.

This situation of course is problematic for the state of W.A. in that SWALSC and all of the other Land Councils and Traditional Owner groups and representative bodies, do not have enough of an understanding of the legislations and their implications, when it comes to Mining Companies and the resource sectors overall.

○ 5. MANAGING LAND USE PROPOSALS THAT MAY IMPACT ON ABORIGINAL HERITAGE

2. The second is 'Protecting Places of Outstanding Importance' no#8. I believe that the consultation even on this particular review was not as extensive and as thorough as it was or should have been with all of the traditional owner groups and land councils body representatives.

The protected areas legislations were implemented to safeguard against the resource sectors for reasons, such as old growth forests in the South West for example (trees that are a thousand

years old cannot be replaced). As well as their significance to traditional owners, traditional dreaming stories, songlines/waterlines and lore and customary importance.

Sections #18, #19 and #20 have been used for anti-logging lobby groups & the Greens parties in the past to continue to protect with the uses of cultural significance providing major factors and contributors to those wins.

○ 9. PROTECTING PLACES OF OUTSTANDING IMPORTANCE

3. The other most significant issue or subjects that have **not been added** to this discussion paper/document are 'Biodiversity Hotspots'; of which the world has a mere 8 hugely significant across the planet. Two of which, which makes up 25% of the planet exist here in Australia.

One is the 'Barrier Reef', all but destroyed in recent years – due to the 'Climate Crisis'; and yes the SOUTH WEST of Western Australia.

What is a 'Biodiversity Hotspot'? Happy to elaborate – a biodiversity hotspot is an area or areas on the land or sea that has the capacity to keep and maintain and sustain plant and animal species en-masse.

The Great Barrier Reef used to sustain around 100 thousand plant & animal species. It is no longer able to maintain or sustain even 5% of that (David Suzuki, 1989 – 2017).

The Australian South West – a region believed to be in essence "Noongar Boodja" (see insert); or making up the entire part of the SWALSC Single Noongar Claim groups areas & regions.

This region alone can and does sustain more than 150 thousand plant and animal species throughout; and more than one third of all known Australian plant species, that include untapped ecological 'traditional ecological knowledge' bases for modern medicines.



'The Southwest', V Laurie, 2015.

The traditional storyline and what we in the South call 'Waterlines' not songlines, is because before colonisation the monsoonal rains in the northern parts of the state delivered floodwaters to the South West regions in the myriad of water catchments.

Currently there are 6 water catchment regions across the state of Western Australia. Five of which sit within this particular region of the state; and make up the very fabric of Noongar (Aboriginal) Lore and Customs.

What does it mean? In essence the discussion paper has only been taken throughout the South West of the state because the resource sector, are aware through the mining tenements processes and already accessed for many decades. Actually show that this region has the richest and highest resources on the continent. The lists range from **bauxite, coal, iron ore, copper, tin, uranium, nickel, tungsten, mineral sands, lead, zinc, diamonds, natural gas, and petroleum.**

Thus far certain sections of the Aboriginal Heritage Act, 1972 has managed to protect these regions from Mining Companies. We in the South West (SWALSC) and traditional owner's representatives bodies; are painfully aware of the fact that we would like to leave something of a legacy for our future generations. Robbing and pilfering their future's and capacities to breath, is not high on our lists of priorities.

Even though time and time again every Government, make it a priority to create environments that are not sustainable to life in 100 years or even 50 or 20 years.

Think about this review and have some more rational conversations and consultations with Environmental Scientists, such as myself on both side and they will all agree that to continue to remove fossil fuels is a path of destruction, that soon (11 years at best) will not be able to be reversed.

Think about your children and their future's, they will be the same as mine. Sadly you may not be aware that there is no Planet B!

You have some questions that might be posed throughout this discussion paper, especially when considering land use agreements (or mining tenements); and significant site registries throughout the South West of the state.

Would you like to discover and develop medicine and cures for all health issues on the planet (this is a probability)? Or would you like to remove all fossil fuels on the planet and push the human race to extinction in under a century?

Miranda Farmer, 2019. ©