

NATIVE VEGETATION IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

A STATE NATIVE VEGETATION POLICY

COMMENTS ON, ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

1. An Introduction to a State Native Vegetation Policy should state WHAT native vegetation is and WHY it is important.

Native Vegetation in Western Australia is a unique, finite and diminishing natural asset/resource that has evolved on a mosaic of soils derived from the weathering of an ancient landscape.

The 'ecological services' provided by native vegetation are difficult to measure/quantify but they underpin the economic and social outcomes for our community.

For example, list the services;

- Habitat for fauna
- Nutrient and water recycling
- Water quality
- Biological pest control
- Seed dispersal
- Water filtration
- Pollination
- Decomposition
- Climate regulation
- Pollution control, for example the leaves, branches and trunks of trees trap airborne particles such as dust, smoke, sand and pollen from the air
- Prevent erosion

AND, in addition native vegetation provides a sense of place, aesthetic and spiritual connection, mental wellbeing ('social') AND contributes to agricultural productivity, maintenance of species richness, tourism opportunity ('economic') etc

2. Use of 'tiers' of data to inform decisions on native vegetation clearing applications. Using the Western Australian Wheatbelt as an example;

a) As described in State of Environment Report Western Australia 2007 'Continental stress class is a method of describing landscape health in Australia at **bioregional scale**. The South West Wheatbelt is the highest stress area for biodiversity in WA , due to widespread fragmentation of habitat, land salinization and relatively small areas protected in the conservation estate.

b) Using Native Vegetation In Western Australia Extent, Type and Status DP Shepherd, GR Beetson and AJM Hopkins February 2002 RESOURCE MANAGEMENT TECHNICAL REPORT 249 Department of Agriculture Government of Western Australia **OR IS THERE MORE RECENT DATA?**

Present Vegetation Extent in Western Australia,

The Extensive Land-use Zone and The Intensive Land-use Zone

Vegetation Extent by Local Government Authority (some LGA's extend across different geological areas, for example the Yilgarn Craton and Dandaragan Plateau where native vegetation may be well represented in one area and not in the other so % remaining in that LGA may be misleading)

Vegetation Extent by Landcare District (data still relevant even though many LCDC's have closed down)

Vegetation extent by drainage basin

Vegetation extent by catchment

c) Sourcing 'historical' information, for example was the area part of a Natural Diversity Recovery Catchment, are there flora and fauna surveys available from the past, local knowledge etc

3. Consideration of cumulative impacts of clearing, again the wheatbelt example

a) Land salinization and subsequent loss of agricultural production, damage to infrastructure eg road and rail etc

b) spread of invasive weeds

c) destruction of critical habitat, for example old trees with hollows which are leaving a shortfall in habitat for hollow dependant species that cannot be replaced in the short-term

4. Education of stakeholders, for example LGA's in alternatives/compromises that enable retention/protection/rehabilitation of roadside vegetation-that it may be seen as an asset to be treasured, not that bit of scrub to be cleared. Measures to enhance the 'safety' of roads that do not involve clearing native vegetation.

5. Incentives for landholders to setback fences to complement existing road or rail reserves with the wider area of vegetation providing improved resilience against edge effects and an enhance corridor for movement of wildlife.

6. Recognise the importance of road and rail reserves as corridors across the landscape. A quote-'in the context of climate change, road and rail reserves and stock routes form an extraordinary fortuitous, extensive network of corridors which, with a contribution from the road network itself could facilitate the movement of species in response to shifting climatic zones. The network is in public hands and its potential in protecting biodiversity under climate change makes it imperative that managers, Local, State and Federal Governments as appropriate recognise and manage its biodiversity values....'An extract from "The State of Australia's Birds in a Changing Climate".

7. Native vegetation is a finite asset/resource and in the wheatbelt a critical threshold has been reached on private and public land beyond which there should now be no more clearing allowed.

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