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From: Bernie Masters [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, 3 January 2020 5:18 PM
To: Dawson, Minister
Cc: stephen.dawsonmp@mp.wa.gov.au
Subject: Clearing of Native Vegetation
Attachments: BNC policy on clearing of native vegetation.pdf

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RECEIVED Office of the Hon Stephen Dawson MLC - 6 DEC 2019 Ref: 62-18383

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Dear Minister,

The Busselton Naturalists Club is one of the largest, oldest and most active conservation groups in rural Western Australia. Founded in 1964, we have some 130 adult members and we hold monthly meetings and excursions, together with two to four camping excursions into regional and remote parts of the state each year. Attendance at our activities averages between 20 and 60 people.

For some years, the Club has been concerned at the lack of policies by successive state governments that adequately protect the remaining native vegetation within the state, especially within the heavily cleared south west land division. While preparing for the first of the public consultation events organised by your department to consider the proposed new strategy on native vegetation, it became obvious that the draft strategy lacked an over-arching policy position, a statement of intent that could motivate and inspire people to better protect remnant native vegetation. Accordingly, the Busselton Naturalists Club adopted the attached policy on clearing of native vegetation which we commend to you and your government.

Regards

Bernie Masters
President
Busselton Naturalists Club
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Busselton Naturalists Club

Founded in 1964, the Busselton Naturalists Club seeks to encourage interest in and conservation of the natural environment of the south west. The extent of native vegetation loss since European settlement has been so high as to now render further clearing unacceptable. As a result, the Club has adopted the following position on native vegetation clearing:

OVER-ARCHING STATEMENT OF INTENT ON NATIVE VEGETATION IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The WA government should adopt the following over-arching statement of intent to guide and motivate government agencies and the public in their efforts to better protect and manage native vegetation:

1. Clearing of native vegetation within Western Australia has been extensive, especially within the South West Land Division where less than 10% of original native vegetation remains in the wheatbelt, less than 50% on the Swan Coastal Plain and less than 40% in the jarrah forest bioregion.
2. Clearing of native vegetation has directly or indirectly contributed to the extinction of several species of native mammals and flora, with many more species of wildlife now endangered or threatened, primarily through habitat loss caused by the clearing of native vegetation.
3. All remaining natural vegetation within the South West Land Division has intrinsically high conservation value as a result of the extensive clearing that has taken place since European settlement in 1826. For this reason, further clearing of native vegetation on public and private land should not occur.
4. Because all remaining native vegetation has high intrinsic value, the WA government should adopt as policy a presumption against further clearing of native vegetation. Illegal clearing of native vegetation should attract more severe penalties than those that currently apply
5. When a land development proposal requires the clearing of native vegetation, the proponent under direction of the state government should fully investigate whether the proposal can be relocated to already cleared land such that no native vegetation would be affected.
6. When a land development proposal requires the clearing of native vegetation and no viable alternative for the project's relocation onto cleared land exists, the proposal should only be approved if the state government determines that the project is of high social and/or economic importance **and** that no viable alternative to the development proposal or its location exists.
7. All cleared private land to be developed so as to prevent the clearing of native vegetation should be resumed only after full and fair compensation is negotiated between the owner and government. Where the private landowner so requests, land values should be assessed by an independent valuer. Compensation should cover the loss of capital value arising from the impact of land resumption on the existing and future viability of the affected private property.

8. Where cleared land is determined to be agriculturally or otherwise unviable, the state government should commit to and provide financial support for its revegetation back to natural bushland.
9. Where private owners of native vegetation wish to better manage their vegetation, government should devise and implement a scheme to provide financial assistance and the free provision of technical advice to assist and encourage such landowners. This could include direct financial assistance from the government or reduced rates from local governments.

Bernie Masters
President
Busselton Naturalists Club
16-12-2019