

Our Ref: CD/7342/20
Enquiries [REDACTED]

5/02/2020

Department of Water and Environmental Regulation		CITY OF
File Ref		
06 FEB 2020		
Doc Ref		
Div/Officer		
Scanned?	Y	N



7 Orchard Avenue Armadale
Western Australia 6112
Locked Bag 2 Armadale
Western Australia 6992
T: (08) 9394 5000
F: (08) 9394 5184
info@armadale.wa.gov.au
www.armadale.wa.gov.au

ABN: 798 6326 9538

Native Vegetation Strategy
Department of Water and Environmental Regulation
Locked Bag 10
JOONDALUP DC WA 6919

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: Submission on the Native Vegetation Issues Paper

The City of Armadale (the City) has reviewed the Native Vegetation Issues Paper and the four initiatives proposed.

The City notes that the issues paper has limited detail on the four initiatives which have been presented to inform discussion. In general the City agrees with the 'issues' that have been identified and support approaches that move towards improved transparency and consistency in how native vegetation is considered across Government processes.

The City's primary area of concern is around the need for better regulation, which also ties into the proposed Native Vegetation policy. The City has a number of comments outlined in Table 1 (attached) which apply primarily to both these aspects of the issues paper.

If you have any questions in relation to this matter, do not hesitate to contact the City's Senior Environment Officer on [REDACTED] or [REDACTED].

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]
Kevin Ketterer
Executive Director Technical Services

Attachment 1: City of Armadale Comments on Native Vegetation Issues paper

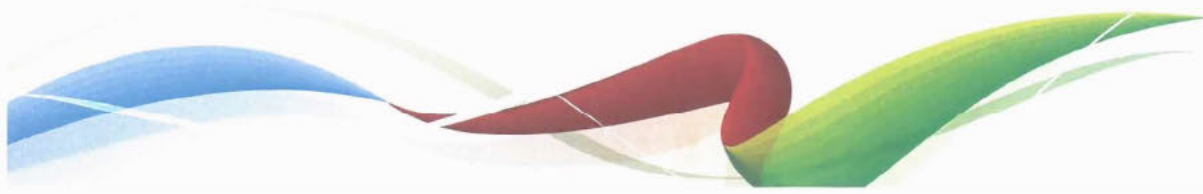


Table 1 – City of Armadale Comments on the Native Vegetation Issues Paper

#	Comments
1	Mechanical changes to regulation and process, including clearing permits, are being considered as part of the suite of changes to the EP Act. Yet there is no mention of where these changes overlap with the intent for 'Better Regulation' as discussed in the issues paper. This has created confusion in the industry as to where opportunities for improvement of clearing regulation can be considered.
2	The issues paper has a lack of focus on outcomes, and broader threats to vegetation are often not appropriately considered through the existing clearing assessment process (i.e. fragmentation, weed invasion, climate change etc). The City's view is that these types of issues can only be considered strategically if tied into high level planning (regional structure planning for example). We recommend a future Native Vegetation Policy should consider the need to strategically respond to, and be tied into future planning.
3	The green-Growth Plan was meant to be an assessment of impacts and strategic mitigation of these impacts based on the sub-regional structure planning. There was a significant amount of work embedded into the green-growth plan, much of which is still relevant. Therefore it would be good to know if this data can be utilised to help inform the vegetation policy and determining the appropriateness of future clearing in constrained areas of the SCP.
4	<p>Currently the list of exemptions under the Clearing Regulations are ambiguous and inconsistently applied, which places regulatory burden on Local Governments when risk of impact is low. The confusion in the application of exemptions also results in worse environmental outcomes generally.</p> <p>For example, recently a developer referred to the Schedule 6 exemptions as justification to clear vegetation in the implementation of an approved subdivision when environmental factors hadn't been considered. It was argued that the mention of the requirement to 'fill' in the creation of a master Lot that was proposed to be a [REDACTED] necessitated clearing. The result was blanket clearing of [REDACTED] ha of very good condition primarily wetland vegetation (mapped as a REW) without any surveys, reporting or consideration of retention. In contrast, the City was recently required to submit a clearing permit to remove 2x grass trees in a road verge that are blocking line of site for oncoming traffic. This illustrates the balance is not right.</p>
5	Four weeks is not sufficient time to properly review and comment on the proposed Native Vegetation Policy when prepared.
6	ESA mapping accuracy should be reviewed on an ongoing basis given the importance of the ESA mapping in not only the clearing permit assessment process, but also in determining when exemptions apply or not.
7	The City would like to see consideration for a dedicated service unit within DWER to deal with Local Government applications. The nature of Local Government work means we are often working in the 'grey' when it comes to application of exemptions, yet typically have the organisational checks and balances in place that reduce risks associated with non-compliance. In fact the City believes this could go further in potentially allowing for Local Governments to be given greater responsibility for assessing impacts and appropriateness of clearing in low risk situations.
8	The City supports a bioregional approach, however are unsure what this may mean for decision making around clearing. Assuming this is the case, then we would expect to see more stringency in clearing allowed on the SCP for example. However it's also important that decision making is informed by empirical evidence and the thresholds for ecological persistence which will likely vary across bioregions (i.e. we don't want comparative assessment across bioregions to be relied on in the absence of good evidence or where this evidence contradicts the objectives of any particular bioregion that may be defined in the new policy for example).