



PO BOX 1391, MIDLAND 6936

25 October 2021

Native Vegetation Strategy
Department of Water and Environmental Regulation
Locked Bag 10
Joondalup DC WA 6919
nvs@dwer.wa.gov.au

Re: Comment on Draft Native Vegetation Policy

The Blackadder/Woodbridge Catchment Group Inc is an association of community volunteers concerned with the restoration of remnant vegetation on creek reserves in the Midland area.

We generally support the Purpose of the Draft Policy as stated on page 4. However we are concerned that while the State recognises the “need to protect areas of high conservation value” there is no commitment to cease the clearing of native vegetation.

The Policy Statement begins with the statement: “To protect and enhance [native vegetation] now and for the future, State Government agencies will ensure that their decisions on native vegetation are coordinated, deliberate, well-informed and transparent - whether the decision is to protect it, to restore it, or to accept impacts to it in favour of other priorities”.

This appears to be no different to the “sustainable development” rationale that has for too long allowed unacceptable vegetation clearing, particularly on the Swan Coastal Plain.

Unfortunately the Draft Policy fails to recognise that we are now beyond the point of “balancing environmental, economic and social considerations”. The situation is seriously out of balance and we are now facing the imminent extinction of multiple species and floristic communities. We no longer have the luxury of any consideration other than the protection and restoration of what remains of the State’s native vegetation.

We suggest that the Draft Policy’s purpose to “achieve a nett gain in native vegetation extent” be qualified with “extent and condition”. This would avoid a loophole where an area of good condition vegetation is cleared and elsewhere a slightly larger area is planted with a monoculture of native trees.

We are concerned that the “Roadmap” still includes environmental offsets. Offsets allow for the destruction of native vegetation and while it may look good on paper it does not achieve nett gain on the ground.

At this critical time we need the Draft Policy to deliver the minimum of what is needed to prevent extinctions: stop clearing native vegetation now.

Finally we commend the Draft Report for its acknowledgement of Indigenous Peoples however the reference to “European settlement” on page 6 is factually incorrect. Western Australia was not “settled” by “Europeans”, it was invaded and occupied by the British. These are important distinctions as reconciliation first requires truth-telling.

Yours sincerely

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the Secretary.

Secretary
BWCG