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Native Vegetation Strategy

Department of Water and Environmental Regulation

Lot Bag 10 Joondalup DC WA 6910

Dear Sir/Madam,

Please find below this submission from the Swan River Native Title Claimants and Perth Traditional Owners.

1. We acknowledge that as the Swan River Native Title Claimants and Perth and Whadjuk First Nation Traditional Owners we have an obligation to continue to effect better outcomes from the planning process and a need to protect our country for future generations.
2. We are aware that our Whadjuk country is the physical manifestation of the Seven Sisters Dreaming and that Perth's sacred name from this Dreaming is Kang Korung Kalba.
3. Our Greater Perth Whadjuk Matta country has a diversity of plants and animals which are higher than that found in the rest of the Southwest global biodiversity hotspot. Your policy doesn't recognise this. It needs to.
4. Our Greater Perth Whadjuk Matta country has been recognised as part of the Old Australian Religious Tradition. Our religious tradition is Animist, and many of our people are comfortable in recognising animist and Christian Religious Traditions. We are aware we have a religious obligation to protect this highest value part of the global southwest biodiversity hotspot, our country, now and for the future. Your policy doesn't yet adequately recognise this but it should.

5. The EPA Conservation through Reserve program in system 6 and adjacent system areas to the north along Moore River and to the East along Avon River and to the South along the Murray River are included in our Whadjuk Matta Greater Perth area. The area that your policy covers should also reflect this area.
6. This vegetation protection in WA policy review needs to better recognise First Nation boundaries across the State, starting with Whadjuk Matta country.
7. This vegetation protection policy review must get ahead of the pressures of incremental development by protecting high value lands and waters and sites identified by DAA and EPA and Water Authority and Parks and Wildlife and Planning studies in the last 50 years, by establishing an expanded Parks System across the Whadjuk Matta Greater Perth area.
8. Perth Traditional Owners request Metropolitan Area Planning be expanded to reflect the extent of our Whadjuk Matta Cultural influence which extends across the Greater Perth Area including:
  - Cowalla
  - Wongan Hills
  - Dowerin
  - Star Swamp
  - York
  - Doodlakine and Gundaring
  - Corrigin
  - Pinjarra
  - Mandurah, Waroona, Myalup

We are aware this combines the areas of Moore River, Swan Avon Rivers, and the Murray River. With our neighbours these are our Matta (Cultural) lands. These lands include our seasonal ceremony and festival areas on which we held ceremonies jointly with our neighbours every year. It would be an improvement if our ceremonial areas were included in Jointly Managed A Class National Parks.

9. We request that for the future there is a more appropriate combination of the areas of the Perth Metropolitan Region Scheme, Peel Metropolitan Region Scheme and Avon Arc Areas, so that Greater Perth Planning Work can better encompass our obligations and deliberations for outcomes in the Whadjuk Matta Greater Perth Area Planning.
10. The Traditional Owners of Perth request as part of the initiatives to protect native vegetation in Greater Perth area, eleven new regional (transition) Parks and eleven new National Parks (permanent and expanding) be established across the Whadjuk Matta Greater Perth area.
11. These eleven National Parks will be named after the eight Traditional Clans:
  1. Wadurngur
  2. Yabourur
  3. Beeliar
  4. Mooro
  5. Beelu
  6. Boyangur
  7. Djeeran
  8. Woragul

and supported by three Parks to protect:

9. Whadjuk Monuments National Park eg. For Ancient Owl Stone,
  10. Waugal Warkal River National Park, and
  11. Kang Korang Kalba Wetlands National Park.
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12. The Greater Perth Whadjuk Matta area needs to be divided by local Government area into the areas previously associated with each of the eight Clans. This will facilitate each local Government Authority knowing the Traditional Clan and Families, their Area was associated with.
  13. The transition function of the regional park systems needs to be overhauled and the aim and success of Regional Park processed be measured by the establishment of A Class National Parks of all the subject sites and corridors and areas.

14. The ESA's or Environmentally significant areas needs to be strengthened and seen as a key part of the conservation through reserve process.

15. The Vegetation Protection amendments to the EP Act in 2004 gave Perth protection for environmentally significant areas and their 50 metre buffers. The 2.8 Policy does not adequately reflect this. It needs to. The EPA 2004 amendments recognised past agreements and negotiations to protect our valuable country and our cultural sites. It protected:

- Register of the National Estate Sites
- System Six Sites
- Conservation Category Wetlands
- Wild Rivers
- Rare and Threatened Species and Ecological Communities

It was well written and clear, and able to be understood. The 2.8 Policy is not. It is difficult to see the intention or effect of the 2.8 Policy. It has not worked to protect wetlands adequately or their buffers. It needs to.

16. Major Wildlife Corridors that are often our Ancient Paths and Songlines, corridors along ridges, or areas often adjacent to wetland chains and waterways. They need better planning and protection from this Policy.

17. We seek a Parks and Waterway system that recognises Regional and Local Wildlife Corridors and Greenways.

18. We understand the Wetland buffer Guidelines were reviewed in 2011 and the Conservation Council and Urban Development Institute supported a simpler and more wide spread adoption of 50 metre buffer from the boundary of wetland type mapped in the Wetland Atlas and the Geomorphic Wetland Type Mapping including wetland, basin, flats, slopes, and channels.

19. We recognise better than most citizens the cyclical range of rainfall, ground water levels and wetland levels in our country. We are concerned that you are not using the knowledge derived from the rainfall, ground water and wetlands levels that were experienced and mapped in 1968. We are concerned planning is not using this data over the last 40 years, to alert people to have caution building too close to wetlands and waterways. This is not good planning, good practice, or sustainable land and water management for wetlands and wildlife. It is also irresponsible and may contribute to biodiversity loss, flooding or water quality management problems.

20. We support the use of the Water Authority Wetland and Waterway 1993 Mapping with 50 metre buffer, used as a minimum standard for foreshore reserve definition. Higher value areas of Wetland and Waterways for Cultural reasons, Ecological reasons or Recreation and Reconciliation reasons may require larger buffers.

21. In the System 6 and immediately adjacent Whadjuk Matta areas, a more rapid transition from Regional Park to National Park areas in the Greater Perth area is required. Many of the System 6 Recommendations from the 1980s have not yet been implemented. Many of the Regional Park Recommendations from the 1990s have not yet been implemented. Many of the Perth Bush Plan and Perth Bush Forever Recommendations have not yet been implemented. Regional Biodiversity Corridors from 2000 have yet to be protected. Most of the Perth Greenway Recommendations have not yet been implemented. The removal Federally of Register of the Nation Estate as an active Indigenous Heritage Protection institution has left many Whadjuk Heritage sites without active agency support. The protection systems need better implementation in Perth. An expanded National Parks system will assist in effecting implementation of the Recommendations above.

22. The Traditional Owners would also like to see a new Whadjuk Land and Sea Council dedicated to looking after Whadjuk Mala and Matta (Land and Culture).

23. The Traditional Owners would like to see the joint management of all Perth National Parks and Nature Reserves.

24. We would also like to see Indigenous Protected Areas over some of our very special areas and monuments.

25. We understand this is a review of the Vegetation Protection of WA Policies.

26. We assert that this is more than just Vegetation Protection as it includes in EPA legislation the important Protection of ESA areas, Areas critically important for Cultural and Natural Reasons including State listing of Register of the National Estate areas, Areas subject to EPA Conservation Through Reserve Recommendations, Wetlands and Rivers and Inland Waters Protection Works supporting State Water Resources Assessment and Protection systems for surface and groundwater sustainability.

27. We would like to communicate a very strong concern about your Policy and how it relates and refers to our Inland Waters and their futures.

28. We are aware traditionally about the importance of Darling Range Springs to the health of the whole greater Perth system. Most of our Springs are traditionally named to reflect attention of their importance. The health of Springs has great relevance to the sustainable management of Water Balance, Water Quality, Water Supply, and Water Related Environmental, Cultural and Recreational Value. Your Policy for Vegetation Protection currently focuses on the Swan Coastal Plain and has vague references to Regional Creeks. This Policy is incomplete. The Conservation Category Wetlands and Resource Enhancement Category Wetlands ESA application in Perth focuses on Wetlands of Conservation Category that had been previously published in Government Maps. We assert that the Conservation Category Waterways Values published in the Water Authority Water Resource Protection Maps prepared for the Perth and Peel regions and for System 6 Update Projects also provide the trigger for meeting the ESA criteria in the EPA Vegetation Protection Regulations. Accordingly we request the Geomorphic Wetlands Mapped as a Conservation Category Wetland or Waterway north, or east of the Swan Coastal Plain in the project area and especially the Springs in the Darling Range should be properly recognised also as Regionally significant Conservation Category Wetlands and Waterways and Protected as Environmentally Significant Areas being Protected with a 50 metre buffer.

29. The Traditional Owners also request that in future the important role of Waterways as traditional trails also be recognised across the whole Whadjuk Matta Greater Perth area as a future network of linked Parks for people and wildlife and as a demonstration of respect for Indigenous Culture and Perth's Whadjuk Peoples.

30. In the 1980s we spoke to State Government about the important Bennett Brook site as a sacred area to us, and of the need to give the area improved protection (O'Connor et al, 1989). Our agreements with the State on the area was troubling to us as our areas were not subsequently respected as much as we had worked to achieve, or shown the respect that we sought. We call for improvements in outcomes in this area.

31. The Gnangara Lakes area is a Seven Sisters Heritage site. Across Whadjuk Matta Greater Perth area there are other Internationally and Nationally significant Indigenous Heritage areas. We have been reluctant to disclose

information about these places as we continue to see the absence of adequate procedural competence, and the concerning institutional inadequacies very visible in the Jukkan Gorge sites recent destruction. We seek improvements in this area.

32. We request for immediate actions:

- The inclusion of a Nationally significant First Nation Monument site Category in the EPBC National Environmental significance list in the State bilateral agreement with the Federal Government.
- The establishment of a Whadjuk Monument IPA and National Park for extraordinary Cultural sites such as Gwambygine.
- Funds be made available to purchase and manage Perth's extended Park system.
- Joint Management to be the norm in Perth's new 11 collective National Parks.

33. We seek our people's involvement as Rangers in the care of our country as a key part of the States Vegetation Protection System. We are keen to see our people employed by State and Local Government as Land Management Rangers and as Cultural Heritage Wardens.

34. Please develop this Policy so that respectful Fire Management that cares for the land and the young of our animals, our traditional approaches, are once again used on our lands.

35. We look forward to holding our seasonal festivals again with our neighbours on Indigenous Ranger Joint Managed National Parks. Please ensure this Planning document brings these old ways closer to being enjoyed again.

36. For these and other reason we assert the need for and expanded metropolitan area planning system. This expanded area needs to align better with the Traditional Whadjuk Matta area. Extending north, east and south.

37. We want our country to be continually subject to high quality action and oversight by our own people annually at our seasonal festivals. We look forward to enhanced relationships, agreements and government negotiations that make this possible.

38. We take this opportunity to remind you that the Whadjuk Matta Greater Perth Area encompasses Moore River, Swan Avon Rivers and the Murray River

and our seasonal festival areas, and is the southwest coast terminus of the Seven Sisters Tradition. It has special Cultural country areas that do not yet have any Monument Protection. It also has many high value Natural and Cultural Heritage areas that also do not yet have current Protection in Parks. We seek urgent attention to protecting our monuments in Whadjuk Matta Greater Perth area and also across the State of Western Australia.

39. We assert that there is a need for better and more effective consultation on Planning for Parks as part of Vegetation Protection.

40. Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the review of this important policy.

41. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these suggestions further in the future.

Yours sincerely,

