

City of Wanneroo – Draft Local Biodiversity Plan 2026 – 2030

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The Urban Bushland Council WA Inc. is the peak community organisation advocating for the recognition, protection and active management of urban bushland and ecological linkages in the Perth metropolitan region.

The wealth of information contained in this Draft Document is remarkable and the City or Wanneroo is to be congratulated. The whole document is a comprehensive resource and direction for the City of Wanneroo.

The Urban Bushland Council supports this Plan that *‘sets a clear direction to protect, restore and better connect the City’s remaining natural areas as it continues to grow.’*

The fact that actions to be investigated and implemented are recorded in Table 19 (page 75) is a valuable part of the Draft Local Biodiversity Plan. The sub-sections are:

1) Protection, 2) Restoration, 3) Conservation, 4) Urban Greening for Biodiversity, and 5) Education, Community Capacity Building and Internal Processes.

In section 1) Protection, the Urban Bushland Council particularly supports 1.4: *‘Advocate for early-stage identification of priority areas for retention and ensure comprehensive ecological flora, fauna and vegetation surveys are undertaken at District Structure Plan and Local Structure Plan staged for land subject to urban rezoning or development, rather than deferred to subdivision or development application stages.’*

In section 5) at 5.8, just one example from all valuable actions is: *‘Undertake an independent review of the current delivery of the fire mitigation program to assess its effectiveness and identify potential impacts on biodiversity values’*. The fact that all actions have an approximate time frame attached is excellent.

We read in the Plan that *‘About 43% of the City retains natural vegetation, but only around 21% is currently protected. Continued growth increases risks from clearing, fragmentation, altered hydrology, invasive species and climate change.’*

The Urban Bushland Council appreciates that this lack of protection for 21 % of natural vegetation is recognised. The Plan is a policy document providing advice, guidance and direction, but in planning for increasing population and associated infrastructure and amenities, local biodiversity is threatened.

As so many natural areas over the Swan Coastal Plain have already been cleared, fragmented and filled, *‘Priority areas for retention, enhancement and improved connectivity’* in the City of Wanneroo should receive the greatest protection.

The Plan identifies land clearing as *‘the greatest threat to biodiversity’* in the City. It reports that:

- between 2001 and 2005, 1,192 ha of native vegetation was cleared, and
- between 2011 and 2016 a further 1,450 ha was cleared.

With an emphasis on, and respect for the uniqueness of our biodiverse natural areas in the City of Wanneroo, protection of nature must be a strong first consideration. Clearing endangered Banksia Woodlands, Tuart Woodlands and Forests and habitat for endangered species must not continue.

The draft Biodiversity Plan goes a long way in achieving recognition of natural areas. If planners adhere to principles and advice in the Biodiversity Plan from the outset and demand appropriate planning from developers, the City will have achieved much.

2.2 A Growing City (p2)

By 2046 the population of the City of Wanneroo is expected to have increased by 73.16% - from 253,389 people to 437,016. This expected increase in population is very challenging for the City and for the State.

The level of population growth may be pushing the City past breaking point.

'If everyone on Earth consumed resources at the average Australian rate, humanity would require 4.5 Earths to sustain itself' (Waste Management and Resource Recovery Association Australia - info@wmrr.asn.au)

Heavily cleared communities.

The Plan identifies some of the most heavily cleared vegetation communities in the City:

- Karrakatta Central and South - 89% lost
- Pinjar wetland complex - 79% lost
- Quindalup dunes 75% lost
- Bassendean Central and South - 84% lost.

UBC COMMENTS ON VARIOUS AREAS OF THE DRAFT LOCAL BIODIVERSITY PLAN FOLLOW.

3. Priorities for Cooler, Greener Communities Include Biodiversity Targets for the City of Wanneroo (p3)

The analysis in Figure 1 is remarkable viz that *'about 43% of City of Wanneroo land remains as natural areas with approximately 31% of naturally vegetated areas considered protected.'*

The Urban Bushland Council would like to see a much higher percentage of 'natural vegetation areas' being protected. The target outcomes on page 5 provide what strategic protection, restoration and conservation of the City's natural areas will achieve.

6.7 District Planning Scheme No 2. (p 13)

'There are currently 55 conservation reserves' – all with dual classification being reviewed to establish a single purpose – supported.

7.3 State Government-Managed Natural Areas. (p24)

The Urban Bushland Council supports the City's four 'Opportunity' statements. In particular - the opportunity for restoration of Bush Forever areas located around wetlands and their buffer areas.

9.4 Wetlands (p 40) The information on wetlands is amazing. We are told that the City contains 179 wetlands, 86 of which are classified as Conservation Category Wetlands, 44

Resource Enhancement Wetlands and 53 Multiple Use Wetlands. And *‘there are currently 18 CCW on private property. It is unknown if these are being managed appropriately...’*

9.6 Coastal Areas (p45)

Development pressures in the northern corridor in the Alkimos-Eglington and Yanchep-Two Rocks areas are intense. The Urban Bushland Council notes the Plan states that in these areas *‘There is opportunity for some Local Natural Areas to be retained along the coastline in POS’*.

The Urban Bushland Council encourages the City to protect coastal vegetation and landforms and their links to inland natural areas to strengthen resilience for *‘biodiversity connectivity, climate change resilience and coastline protection’*. (1.5 Actions Table19)

9.7 Ecological linkages (p 46). Figure 11 and see also Appendix F - Naturelinks

The UBC strongly supports this section. The UBC appreciates the science and years of investigation behind the mapping of Naturelinks. Of course, natural areas, as large as possible, must be protected as nodes that are Naturelinked. All remnant bushlands are now significant. (Fauna Report for Nowergup (p42))

The listing of the Tuart community is *‘to mitigate the risk of extinction of the ecological community...’* (p25 TW and F of the SCP - Guide).

10.3 Altered hydrology (p 52)

The Urban Bushland Council strongly supports this section and the comment in ‘Opportunity’ at 2.4 (p77). Altered hydrology is acknowledged by the City as one of the principle environmental challenges associated with urban expansion. Is drainage infrastructure in urban developments in the City international best practice? Could it be done better? A leading example is Denmark’s Copenhagen – where a climate-adapted urban drainage plan shifted from underground pipes and pits to using the urban landscape to manage water. However, Copenhagen has to manage frequent rainfall, whereas the State has to manage infrequent rainfall. Social and ecological benefits can be achieved by viewing stormwater as a benefit when design acknowledges the landscape and natural drainage lines are restored.

The Plan says district and local water strategies should protect wetland function and expressly identifies the need to avoid adverse effects such as inundation of peripheral/fringing vegetation.

But an implementation gap is evident.

The Carabooda/North East Wanneroo section does not connect this analysis back to

Lake Nowergup, changes in groundwater abstraction from horticulture, the 9,200 dwelling District Structure Plan, possible rising groundwater and groundwater-dependent vegetation.

Action 2.4 - to investigate whether Urban Water Management Plans could include objectives to enhance wetland ecology - is not an action to require catchment-scale ecohydrological modelling so this is a weak point.

Section 11 looks at **Biodiversity Conservation by Planning Precinct.** (p62)

The six biodiversity planning precincts are:

- Yanchep Two Rocks (p 63)
- Alkimos-Eglington (p 65)
- State Forest - Regional and National Parks (p 67)

- North East Wanneroo (p 69)
- South East Wanneroo (p 71)
- South West Wanneroo (p 73)

The attributes of each precinct are very well and succinctly described and the maps are helpful and informative.

NORTH EAST WANNEROO BIODIVERSITY PLANNING PRECINCT:

The Urban Bushland Council submitted comment on the Carabooda District Structure Plan and attended a deputation to the WA Planning Commission. Supported was the protection of the substantial conservation estate and also the early involvement of the Environmental Protection Authority. Never the less the Urban Bushland Council sought:

1. stronger north-south ecological connectivity;
2. greater application of the first step of the mitigation hierarchy - **avoidance**;
3. less fragmentation by locating roads along the edges of conservation areas; and
4. stronger safeguards addressing groundwater change and the area's complex ecohydrology.

Modification to the District Structure Plan still fell short of translating the EPA's advice into secure planning outcomes.

The City's Biodiversity Plan strongly favours avoidance rather than clearing with mitigation.

Black cockatoo habitat

North East Wanneroo precinct explicitly identifies black cockatoo foraging habitat - with the stated objective of supporting the long-term viability of local populations. The Carabooda Structure Plan should be doing more to avoid clearing high-quality foraging habitat, nesting trees and canopy connections. The gap between advice in the Draft Biodiversity Structure Plan – particularly in the North East Wanneroo Precinct – and the Carabooda Structure Plan is evident.

Conclusion

The draft Local Biodiversity Plan is very well written and organised and will be a significant reference for development and conservation in the City of Wanneroo. It provides a clear direction to protect, restore and better connect the City's remaining natural areas. Its stated objectives to retain native vegetation early in the planning process, protect linkages, give priority to threatened communities and fauna habitat and recognise altered hydrology are strongly supported by the Urban Bushland Council.