



12th May 2011

(Member address)

Dear (Member Name)

Bush Forever motion before the Legislative Council 25th May 2011

Perth is the only city in the world built on a natural landscape dominated by Banksia Woodlands. Furthermore the two most common Banksia trees (*Banksia menziesii*, *B. attenuata*) are truly iconic and ancient species having been present for 40 - 60 million years.

As well as being intrinsically rich in flora, fauna and fungi species, our Banksia Woodlands provide us with valuable ecosystem services. This includes clean fresh air, a carbon sink, a quiet relaxing place to escape the stresses of city life, mental health benefits, a place to enjoy nature's gifts of wildflowers and birds, a place for passive recreation, and a priceless educational and learning resource for children.

Bush Forever is a comprehensive plan, introduced by a Liberal Government in 2000, to retain and protect an interconnected series of conservation areas across the Swan Coastal Plain part of the Perth Metropolitan Region. The planning and environment agencies of the day are to be highly commended for their rigorous scientific surveys and plans based on national criteria and published in the Government's Bush Forever documents of December 2000. No other city in Australia has this standard of information, nor the outstanding biodiversity values inherent in our natural landscape. Excerpts from the Vision statement of Bush Forever are attached.

Ten years of implementing Bush Forever has progressed with acquisition of some sites, a major amendment to the Metropolitan Region Scheme to show the boundaries of all sites, and gazetting of the Statement of Planning policy 2.8. But there is still much to be done to secure and protect all sites, provide fencing and signage, foster community awareness and appreciation of bushland, and to manage threatening processes such as weeds, dieback, foxes, rabbits and feral cats. There are more than 100 Bush Forever sites where portions have no managing agency and there is no on ground management to protect and maintain the values. This lag in implementation is unacceptable in a rapidly expanding metropolis and requires urgent allocation of substantial infrastructure resources.

In some areas community volunteers in Friends groups are helping to care for and promote their local bushland in conjunction with land managers. Many Bush Forever sites, however, have no Friends groups and are not being managed to retain their natural heritage values while suburbia is encroaching and costly degradation follows.

Thus the process of implementing Bush Forever according to the Government's plan is far from complete. There is no statutory framework for protection and management of sites under the Environment portfolio and we believe that this is a key reason for lack of 'on ground' Government

commitment and action. We therefore seek your support for the immediate introduction of a formal statutory framework via a mechanism, such as a regulation under the Environmental Protection Act, which includes provision for:

- * site protection,
- * setting appropriate standards of management,
- * provision of Government resources for management,
- * ongoing community education and awareness,
- * facilitation of establishment of new Friends groups by land managers and
- * co-operation with and support for Friends groups.

Our Bush Forever sites and the associated local bushland areas are irreplaceable natural assets which belong to and benefit the whole community.

The Urban Bushland Council therefore looks forward to your interest and support of a formal initiative as suggested above to protect our precious bushland landscape of the Perth region for the benefit of present and future generations. We seek your support of the motion now on the notice paper before the Legislative Council likely to be debated on 15th May and/or 15th June. The title of the notice of motion is **"Bush Forever sites - Perth Metropolitan Area."**

The Urban Bushland Council is available to supply further information and may be contacted by telephone on 9420 7207 (leave a message if unattended) and looks forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

C Mary Gray
Vice President

ATTACHMENT

From Bush Forever Volume 1 (December 2000): Policies, Principles and Processes, page vii:

The Vision

'Conserving biological diversity (biodiversity) is one of the major global environmental challenges facing humanity. The Western Australian State of the Environment Report (Government of WA 1998) acknowledged that the loss of biodiversity and habitats through clearing, habitat degradation, human interference and the introduction of pests and weeds are some of the State's most serious environmental problems.

... Perth's biodiversity is one of the highest recorded in any major city, and through Bush Forever, Perth has a unique opportunity to become the biodiversity capital of Australia.

... Bush Forever is about "Keeping the Bush in the City". Urban bushland contributes to Perth's unique character and quality of life and has often been described as "the heart and lungs of the city". The woodlands and shrublands of Perth's bushland, although perhaps lacking the immediate visual impact of the tall southern forests, have their own special beauty tied to their diversity and

intricacy of form. An important aim of Bush Forever is to foster a greater awareness and appreciation of urban bushland, and to develop a stronger sense of responsibility and belonging by the community through active management to control threatening processes.

... Every city needs its special places: they are impossible to replace once lost.'

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Appendix 1. Cover letter to Mr K. McNamara
CEO Dept of Environment and Conservation

From: cmgray [mailto:celiagray@bigpond.com]
Sent: Monday, 23 May 2011 9:42 AM
To: McNamara, Keiran
Subject: Bush Forever debate before Parliament
Importance: High

Dear Mr McNamara

The Urban Bushland Council wishes to advise that the attached letter has been sent to all State Members of Parliament.

We are seeking support for a well funded initiative that will ensure Bush Forever sites and associated local bushland and ecological linkages are properly managed into the future. This is now critically important in the face of climate change which threatens our biodiversity and iconic Banksia Woodlands.

We are aware that many Bush Forever sites are in the process of being transferred to DEC managed lands and others to local government authorities. However there is no statutory framework for their recognition as conservation lands and provision for appropriate standards of management. These lands are under severe pressure from encroaching suburbia and threatening processes and many are degrading from neglect.

Sadly there is little political and public awareness of the values of Perth's iconic woodlands and the existence of Bush Forever. But the attendance and high level of interest in our recent Banksia Woodland Symposium showed overwhelming support for much more focus on threatening processes and the control of clearing, as well as education and awareness. We need to keep and protect what little remains.

We are pleased to have had a useful follow-up discussion with officers of DEC's Swan Region as above. We look forward to your support for an initiative that raises the profile of Perth's Banksia Woodlands and Bush Forever. We want them to be part of Perth's future landscape for future generations.

Yours sincerely

C Mary Gray
Vice President
Urban Bushland Council WA
23 May 2011