



Urban Bushland Council WA Inc

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WEST PERTH 6872

21 May 2015

Committee Secretary

House of Representatives Standing Committee on the Environment

PO Box 6021

Parliament House

Canberra ACT 2600

Submission to the inquiry into the administration and transparency of the Register of Environmental Organisations and its effectiveness in supporting communities to take practical action to improve the environment.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission.

The Urban Bushland Council (Council) is an umbrella association of some 70 community groups with the common interest in the conservation and management of urban bushland. 'Urban' bushland includes all the native vegetation, fauna and fungi in the Perth- Peel Regions as well as bushland associated with towns in the south west region of WA - in summary it focuses attention on the biodiversity at stake in our Region. The Council has been active for over 20 years, has held conferences with printed proceedings, and has conducted activities and major projects in community education and science on various aspects of bushland management.

The Council is a voluntary, non-government organisation concerned about declining urban bushland. The South West of Western Australia including the Perth - Peel Region is one of only 34 global biodiversity hotspots, based on the high number of unique plants and animals and the high level of threats to the region by Conservation International. And in 2011, the Australian Government and Western Australian Government formally agreed to undertake a strategic assessment of the Perth and Peel Regions of Western Australia under provisions of the EPBC Act.

In recent years Council has worked tirelessly to protect this internationally recognised Region but has received no Grants to support this effort from either the State or Federal Government. Council's work is mainly supported by donations and membership fees.

The Council is registered on the Register of Environmental Organisations (REO) but has not applied to receive income tax-deductible donations and tax-deductible contributions (called deductible gift recipients (DGRs)). However a number of the Member groups have DGR status. Without DGR status the income of these groups would be reduced as most donations are received from individuals who appreciate the small benefit they receive by being able to claim the donation on their income tax return.

The Council plays a crucial role in lobbying Government of all levels for bushland protection. Despite numerous statements and commitments by Governments over many years urban bushland continues to degrade and disappear at an alarming rate. The Council and its supporters have achieved many great wins in holding back the tide of unacceptable developments but the need to be vigilant and active is relentless.

Luckily, the greater Perth area still holds significant tracts and pockets of relatively undisturbed bushland. However, these are continually at risk from developers and from more insidious impacts from climate change, catastrophic fire events, receding water tables, and weed invasion; exacerbated by a general lack of public awareness of bushland values.

The Council is the key organisation focussing on these threats and provides the main public voice on the need for retention of what remains for current and future generations. It does this with limited resources through the amazing efforts of its Friends Groups and its many volunteers from all walks of Perth life; schoolchildren through to leading scientists.

We encourage our members and supporters to advocate for the protection of the bushland in Western Australia. We believe that environmental advocacy has benefited the conservation and protection of urban bushland in our internationally recognised biodiversity hot spot . Our species do not have a voice of their own. They need advocates and these advocates have made Australia a much better place over many decades.

Council reports its financial results annually on the www.acnc.gov.au website and at its AGM. It is often asked why it has not applied for DGR status? Unfortunately the Council comprises a very small number of volunteers who are dedicated to the conservation of urban bushland we have been unable to complete the complex process of applying for this status.

The Council would be very concerned if the Committee proposes making the administration of the Register more complex, or limiting it and its members and supporters the right to ask our Local, State and Federal government representatives to protect urban bushland and to make submissions to Government about proposed changes that will impact on the present urban bushland and put at risk the existing level of biodiversity in the Perth Region.

Any act by any Government of the day which would impact on the financial viability of voluntary 'not for profit' community environmentally oriented organisations would be extremely regrettable. It would leave the environment even more at risk of destruction and alienation by vested interests whose primary motive for their interests is invariably underpinned by their drive to maximise their profits.

Please call Mary Gray the Vice President of the Council on (08) 9420 7207 (leave a message) if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely

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