

9 April 2012

World Heritage Committee  
UNESCO

Dear World Heritage Committee.

The Urban Bushland Council WA Inc. is a peak community conservation association of over 65 member groups for the protection and recognition of urban and rural bushland in Western Australia.

Our website [www.bushlandperth.org.au](http://www.bushlandperth.org.au) has a wealth of information including short videos from a seminar 'Perth's Banksia Woodlands' which the UBC ran in March 2011.

#### **Nomination introduction**

The Urban Bushland Council wish to nominate the '**Banksia Dominated Woodlands of the Swan Coastal Plain IBRA Region**' as a 'heritage site'. These woodlands are typified and identified by the presence of *Banksia attenuata* and/or *Banksia menziesii*. Generally known in Western Australia as the Banksia Woodlands of the Swan Coastal Plain, they do not occur in other states of Australia or in other IBRA. These Banksia Woodlands have outstanding universal value and are part of the country's cultural and natural heritage.

Nearly all the flora (~80%) of the Banksia Woodlands is regionally endemic to the south west of Western Australia and contain rare species of flora including endangered orchids.

Banksia Woodlands provide habitat for three species of endangered black cockatoos, all of which are endemic to the south west of Western Australia. The three species are;

- Baudin's Cockatoo, *Calyptorhynchus baudinii*
- Carnaby's Cockatoo, *Calyptorhynchus latirostris*, and the
- Forest Red-tailed Black Cockatoo, *Calyptorhynchus banksii naso*.

The major reason the three species are threatened with extinction is because of clearing and fragmentation for urban and rural development. Black cockatoos are being rescued, unable to fly because of starvation. A Report on comparisons of numbers of Carnaby's Cockatoos counted flying in to the roosting sites on one night in April 2010 and one night in April 2011 showed a significant decline of 37% on the Swan Coastal Plain. Four-monthly follow up counts confirmed the population decline. As little as 40 years ago flocks of Carnaby's Cockatoo regularly included over 1000 birds. However, numbers of roosts with 151 – 500 cockatoos reduced by 42% over one year, and no roost had over 500 birds.

The Minister for Environment; Water, Minister Bill Marmion in the WA Liberal Government, barely acknowledged the scale of the problem and the Premier, Premier Colin Barnett, has referred to Carnaby's Cockatoos as 'so-called threatened species' which are holding up development.

Since December 2011 The Forest Red-tailed Cockatoo has come out of the hills and onto the Swan Coastal Plain, the first time for 60 years.

Applications for development in our Banksia Woodlands are for the most part 'not assessed' by the Environment Protection Authority. 'Not assessed' essentially means that the project is allowed to proceed.

### **Additional information**

1. There is no state listing for natural heritage.
2. We do have a planning policy called Bush Forever. The bushland and wetland sites selected as part of Bush Forever are "representative of regional ecosystems and habitats, and play a central role in the conservation of Perth's biodiversity." Where achievable a target was set for the retention of at least 10% of each of the 26 vegetation complexes of the Swan Coastal Plain portion of the Perth Metropolitan Region. In some areas more than 10% had already been cleared compared with pre colonization.
3. The Bush Forever plan is an excellent plan backed by rigorous science. However it has been only partially implemented by successive governments over 11 years. Some Bush Forever sites which should be completely protected are currently under threat. Three examples are given below.
4. The south west of Western Australia is an ancient landscape with highly leached and nutrient deficient soils and our plants, animals and fungi have evolved with the ancient landscape. This south west area is a globally recognised biodiversity hot-spot, one of 34 on the planet.
5. The Perth landscape setting is unique. No other city in the world is set in a natural landscape dominated by Banksia Woodlands.

There are 63 species of Banksia in the south west of Western Australia and they were evolving before the demise of the dinosaurs, 70 million years ago. There is a fossil record of a Banksia cone from 47 million years ago. Its appearance is the same as Banksia cones seen today.

### **Examples of Bush Forever sites under threat today.**

#### **1.) Underwood Avenue Bushland, Shenton Park.**

In 1904, 614 acres (258 hectares) of land, which included what is now known as Underwood Avenue Bushland was granted to the University of Western Australia as endowment land. The Trustees of the University of WA received around 1400 hectares of land as endowment around that time. What remains of the endowment land of Underwood Avenue Bushland is 62.9 hectares some of which is cleared but the rest is magnificent jarrah, tuart and Banksia woodland.

Endangered Carnaby's Cockatoos roost just to the west of this bushland and often fly into and over the whole bushland area from their roosting site. The bushland is a place of refuge and

where they can feed on the Banksia flowers and seeds and on other foods in the bushland. The Urban Bushland Council has observed this behaviour directly. The size of the bushland is significant and also it is part of the essential linkage between other significant bushland areas. For around 12 years the University of Western Australia has been seeking approval for housing in the bushland. The state government has made a political decision and has given approval but the proposal has to be referred to the Australian government because of *the potential impacts on listed threatened species*. Twice before the University has made this referral to the Australian government but the University has withdrawn the proposals to avoid being denied ultimate approval. Underwood Avenue Bushland has been classified by the National Trust as an endangered place.

2. **Point Peron Marina.**

This proposal, entitled 'Mangles Bay Marina Based Tourist Precinct', is currently out for public comment. The State Government and Cedar Woods Properties Limited propose to construct a marina, not into the bay, but into a great big hole to be excavated from the land, taking 33 hectares from a Bush Forever site. The proposal would involve dewatering and would come within 200 metres of Lake Richmond. Lake Richmond has a community of critically endangered thrombolites, and the Urban Bushland Council deplores the risk taken if this proposal were to be approved. Thrombolites are one of the oldest forms of life on the planet, a chapter in evolutionary history.

The geomorphology of this coastal formation has not been considered by the proponents, and the sequence of forms from the beach right through to the inland tuart communities is significant. Again habitat for black cockatoos is threatened. There is no justification for such a radical project.

3. **Roe 8 Highway extension.**

The state government propose extending Roe Highway through a very significant chain of wetlands, the Beeliar Wetlands. The highway would be built between North Lake and Bibra Lake. These two lakes have been interim listed on the National Estate of the Australian Heritage Commission because of their environmental and heritage significance. The Urban Bushland Council strongly opposed this construction because of the unacceptable impacts on the conservation values of the area. This is a complex and highly diverse wetland ecosystem and this proposal cannot be made acceptable. The Environmental Protection Authority is considering submissions. Alternatives are available for the removal of freight.

**Conclusion**

The Urban Bushland Council is very willing to provide more details if requested. We commend the two publications to you, the printed proceedings of two seminars, *Endangered Black Cockatoos in Western Australia* (November 2012) and *Perth's Banksia Woodlands, Precious and Under Threat* (25 March 2011)

Yours faithfully

President.  
Urban Bushland Council.

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