



19 July 2018

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Department of Planning, Lands, and Heritage

### **Green Paper: Modernising WA's Planning System**

Submission by the Urban Bushland Council WA Inc.

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### **Key reform 5: Planning for smart growth**

The concept of 'key urban infill' is generally supported, as long as this is not at the cost of the loss of 'green spaces' and especially patches of remnant bushland and native vegetation. With more dense housing, the natural areas and open spaces are even more important for human health and well-being with access to nature. Thus they should be retained, protected and managed.

On the urban fringe, further clearing of bushland, most of which is now listed as TEC's, should be stopped and an urban growth boundary introduced. Perth's urban sprawl needs to stop. Continuing urban sprawl is highly inefficient, contributes to global warming and is destructive of nature.

**Biodiversity and Bush Forever:** There is no mention of Perth's status of being in a biodiversity hotspot of global significance. And there is no mention of Bush Forever and its planning policies and actions which came into effect in the year 2000 as a **whole of government policy and program, but its implementation is still incomplete**. SPP 2.8 provides this framework and it must be given prominence in the Planning System. Simply using the label 'Green Paper' is not enough.

Perth's and the south west's biodiversity assets are priceless, unique and enhance lifestyle. We have a duty to retain these natural landscape values and its biota. Children must be given access to nature near their homes and schools. Protection of what little remains of Perth's and the south west's natural landscapes is a key element of the planning process.

**Complete implementation of Bush Forever as planned** (Government of WA, December 2000) is essential infrastructure which must be done *before other infrastructure is planned*. Incursions into Bush Forever sites and local bushland reserves must not be allowed. The same applies for implementation of the Bunbury Region Scheme.

### **Metronet**

It is of great concern that Metronet is proposed to be located in some Bush Forever Areas and this is not acceptable and is not 'smart growth'.

In summary, smart growth needs to include respect for the attributes of our unique natural landscape of Perth and other urban centres, and it needs to ensure completion of Bush Forever as planned.

### **Reform Principles page 17**

These principles are generally accepted. However fairness and respect should also include the

attributes of the natural landscape – nature and living ecosystems on which we humans are dependent. Environmental attributes – landscape features, bushland, wetlands – should be included as the starting point of planning. The term ‘balance’ is too often used to excuse environmental destruction.

### **State Planning Policy (SPP) p17-19 , also 2.2 on p24, 25, 26**

State Planning Policies as discussed on pages 17-19 should be made legally binding - as is the case in NSW where the equivalent of SPP 2.8 is SEPP 19 (State Environmental Planning Policy 19). Whilst SPP’s are considered to be at the top of the planning hierarchy for decision-making, they are currently not being adequately followed at local government level and by some state agencies. Members of our community organisation are spending too much time and energy advocating to local governments and to WAPC to properly follow state environmental policies and to stop destroying bushland that is supposed to be protected. If these SPP’s were legally binding on local government and state agencies, then decision-making would be easier, more efficient, and more transparent. This may require an amendment to the PD Act. Infrastructure agencies such as Main Roads, Landcorp and Water Corporation and now Department of Transport should be required to respect SPP’s (especially SPP 2.8 for Bush Forever and other SPP2 policies) as well as federal and state listed Threatened Ecological Communities (TEC’s) and rare species and their respective Conservation Advices and Recovery Plans.

### **Sustainability (p. 20-22)**

The term sustainability needs clear definition. The concept of ‘sustainable use’ is questionable and open to ‘selective interpretation’ especially by developers who state that a certain proposal is sustainable development – which really means they can make money from it, but ignores the environmental destruction from clearing.

We do not support as relevant the examples given on page 20 – for Ireland and UK planning policy. The last sentence on page 20 includes the term ‘flexible guidance’ which is meaningless as it can be interpreted in different ways.

A better example is that of Sweden’s sustainability system called ‘The Natural Step’. One of the 4 system conditions defined for a sustainable society is: *‘In a sustainable society, nature is no longer being destroyed’*. Currently nature in WA is not being sustained, instead it is being destroyed continuously – at our future peril. A sustainable city of Perth needs to stop clearing. This is in the public interest.

### **Development Assessment Panels (DAPs)**

DAPs have misused or avoided proper planning processes, and have avoided proper public consultation and scrutiny. The DAP process is an additional level of governance which is only confusing and is not transparent. It has caused significant community concern and there have been campaigns to ‘scrap the DAPs’.

It is recommended that DAP’s be completely removed from WA’s planning processes – ie stopped. This will help achieve the goals of an efficient, less complex, and transparent planning process – as outlined in **Key Reform 4: ‘An efficient planning system’**. Indeed existence of DAPs is contrary to the goal of an efficient planning system.

Thus we do not support all the Schedule of proposals under 3.6, page 78.

### **WAPC board and committees p 54-55: include environmental expertise**

There is a fundamental gap in the expertise on the WAPC in its current form and as proposed on

page 55. Land use planning must include person(s) with expertise and knowledge of the natural landscapes being considered. This is especially important for the south west of WA's biodiversity hotspot and its extreme complexity. The PMR is extremely complex in its landforms, hydrology and wetlands, as well as flora and fauna biota.

The Urban Bushland Council and its member groups are forever raising awareness of inappropriate plans for developments in environmentally sensitive areas and their buffer zones. The Roe 8 saga is just one of at least ~20 current local proposals in the PMR which are environmentally inappropriate and should not occur. Understanding of the reality of the landscapes and appropriate limitations needs to be represented by at least 1 WAPC member who has the specialist environmental science knowledge and is independent of developer's interests. Protection of all Bush Forever sites, local bushland reserves and linkages, TEC's and habitats of endangered species must all be protected under strengthened SPP 2 provisions. Essential also is an understanding of Acid Sulfate Soils and avoidance of acidification of soils, wetlands and waterways, especially on the eastern side of the Swan Coastal Plain which is comprised largely of sensitive palusplain wetlands.

A current case is the proposal for industrial developments in the MKSEA areas in the City of Gosnells which are threatening the most species rich Greater Brixton Street wetlands and Yule Brook due to inappropriate planning decisions with lack of adequate buffer zones, and inappropriate drainage. Also clearing of a major roost site and foraging habitat for the endangered Forest Red-tailed Black Cockatoos should have been avoided under planning policies. An understanding of these issues by a scientist on the WAPC could perhaps have ensured this area was not rezoned industrial.

Another example is the proposals for developments in and adjacent to the Farrall Rd Bush Forever site and the destruction of a wetland.

### **Mandatory Local Biodiversity Strategies (LBS): SERIOUS OMISSION**

Bush Forever recognises the importance of retaining and protecting local natural areas and ecological linkages to support the network of regionally significant bushland. To achieve this, Local Biodiversity Strategies are supposed to be completed by each LGA according to endorsed guidelines. However only the Shire of Mundaring has completed this process with their LBS included in their Local Planning Strategy (LPS) and Town Planning Scheme. Some LGA's have outdated LBS or have not included them in their LPS and Town Planning Schemes and thus they are often ignored or are not adhered to as they are not set in law.

It is remarkable that these LBS are not mentioned and are not included in the Green Paper. They need to be included in all the relevant sections concerning LPS.

**It is essential that Local Biodiversity Strategies are prepared and included in Local Planning Schemes in a sustainable, efficient, transparent planning system. It is recommended that the Planning System be revised to include these provisions so that they are a legally binding requirement. This will make decision-making clearer and more sustainable (Proposal 1 page 75), more efficient (Proposal 4 pages 78-80), and our precious natural areas will be retained, protected and valued by the community.**

### **Smart growth** (Proposal 5, page 80)

The Green Paper assumes that Perth will grow to a population of 3.5 million, but there is no justification of this. Growth should not be a goal in itself. For a 'consolidated' city, urban sprawl

especially in linear edges to the north and south and to the east along the Swan Coastal Plain should be stopped. For example, linear urban sprawl north to Yanchep is not smart growth and is clearly unsustainable development. Pressure from land developers for such sprawl must be resisted with a legislated **'Urban Growth Boundary'** drawn at the existing extremities of development. These uncleared areas of bushland are TEC's and therefore must be protected according to the relevant Conservation Advices under the EPBC Act and under State clearing regulations, with urban and urban deferred zoning removed as these areas are not developable land. Such changes are long overdue. It is time we moved to a 'no growth' economy and city size for Perth.

Introduction of an **'Industrial Deferred Zone'** (Section 5.4.1) is not supported.

**Section 5.6.2. A review of regional road reservations** for road widening is not supported. In a more consolidated city, more use of public transport, and less use of cars is required. Such a review is contrary to the more compact and liveable city as in 5.7.1.

Main Roads needs to be stopped from its current approach of excessive and un-necessary road widening and destruction of roadside native vegetation. The road construction industry seems to have taken over. Road widening makes suburbs less liveable. This is contrary to 5.7.1 which is supported.

**Liveable neighbourhoods** Section 5.7, page 81.

5.7.1 is supported. A liveable neighbourhood is one in which residents and children have access to bushland and nature within walking distance of home and school. We need to keep our precious local biodiversity and use local species for street trees and surrounding shrubs, in home gardens and local parks to increase the green canopy in public open space and in our neighbourhood streets.

We look forward to your review of the Green Paper with these matters included.

We welcome the opportunity to discuss these matters with you.

Yours sincerely

Chairperson, Urban Bushland Council WA Inc.