



## Submission to Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage on the Roe 8 (West) and Roe 9 Planning Study

The Urban Bushland Council welcomes an opportunity to comment on the concept plan and strongly supports a vision of a green corridor to create a vibrant and connected nature corridor from the Beelihar Wetlands to the Indian Ocean to address the urgent need to restore ecological function to the remaining fragmented bushland and wetlands.

UBC submits that the State Government:

1. Abandon the Draft Concept Plan and commit to establishing an ecological green corridor to extend from the Beelihar Wetlands to the Indian Ocean. This corridor was identified in reports for the Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA) in 2013 and more recently by Naturelink Perth. See reference below.
2. Remove the Roe 8 (West) and Roe 9 highway reserve from the MRS (Metropolitan Region Scheme) providing for the corridor to be zoned for conservation and recreation purposes. This includes land reserved at the intersections of Forrest Road with North Lake Road and Stock Road. Land reserved for the Fremantle Rockingham Access Corridor (at the north and western edge of Manning Park) should also be rezoned for conservation and recreation. These areas are integral to the integrity of a connected green corridor and must not be excised from the planning study.
3. Extend the study plan west to incorporate the regional road reserve (Fremantle Rockingham Access Corridor) between Rockingham Road and Spearwood Avenue. This road reserve should be re-zoned for conservation.
4. Comply with local, state, federal and international environmental legislation, agreements, policies, and guidelines that affect our urban ecology. (See below.)
5. Recognise the benefits of ecological restoration and a green corridor are diverse and extensive, not only for native plants and animals but also for human health and wellbeing, mitigating impacts of climate change, creating liveable neighbourhoods, providing connection to nature and community.
6. Identify and protect Aboriginal heritage and cultural values in the area.

To this end, we call on the WA government to adopt a visionary approach to the Cockburn Green Corridor that will:

- **Conserve** and protect all existing native vegetation along the corridor, including the areas currently reserved for intersections.
- **Restore** ecosystems along the corridor to create viable ecological connectivity.

## Legal Context and Supporting Evidence

The Cockburn Green Corridor offers a unique opportunity to implement the [WA Native Vegetation policy](#) to:

**Conserve:** *Protect native vegetation from harm, loss or change (and)*

**Restore:** *Supporting the recovery of an ecosystem that has been degraded, damaged or destroyed. Includes revegetation, rehabilitation, repair of ecosystem processes and management of threats.*

The Cockburn Green Corridor will provide benefits to all in perpetuity:

1. It has unique native vegetation that has been lost from greater Perth. The corridor contains seven distinct ecological zones including wetlands, paperbark forest, banksia/tuart woodlands and three dune systems, much of which is in good condition. (Source: R. Zelinova paper) Much is now threatened with extinction and needs to be protected and restored. The highly valued native vegetation exists today because the area has been reserved for a road.
2. Within the reserve there exist two Threatened Ecological Communities (TECs) protected under the Federal Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act 1999 and the WA Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016:
  - Tuart woodlands are listed as Critically Endangered (EPBC) - Mapping of the area by Cate Tauss has identified around 20ha of Threatened Tuart woodlands on both sides of Forrest Road and in the Blackwood Road bush. Another 5ha containing Tuarts is found at Dixon Park and Clontarf Hill. (see attached maps 1, 2, 3)
  - Banksia woodlands of the Swan Coastal Plains are listed as Endangered (EPBC) – Several banksia species live throughout the corridor and sustain thousands of birds and insects.
3. Native vegetation in the area supports the survival of several Threatened and Endangered species (EPBC Act 1999), especially Black Cockatoos and 52 other bird species that depend on large areas of connected vegetation. The area also contains populations of rare and threatened species such as quenda and ringtail possums and it has been suggested chudditch. If this is the case then a wetlands to coast green corridor must be secured.
4. The Carnaby and Red-Tailed Black Cockatoos will greatly benefit from this green corridor. The increased habitat will support the Carnaby recovery plan and habitat restoration projects (such as Murdoch University's Keep Carnaby's Flying project). A Cockburn Green Corridor is exactly what Birdlife WA research shows is needed, that Carnaby's black cockatoos will fly further just so they can fly over bushland.
5. If restored as a strong ecological linkage, it will support genetic exchange for more resilient flora and fauna species. (Note: There are [national standards for ecological restoration](#) (Society for Ecological Restoration Australasia, Edition 2.2, 2021). Professor Kingsley Dixon's [presentation](#) and the recovery wheel is available on the [UBC website](#).)

## ▪ Local Government

### Planning & Development Act 2005 (WA)

Schedule 7 outlines valid local planning strategies, including: *'The conservation of the natural environment of the scheme area, including the protection of natural resources, the preservation of trees, vegetation and other flora and fauna, and the maintenance of ecological processes and genetic diversity.'*

### City of Cockburn Planning Context

- **Public Open Space Strategy** (2014-2024) supports ecological corridors and standards expected of developers when rehabilitating sites.
- **Sustainability Policy** (June 2021) says: *"Council will protect strategically identified remnant bushland, wetlands, the coastal environment, **ecological corridors** and associated eco-systems to ensure the integrity of these systems is conserved and enhanced for future generations."*
- **Natural Areas Management Plan** and **Urban Forest Strategy** identify existing and potential ecological corridors within the LGA.
- Supports the Wetlands Centre in the Beeliar Park Precinct.

### Western Australia Local Government Association

WALGA policies encourage biodiversity conservation:

- [Guidance for the Integration of Biodiversity Conservation into Local Planning Strategies and Schemes](#)
- The WALGA Perth Biodiversity Project uses a mapping framework to identify priority natural areas for biodiversity conservation and connectivity. Using this framework, a report published in 2020 (R. Zelinova "Cockburn Community Wildlife Corridor proposal in the context of regional connectivity planning") concluded that the Roe 8/9 road reservation was the best option for a connected green corridor in the south metropolitan suburbs.

## ▪ State Government

### [Perth to Peel @3.5million](#)

The aims of The Perth and Peel@ 3.5 million (2018) planning strategy include to "protect areas with regional conservation and landscape values" and "encourage and guide increased connectivity through an integrated green network".

### [Native Vegetation Policy 2022](#)

The Native Vegetation Policy commits the government to a net gain in native vegetation, through conservation and restoration of natural areas. Currently this is not happening, and WA is experiencing a *net loss* of native vegetation and biodiversity. A net gain requires a halt to land

clearing and serious efforts to restore native vegetation. The Cockburn Green Corridor offers a unique opportunity to implement the policy.

*To protect and enhance native bushland with the intent of long-term protection of biodiversity and environmental values.*

#### **Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016**

The Biodiversity Conservation Act provides protection for threatened species and ecological communities, including penalties for illegal actions.

#### **State Planning Policy 7.0 Design of the Built Environment Liveable Neighbourhoods**

The distinctive characteristics of a local area includes its prominent natural and built features, social, economic and environmental conditions, the overall qualities of its built environment, local Aboriginal culture and history and significant post-settlement heritage.

Restoring natural and Aboriginal Heritage here as a functional green corridor restores a sense of place which has been largely lost due to urbanisation.

#### **State Planning Policy 2.8 Bushland Policy for the Perth Metropolitan Region**

Aim: To protect and enhance native bushland with the intent of long-term protection of biodiversity and environmental values.

Seeks to protect and manage significant urban bushland, including Bush Forever sites, and assist conservation planning and assessment.

#### **Conservation & Land Management Act 1984 (WA)**

Enables sites to be designated as conservation parks (Section 6.4 and 8B.2). The entire Cockburn Corridor should be granted conservation status.

#### **Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2021**

Several registered sites are located on the corridor and within the Fremantle-Rockingham Access road extension and must be protected:

- Bellion Drive Hill is a registered indigenous women's site
- Clontarf Hill and Dixon Park Precinct are registered Aboriginal site 18322
- Connecting the Beeliar wetlands to the coast is a significant statement for protecting a traditional cultural Noongar route in suburbia which is important to all West Australians, particularly first nations people.

#### **Environmental Protection Act 1986 (amended Dec 2021)**

The Environmental Protection Act seeks "the prevention, control and abatement of pollution and environmental harm, for the conservation, preservation, protection, enhancement and management of the environment..."

Relevant EPA resources are:

- Schedule 5: Principles for clearing native vegetation
- [Statement of Environmental Principles, Factors and Objectives](#) (October 2021)
- [EPA Guidance for planning and development: Protection of naturally vegetated areas in urban and peri-urban areas](#) (December 2021)

## The Water Corporation

The Water Corporation is working with Naturelink Perth and others to promote green corridors and healthy streams along Perth's drains and waterways.

### ▪ Federal Government

#### [Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act \(EPBC\) 1999](#)

The EPBC Act includes directories of listed threatened species and listed threatened ecological communities. The Cockburn Green Corridor contains two Threatened Ecological Communities ([banksia woodlands](#) and [tuart woodlands](#)) and habitat for several threatened species. The EPBC guidelines address both protection and restoration actions to increase the remaining extent, condition and landscape scale connectivity (including with other surrounding native vegetation types).

### Minister for the Environment

Minister Tanya Plibersek's commitments:

- Dec 2022 – Pledged to implement the [Samuels Review of the EPBC Act \(2019\)](#) to enact stronger laws and a stronger Agency to protect the environment.
- Oct 2022 - Launched an updated [Threatened Species Action Plan](#) that aims for 'no new extinctions'. Based on [the 2019 Wintle Report](#).

#### [Australian Institute of Health and Welfare](#)

AIHW is a Federal government agency producing information to support better policy and service delivery for better community health and wellbeing. A July 2022 report found that : Nature provides **health benefits** by filtering harmful air pollution; **economic benefits** through avoided incidences of disease and health care costs; and **improved physical activity** that can lead to better physical and mental health.

### ▪ International Context

Australia is party to several global agreements committing to halt the dangerous loss of biodiversity with the United Nations, the International Panel for Climate Change (IPCC), International Panel for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), and RAMSAR Convention of Wetland Protection.

UN COP15 Biodiversity Conference (Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework) adopted [an agreement](#) to protect 30% of the world's land and oceans by 2030, to restore degraded ecosystems, and to end extinctions by 2050. The Australian Government led the way.

2021-2030 is the [UN Decade for Ecosystem Restoration](#) that aims to prevent, halt and reverse the degradation of ecosystems across the world.

The standard text is [International Principles and Standards for the Practice of Ecological Restoration](#) (Society for Ecological Restoration, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2019).

### Urban Bushland Council Inc

The Urban Bushland Council Inc (UBC) is a voluntary community association of 87 member groups (each with their own local membership from 10-165 individuals) – all of which have a common interest in the conservation of urban bushland and wetlands. UBC is an incorporated, not-for-profit organisation registered as a charity. <https://www.bushlandperth.org.au/>

We are the key community organisation in WA providing a public voice on **the need for retention of what remains of our urban bushland and wetlands which is also critical for a healthy and prosperous future**. We advocate to all levels of Government for natural areas protection. We do this with limited resources through the amazing efforts of our 'Friends Groups' and their many volunteers – from all walks of life working to improve and maintain the health of patches of neighbourhood nature – many working in close collaboration with your department and their local councils.

UBC acknowledge the Traditional Owners, the Noongar people remain the spiritual and cultural custodians of this land. Restoring biodiversity and natural vegetation in our Perth Biodiversity Hotspot is a priority human right for the Noongar people.

Submitted to: Department of Planning Lands and Heritage Perth

<https://consultation.dplh.wa.gov.au/strategy-and-engagement/roe-8-west-9-corridor-planning-study-draft-concept/consultation/intro/>

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