

Stop the Waves of Destruction – Save Our Natural Heritage from a surf park

Decision on clearing permit to be decided by end of February 2024

The WA State Government is poised to approve the destruction of yet another Banksia Woodland on the Swan Coastal Plain – a Threatened Ecological Community listed as endangered, including critical forging habitat for the endangered Carnaby's Black Cockatoo. These are Matters of National Environmental Significance (MNES) under the EPBC Act and should be protected.

Yet incredibly, this February the WA Minister for the Environment, Hon Reece Whitby, may approve a Clearing Permit that will destroy our natural heritage – this time for a private commercial venture. The Urban Bushland Council WA is imploring the Minister not to grant the clearing permit.

It is unnecessary and irresponsible to clear a banksia woodland for a surf park. There are also huge water concerns regarding this project, as the groundwater licenses in the area are already fully allocated and a third desalination plant in Perth needs to be built.

[A new online letter campaign](#) has been launched to encourage everyone state-wide to send a letter to their local member (MLA) saying it's not ok to destroy nature for a surf park.

There has been a major public outcry against this project – despite the WA State Government promoting this project without telling the public what the consequences are. [A change.org petition](#) by UBC volunteer, Heidi Hardisty, has over 5900 signatories opposing the granting of the clearing permit to date.

UBC is also calling for the Federal Minister for Environment, Hon Tanya Plibersek, to step in and save this banksia woodland.

Nearly 2 years ago, the project was referred to the Commonwealth Government under the EPBC Act and deemed not to be a controlled action. However, there are now substantial new information and changes in circumstances that has led the Urban Bushland Council WA (UBC) to request a reconsideration of this decision (submitted 7th February to DCCEEW). This includes a recent assessment by the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (WA) stating the project will have significant residual impacts on MNES.

Background - Timeline

2016 - The WA State Government facilitated the choosing of the site to build a surf park and hotel (circa 2016-2020). After rejecting one location on Alfred Cove – due to environmental and public concerns- a site was chosen in Jandakot, despite having even more significant environmental values.

2022 - The surf park project was referred to the Commonwealth Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) under the EPBC Act in May 2022 and was determined to NOT be a controlled action requiring approval on 18 July 2022.

Project Name: Cockburn Surf Park EPBC Number: 2022/09267

- Referral started: 25/05/2022
- Project Status: Referral Decision Made
- Decision Status: Published

2023 - Because of the Commonwealth's initial decision – not a controlled action- the proponent sought “development approval” from the Joint Development Assessment Panel. Despite proposing to clear a Banksia Woodland TEC, “Development Approval” was granted in March 2023 subject to the proponent attaining a Clearing Permit and water licence.

Despite indicating that the project will result in significant residual impacts on Matters of National Environmental Significance plus a Conservation Category Wetland (an Environmentally Sensitive Area under the EP Act), the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation WA (DWER) granted a Clearing Permit under the provisions of the Environmental Protection (Clearing of Native Vegetation) Regulations 2004 (WA) on November 22nd, 2023. The issuing of the permit was immediately appealed - hence it is currently deemed not to be granted.

2024 - The Urban Bushland Council WA (UBC) requested a reconsideration of the Commonwealth decision – not a controlled action – on 7th February, 2024 based on substantial new information and changed circumstances that were not previously considered. UBC has also requested that the Federal Minister for Environment step in, move the surf park and save the banksia woodland.

The appeal process by the State Appeals Convenor Committee is underway and near completion. The Committee will make their recommendations to the WA Minister for Environment who will hand down his decision on whether to grant a Clearing Permit by the end of February 2024.

If a Clearing Permit is granted, the proponent will then have to attain a water license (to extract groundwater) from the DWER under the provisions of the Rights in Water and Irrigation Act 1914 (WA).

Background – Importance of the site

The southwest of WA is one of 36 globally recognised biodiversity hotspots because of its unique and amazing biodiversity, and because over 70% of the total area has already been cleared. Perth is a hotspot within this hotspot. Banksia Woodlands of the Swan Coastal Plain are recognized as a Threatened Ecological Community in the endangered category under the EPBC Act. This public asset should not be cleared for a private commercial venture.

There is significant native vegetation (on a local, regional and national level) on the site. If cleared it will result in (excerpt from the Clearing Report by DWER):

- the loss of 3.16 hectares of native vegetation that is representative of the Banksia Woodlands of the Swan Coastal Plan (Banksia Woodlands) federally listed threatened ecological community (TEC) and priority ecological community (PEC) in Western Australia,
- the loss of 2.08 hectares of significant foraging habitat for Carnaby's cockatoo (*Zanda latirostris*) and forest red-tailed black cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus banksii naso*),
- the loss of 1.48 hectares of significant wetland vegetation that has values that are commensurate with a conservation category wetland (CCW),
- the loss of native vegetation that provides locally significant habitat for quenda (*Isodon fusciventer*),
- the loss of potential suitable habitat for threatened flora species *Caladenia huegelii*,
- the potential for indirect hydrological impacts to nearby significant wetland vegetation within Lot 802 on Deposited Plan 50212, Jandakot,
- the potential introduction and spread of weeds and dieback into adjacent vegetation, which could impact on the quality of the adjacent vegetation and its habitat values, including local nearby significant wetland vegetation within Lot 802 on Deposited Plan 50212, Jandakot, and other significant remnant vegetation, and
- potential land degradation in the form of wind erosion, subsurface acidification, and phosphorus export.

UBC says significant new information and changes in circumstances have arisen since the original referral – showing that the impacts are unacceptable. These issues include:

1. Following their assessment for a Clearing Permit, DWER stated the proposal will have significant residual impacts on MNES – the very definition of a controlled action – 22nd November, 2023
2. The median patch size of banksia woodland in the local area is only 0.72 hectares – which makes the clearing of 3.16 hectares even more significant.
3. Loss of over 200 grass trees which UBC considers is important local natural heritage and foraging habitat for endangered Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos.
4. The proposal does not meet the definition of Sustainable Development under the EPBC Act
5. There has been a huge loss of green space and banksia woodland in the immediate area since the original proposal: The closure of the Glen Iris Golf Course and the intention to rezone 625 hectares of land near the Jandakot Airport from "Rural – Water Protection" to urban.
6. There has been an unexpected loss in Carnaby's Cockatoo foraging habitat due to recent fires in the Gnangara pine plantations.
7. There is a huge potential loss of tree canopy and foraging and roosting habitat for black cockatoos due to the newly invasive Polyphagous Shot-hole Borer – which no one has even mentioned.
8. The clearing proposal goes against the federal Threatened Species Action Plan.

Other concerns:

There has been a pathetic and insufficient attempt at avoidance of clearing. A more appropriate site – land that has been previously cleared or developed – should be chosen for the surf park.

The project will provide little, and possibly negative, public benefit. This is a commercial venture for profit. It will cost users \$90-\$200 per hour to use the surf park.

1.5. Site map



Figure 1: The area cross-hatched yellow indicates the area authorised to be cleared under the granted clearing permit.

Site location: Kwinana Freeway and Prinsep Road.

Photos above and below taken from the Clearing Permit Report by DWER, November 2023.

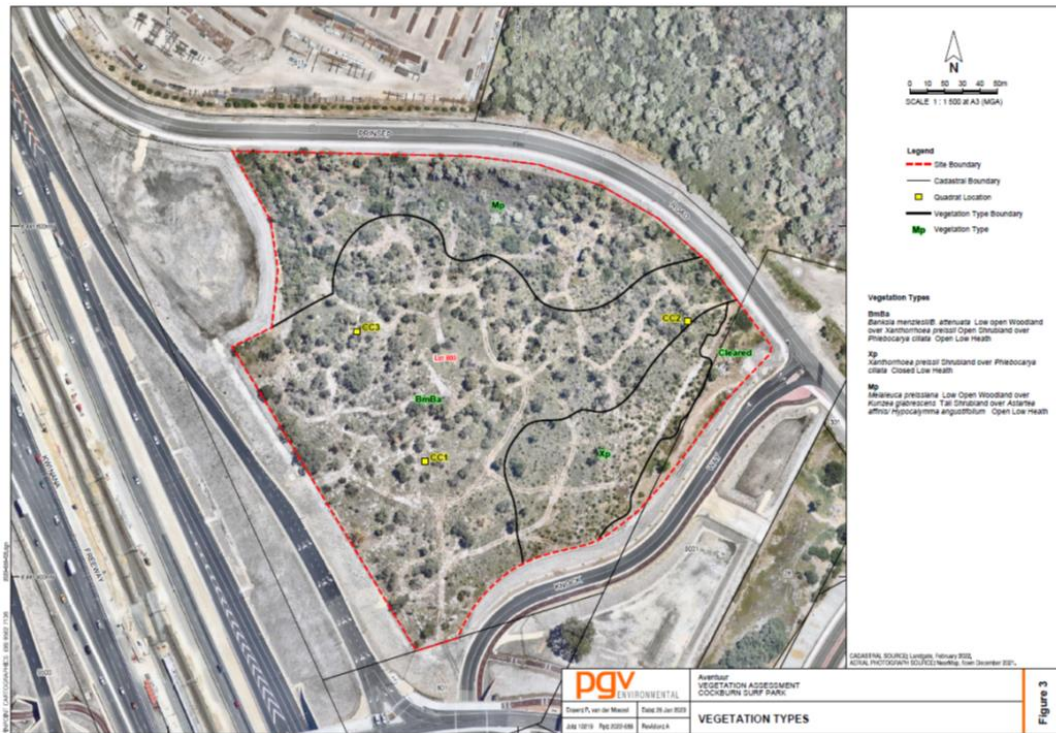


Figure 3



Photo of Carnaby's Cockatoo by John Blakey.