

RESPONSE: PERTH AND PEEL URBAN GREENING STRATEGY – FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. What is your main interest or area of expertise in urban greening?

Note: please supply your organisation's most contemporary relevant study, strategy or research via weblink or reference if applicable.

The **Urban Bushland Council WA (Inc)** was established in 1993, with the objects/aims.

- To promote the recognition and conservation of urban bushland and its biodiversity.
- To provide a forum for, and support to, local groups.
- To encourage networking and provide access to ideas, information and expertise concerning bushland.
- To promote policy development for the protection and management of urban bushland.
- To provide an avenue for advocacy and seek legislative changes for bushland protection.
- To raise awareness of the values and problems facing urban bushland.

The Urban Bushland Council (UBC) formed more than 30 years ago in response to continuing threats to urban bushland, especially Hepburn Heights, when over 40 groups came together at a workshop organised by the Conservation Council (7/11/1992). The workshop unanimously called for the establishment of a coalition of community groups to focus on urban bushland with the following key priorities:

- Greater public awareness of natural heritage
- Community participation in decision-making and in caring for urban bushland
- A government policy to recognise and protect urban bushland.

Today UBC is the peak community organisation for urban bushland recognition and protection and is an association of over 90 community groups with a common interest in conservation and management of urban bushland. Our members actively care for and advocate for local and regional patches usually owned by State or local governments.

The Council is an incorporated, voluntary, non-government organisation playing a crucial role in:

- seeking both academic and locally acquired knowledge and experience
- advocating with Government of all levels for bushland protection
- supporting our members to better understand the impacts on, and benefits of urban greening, and the State Government's 'Urban Greening Strategy' and opportunities to contribute to the associated 'public survey'.

The UBC focus is 'urban natural habitats/ecosystems' – including bushland, coastal and wetlands. UBC calls upon expertise from members, scientists, planners and the wider community conservation network. These views are also tested with DBCA staff and with appropriate other expertise such as within other agencies or universities. This collective expertise allows us to make comment not just on current vegetation trends but to see the critical need for planning and development to incorporate future needs of vegetation complexes.

UBC is confident that if our recommendations are implemented both habitat biodiversity and people will benefit greatly.

2. What is the key message(s) you would like to convey in the Urban Greening Strategy?

Note: please supply references if particular facts, statistics, graphs or studies are quoted.

We are concerned that the initial focus of the Urban Greening Strategy appeared to be limited to 'planted' vegetation with little consideration of natural areas. Notwithstanding this, UBC's key

concerns are around the impacts of ongoing clearing and disturbance of natural areas and breakages of ecological linkages.

In approving clearing permits for residential, commercial, industrial and government developments there appears to have been inadequate regard for the critical contribution of natural areas to the health of wildlife and humans. We believe that not enough account has been taken by Governments of the positive contributions of protected and conservation-managed natural areas to climate mitigation, heat-island effect mitigation, nature links, biodiversity, human health and wellbeing. Saving our unique nature and our health and wellbeing will only be possible when everyone – public, community, government (all spheres), private sector, private landholders education

Whilst we are now in multiple crises (including biodiversity loss, climate change, heat island effect, lack of adequate funding to care for environment, loss of tree canopy) for which we collectively have the knowledge and ability to resolve – we sadly lack commitment and realistic budget allocation.

Contributions to the solution include:

- Targeted and realistic budget allocation to:
 - Ongoing conservation management of all natural and planted areas
 - The formation of Regional Parks (including but not limited to those proposed for Gngangara, Lower Serpentine, Swan & Helena Rivers, Peel and Yule Brook where the quality of the vegetation communities will be improved through active conservation management)
 - Wetlands and buffers
 - nature links / ecological linkages / greenways
 - activation of sectors (private, government, industry) and communities to understand the crises and participate in turning them around
- No more clearing of native vegetation whilst meeting the WA Govt (2022) Native Vegetation Policy of 'net gain'. This includes the removal of OFFSETS as an option when proposing clearing / disturbance of natural vegetation. Offsets do not replace ecosystems.
- Include tree canopy and vegetation (natural and planted) on all land tenures and for all land uses in urban greening strategy solutions.
- Introduce protection for mature trees on all land tenures – including private residential
- Legislate and implement 30% canopy cover by 2040 – whilst delivering on the IUCN Urban Alliance's 3:30:300 concept
- Urban Greening – not just by Govt, people to be encouraged to grow appropriate local natives on their property – especially near remnants. This means a WIN for nature and WIN for community.

3. What do you think are the key opportunities for improving urban greening in Perth and Peel?

Note: if you have any examples or specific details to supplement your submission, please include their location or project reference details to enable further research.

- **Awareness & education** including:
 - the wider public seeing a greater range of opportunities and if encouraged, contributing to the amazing value of native vegetation both in their garden and in local neighbourhood patches
 - economic benefits of power costs for cooling around residences and roads
 - mental health benefits of being able to enjoy native vegetation and wildlife and of contributing to community groups.
- **Protecting ecological sites** – from development (or neighbouring development) – as collectively, we need to protect these including with no ferals or pets and removal of invasive species (to prevent/reduce weeds)

- **Biodiversity Sensitive Urban Design / Biodiversity in Place** approaches
 - designers/planners (govt & private)
 - community living/working there (govt & private)
 - Refer: Nivethitha J (2024) Influencing Urban Greening (attachment) as part of UBC Internship
- **WA Government Planning policies and regulations** – including bioregional planning and Strategic Assessment.

4. Have you examples, research or best practice ideas in linking or integrating green spaces or greening within urban areas?

Guide: examples may include integrating planting with urban water management or waterways, innovative planting to create nature-links, best practice approaches, or alike.

- **Bush Forever (WA Government) and associated local and regional ecological linkages** – providing habitat, neighbourhood nature, shade, temperature reduction, aesthetics and community wellbeing thru the actions support and local activities of ‘friends of groups’
- **Growing Locals (WA Naturalists’, Wildflower Society WA, Urban Bushland Council, BirdlifeWA)** – including application of revised edition of Powell & Emberson’s [Growing Locals gardening with local plants in Perth](#) matching your location and soils for better nature outcomes.
- **NatureLink Perth (Murdoch University)** – actively working with ‘friends of groups’, LGAs, Government utilities to identify, design and partner in ecological linkages connecting natural areas across our suburbs eg ‘Kings Park to Bold Park’. Guidance, collaboration and resources are innovative, practical and successful. <https://www.naturelinkperth.org/>
- **Living Streams** – as ecological linkages mixing the ‘green and the blue’ (eg [Nurdi Park, Riverton – Perth NRM urban-wetlands-reimagined](#) collaboration across LGA, govt, NRM, urban landcare, local community and tertiary sector.
- **Landscape Architecture Outreach (University of WA)** – program of masters students learning ‘on the ground’ whilst applying their knowledge and skills to ‘real life needs’. Eg 2024 investigating and designing ecological linkages for ‘non-human species’ (across private, local government and public lands) between Bush Forever Site 59 – Samson Park, Samson and other nearby and distant patches of nature. The next step needs to be for land owners and managers to implement these designs.
- **Green infrastructure** – green walls (City of Perth Library, Northbridge Piazza); rooftop gardens (‘140 William’, Perth); fauna bridges (Gt Northern Highway, Ellenbrook [emu-crosses](#))
- **Community & LGA collaborations** – such as ‘Cockburn Community Wildlife Corridor’ (CCWC) & City of Cockburn – the vital link connecting the Beelie Wetlands with the Indian Ocean – very inclusive of community/landholders.
- **Gondwana Link** – principles, collaborations and creative approaches, adapted to Perth & Peel Regions <https://gondwanalink.org/>
- **Early planning & collaboration** – integrating in design phase.
- **Expanded ‘green space’ in high-rise developments** – thus contributing to canopy, and providing habitat

5. What key action(s) do you think would make the most improvement to urban greening and tree canopy in the Perth and Peel regions?

Guide: these may be broad or location or organisation specific. Note: for any specific actions, please supply supporting details to enable further research.

Whilst the community is becoming better informed about the causes and impacts of ‘Urban Heat Island Effect’ and ‘Climate Change’ we still do not have an enforceable government and community target for ‘tree cover’ nor essential climate adaptation measures such as retaining vegetation (natural, private, public) to moderate the climate and provide habitat for wildlife. The actions we recommend include:

- Legislate / mandate with associated enforceable penalties for:

- ≥ 30% tree canopy cover across all publicly owned property (eg schools, departments, road-runoff drains and sumps)
- ≥ 30% tree canopy cover across Swan Coastal Plain, Darling Range and Peel Region
- mature trees on private property' be designated as an 'asset' requiring 'development approval to remove' (this also requires State Govt to support LGAs)
- 3:30:300 - IUCN Urbanalliance.org – promoting health & wellbeing through urban-forests Introducing 3:30:300 Rule
- LGAs to develop and implement streetscape policies/ tree planting
- public annual reporting of targets (eg via LGA, State government, developer and industry websites)
- Protect and deliver adequately resourced, effective conservation management of all existing natural areas including thru:
 - expanding Regional Parks
 - completing of Bush Forever Site purchase, gazettal as A Class for Conservation, allocation of appropriate land manager
 - State Planning Policy (SPP) to better protect all Bush Forever Sites
 - Increased recurring dedicated budget for DBCA to manage the conservation estate
- Protect diminishing and stressed wetlands thru:
 - Wetlands Buffer Policy – WAPC finalising and implementing
 - Wetlands of the Swan Coastal Plain Environmental Protection Policy (EPP) – reinstate and implement
- Find a solution to the devastating impact of Polyphagous Shot Hole Borer (PSHB)
- Encourage & support both private & public lands to actively participate in 'ecological linkages'

6. What do you suggest is included in future public education programs to help achieve urban greening on public or private land?

Note: the Strategy will also offer an educational role, either initially or via a subsequent website and/or guide. This may include promoting existing or emerging programs, use of innovation or other creative initiatives by a range of promotional materials.

- Increased awareness & understanding of nature – including how it contributes to making our cities more liveable (eg oxygen, cooling)
- Noongar reconciliation and healing including thru nature links following storylines, cultural guided walks and bush tucker gardens.
- Continue 'Tree Festival Month' activities (eg Samson Park 2024, City of Stirling 2024, with variety of activities for all ages)
- Active involvement and support of people in care of canopy
- Engaging with schools / universities
- Incorporating NatureLink's resources.
- In responding to community concerns about fire, include realistic assessment of fire strategies relative to the (low) likelihood of fire as well as the negative impacts of prescribed burning on ecosystems.

7. Do you have any other comments on the Urban Greening Strategy?

UBC strongly supports the implementation of the public/private focus of 'urban greening' to effectively deliver for nature, climate action, community connectivity, health and wellbeing and also private and public 'Environment, Social, Governance' (ESG) responsibilities.

UBC reinforces that it is essential to build on the current design and delivery of a 'strategy' – implementation needs to be significantly funded by government

UBC encourages expansion beyond Perth & Peel Regions by creating mechanisms to encourage and support rural cities and towns to care for their local nature and to extend their tree and shrub canopy.