

**10 February 2020**

Enquiries: [REDACTED]

Our Reference: Native Vegetation in WA Issues Paper Response

Native Vegetation Strategy  
Department of Water and Environmental Regulation  
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## **SOUTH WEST GROUP RESPONSE TO NATIVE VEGETATION IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA: ISSUES PAPER FOR PUBLIC CONSULTATION, NOVEMBER 2019**

The purpose of this correspondence is to respond to the state government's Native Vegetation in Western Australia Issues Paper, November 2019 (the Issues Paper).

This submission is provided in my capacity as the Director South West Group, and not as a position of the South West Group Board. It is a high level submission intended to:

- support the individual submissions made by South West Group member Councils and to commend these to the state government, and
- support the comprehensive submission made by the Western Australia Local Government Association (WALGA), and to commend this to the state government.

In addition to this high level submission, the South West Group has provided additional input to the public consultation process through the South West Group's Regional Natural Resource Management (NRM) Facilitator's input to the WALGA submission, and his attendance at a DWER consultation workshop on the Issues Paper.

### **Background**

The South West Group, formed in November 1983, is a Voluntary Regional Organisation of Councils. It comprises the Cities of Cockburn, Fremantle, Kwinana, Melville, and Rockingham, and the Town of East Fremantle. The South West Group is managed by a Board consisting of the Mayors and CEOs of its member local governments.

The South West Group seeks to work with these six local governments and through cooperation with industry, community and the other spheres of government to capture a wide range of opportunities to enhance economic growth as well as supporting a diversity of quality lifestyles whilst servicing and sustaining cohesive, productive communities in an enviable environmental setting.

The South West Group therefore recognises the critical need for well-planned and adequately resourced management of the state's assets and importantly, also recognises the crucial role that cooperative and productive partnerships between state and local governments, business and the community play in maximising beneficial environmental, social and economic outcomes.

## **Response**

It is the South West Group's view that, while improving consistency, transparency and fairness in how native vegetation is managed across all government processes is necessary, there remains a fundamental need to improve protection for the condition of the state's remaining native vegetation. This is most critical where the ecological limits of clearing have already been exceeded, such as on the Swan Coastal Plain.

Without strong and decisive action to reduce further clearing and ongoing degradation of remnant vegetation from threats such as climate change, wild-fire, introduced diseases, weeds and feral animals, and population pressure, the quality of the state's native vegetation will continue to deteriorate.

The South West Group therefore shares WALGA's disappointment as expressed in WALGA's submission, that;

- the primary purpose of the Issues Paper and the proposed initiatives is constrained to improving processes only,

and supports WALGA's position that;

- a clear statement of the overall outcome the state government is seeking for native vegetation management, expressed in terms of net gain in vegetation cover and condition is lacking and should be included. This would provide a clear target for action and enable progress towards that target to be measured and reported against.
- State of the Environment reporting should be reintroduced.
- the four week consultation period proposed for the draft native vegetation policy is inadequate to allow local governments sufficient time to consider the draft policy and prepare responses.
- there is an urgent need for more and better information to support good decision making, and making this data publicly available as an on-line resource is supported.
- in contrast to current arrangements that are the cause of widespread frustration, local government needs a regulatory regime that is effective, efficient and equitable. WALGA's submission clearly articulates the problems with the current system.
- the proposed Bioregional Approach appears to have merit, however more detail is required to understand exactly what is proposed.
- the implementation of the State Environmental Offsets Framework has been inconsistent, lacking in transparency, and overall effectiveness. Changes are needed to improve the clarity and transparency of the offsets process; ensure compliance and improved reporting; ensure offsets are appropriate and environmentally effective; reduce duplication; and achieved at least cost.
- a wide ranging, strategic and comprehensive review of, and inquiry into, the clearing permit process and the planning and management of native vegetation in the state is required.

Yours sincerely,



**Tom Griffiths**  
**Director South West Group**