

## Native Vegetation Policy Comments Oct 2021 to summit

### Consultation questions

1. Has the policy's context adequately covered native vegetation values, opportunities and challenges?
2. How suitable are the guiding principles in providing a contemporary foundation for managing native vegetation?
3. How well do you support the strategies and outcomes?
4. How suitable are the goals and approaches in guiding implementation of the policy?
5. Which roadmap actions are most important?

We are not sure as to how to answer your consultation questions, but we believe any action to conserve, restore, protect, and stop clearing native vegetation in Western Australia in a positive step.

*'Areas of State Government responsibility: The policy will support agencies to contribute to international and national ecological sustainability goals, through native vegetation management. It will be implemented through collaborations and actions primarily across the following areas of State Government responsibility and their existing legislation'*

- The Native Vegetation Policy needs not only to support, but override all other policies. There is only 10% left of native vegetation since European settlement<sup>1</sup>. This 10% is at a critical level. See map under appendices of how much native vegetation has been cleared since European invasion/settlement.

As there are no direct changes to regulatory arrangements with this policy we believe not much can be achieved because:

- **Emergency services planning** overrides all other policies. The Shire of Manjimup has a 40 metre Building (Asset) Protection Zone (BPZ) in their annual Firebreak & Fuel Hazard Reduction Notice<sup>2</sup>. This equals about 2.4 acres of clearing allowed per private property. Add to this the clearing of compulsory firebreaks around the perimeter of these properties, plus clearing for turn-a-rounds and access and egress to our drinking water tanks, this all adds up to nearly 3 acres of clearing per private property.
- **Guidelines for Planning in Bushfire Prone Areas** with State Planning Policy 3.7 Planning in Bushfire Prone Areas (SPP 3.7) overrides this new Native Vegetation Policy. To build a new house in WA in a bushfire prone area you have to clear to get a BAL-rating of BAL-29 or lower. Surface vegetation and canopy cover has to be less than 15% within the 40 metres BPZ. Clearly this is not protecting native vegetation as these treed areas will suffer with most of the supporting vegetation and most trees removed to reach the 15% left. Clearing a BPZ to the required 15% tree coverage, the trees that remain standing are more likely to fall and die. These trees have grown up with the support of the surrounding native trees and vegetation and without it are more vulnerable due to more sun exposure, the force of the wind, erosion due to clearing, lack of nutrients formed by symbiotic relationships with other native vegetation and organisms.

Parkland clearing produces an environment of trees and invasive, grassy weeds, which enables a fire to move faster than it would through bush with woody undergrowth, creating an unwanted fire hazard and conservation threat, also known as the 'grass-fire cycle<sup>3</sup>' (the pattern of grass invasion promoting the spread of fire, and fire promoting the spread of grasses).

No consideration is given to sprinkler systems, even though all our drinking water can be taken in the event of a fire, and no other fire retardants (such as fire retardant paint) are

considered acceptable solutions.

You only need a candle to burn a house down. Look at all the house fires that are started by overcharging batteries. According to the RAC the majority of homes that burn down, the fire starts in the kitchen. Windsor Castle burnt down – the fire started with a lamp burning nearby upholstery. £37 million and 5 years later to restore!

- **Heat Waves** account for 5 times more deaths than bushfires yet new planning developments in cities do not even allow room for a tree for shade. As you can see below, 5 times more people have died from 'Extreme heat' compared with deaths from 'Bushfires'<sup>4</sup>.

Table 1: Fatalities in Australia between 1900 and 2015 resulting from natural hazards

Natural hazard	Fatalities (1900 2015)
Extreme heat	4,555
Flood	1,911
Tropical cyclone	1,216
Bushfire	974
Lightning	562
Gust	527
Landslide	96
Tornado	53
Earthquake	17
Hail	3

### Strategy 1: Planning, collaboration and coordination

Iv Transparently address competing priorities and cumulative impacts in setting objectives and priorities.

viii) Improve the condition of native vegetation by identifying and addressing threats and threatening processes (e.g. climate change, inappropriate fire regimes, inappropriate water regimes and quality, pests and unsustainable use).

- The Southern Forests Irrigation Scheme to dam the Donnelly River is a threat to native vegetation and an inappropriate water scheme and yet the State and Local Government support the scheme.

Good luck trying to implement improvement to native vegetation across these departments!

### Strategies:

For control burns:

4.3 Enhance the effectiveness of fuel-mitigation programs across the state to reduce the risk of bushfire to the community and the environment. DFES, DBCA

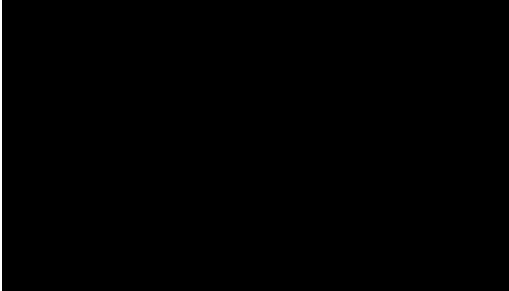
- With climate change the 2019-2020 megafires over east proved no amount of control burning would have prevented this event. Experts noted that hazard –reduction burning had little or no effect on the 2019-2020 fires.
- With most old-growth forests cleared, any regrowth forests around towns will be more fire prone.

- Control burning done by non-indigenous people only reduces fuel load for about 12 months. Aerial burns and large scale (quantity target) burns are the current practice with some fires getting too hot and out of control.

4.6 Develop and implement a Wildflower Friendliness Rating Scheme, to reward LGAs with wildflower-friendly roadsides. Wildflower Society of WA JTSI, DWER 1

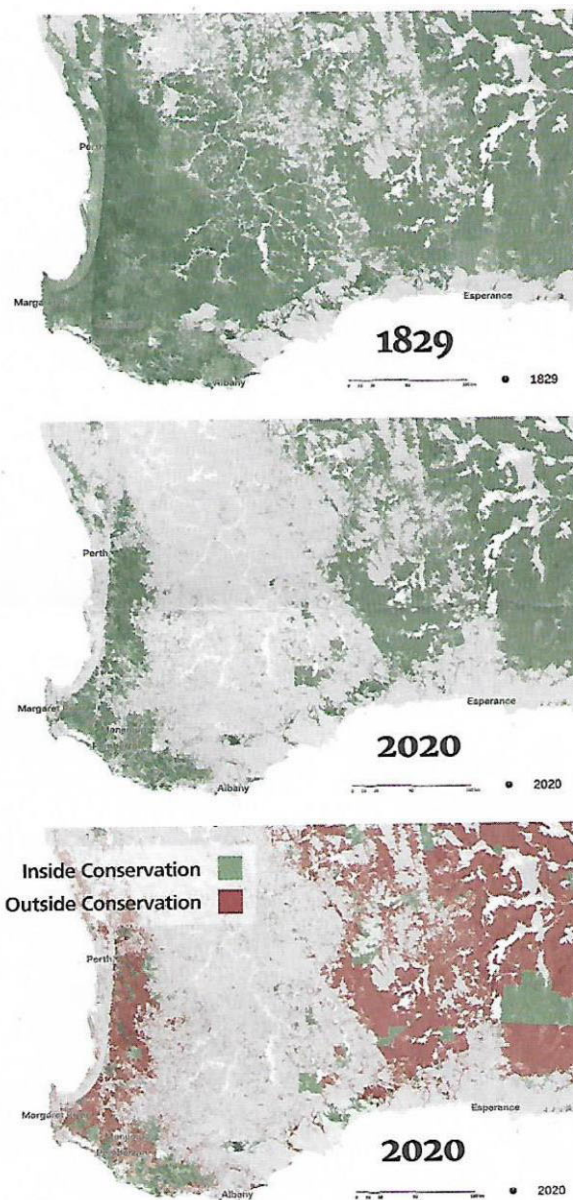
4.7 Build on existing strategies to protect and enhance urban forests. DPLH Local governments 2

- The local Shire of Manjimup has cleared several (up to 10) meters along most road sides in protection. The shire also has reserves with only trees degraded, dead or dying and invaded by weeds. Policy is going to change this?



Appendices:

## Forest & Woodland Cover, South West Western Australia



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### References:

1. Little left to lose: deforestation and forest degradation in Australia since European colonization  
*Journal of Plant Ecology*, Volume 5, Issue 1, March 2012, Pages 109–120, <https://doi.org/10.1093/jpe/rtr038>  
<https://academic.oup.com/jpe/article/5/1/109/1294916?fbclid=IwAR00CCcFq70306Ub5Bvoi8Df45cBpey2EJMPw0g3lsFRg7wauhq6qLv2ULE>
2. Shire of Manjimup WA: 'Firebreak and Fuel Hazard Reduction Notice 2020-2021'
3. Landscape magazine, Spring 2020, Vol 36, number 1.
4. Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements Report, 28 October 2020