

FLYING MINUTE: SUBMISSION ON THE DERBAL YIRAGAN (SWAN) DJARLGARRO (CANNING) DRAFT RIVER PROTECTION STRATEGY

By Rebecca Brown, Policy Manager, Environment and Waste

WALGA RECOMMENDATION

That State Council endorse the Submission on the Derbal Yiragan (Swan) Djarlgarro (Canning) Draft River Protection Strategy.

RESOLUTION 245.FM/2024

CARRIED

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The Swan River Trust has released the Derbal Yiragan (Swan) Djarlgarro (Canning) Draft River Protection Strategy ([Draft Strategy](#)) for comment.
- The Draft Strategy relates to the Swan Canning Riverpark, which includes the waters and foreshores of the Swan Canning River system and considerations relating to the catchment for the River system.
- Local Government has an active role in the management of the River system, including balancing recreation use, development and ecosystem health. Local Government also manage most drainage networks within the catchment.
- WALGA has developed a Submission on the Draft Strategy, informed by previous advocacy and feedback from Local Government via a webinar and written submissions.
- The Submission includes detailed comments on the key elements of the Draft Strategy and identifies the need for an adequately funded, strategic, approach to managing the Swan Canning River System and catchment, taking an evidenced-based approach using best available science.
- The Environment Policy Team endorsed the Submission out of session.

ATTACHMENT

- Submission on the Derbal Yiragan (Swan) Djarlgarro (Canning) Draft River Protection Strategy

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This Submission aligns with previous Association Advocacy undertaken through the Swan Canning Policy Forum, including the development of the [Priority Plan for Investment in the Swan Canning Catchment](#).

BACKGROUND

The Derbal Yiragan (Swan) Djarlgarro (Canning) Draft River Protection Strategy (Draft Strategy) was released for consultation on 14 August. The Draft Strategy's vision is "a healthy, thriving river system for nature and people, to be cared for and enjoyed as the heart of our community".

Key threats to the river system are identified as coming from population growth, climate change, and resourcing. Threats include weeds, pests and disease, agriculture, urban drains, fertilisers and pesticides, construction and development, vegetation clearing and fire, sediment, human disturbance, growing user demand, wildlife entanglement and ingestion of pollutants, water abstraction, contaminated water and erosion.

The consultation period for the Draft Strategy closed on Wednesday 9 October. WALGA requested, but did not receive, an extension for the Submission deadline. The Environment Policy Team endorsed the Submission out of session.

COMMENT

Local Government has an active role in relation to the management of the river system, with the sector having a vital role in maintaining the balance between recreational use, development and ecosystem health. Local Governments are the key land managers with the capacity to make real improvements to water quality and manage most drainage networks in the catchment (80%), which can be a source of nutrient and non-nutrient contaminants.

WALGA has advocated for Local Governments interests in the Swan Canning River, including through the Priority Plan for Investment in the Swan Canning Catchment which was developed on behalf of the Swan Canning Policy Forum. This Priority Plan was underpinned by a Local Government Charter for the Swan and Canning River system, signed by 21 Local Governments and WALGA, which outlined a vision for a healthy Swan Canning River system. The aim was for the river system to be managed for its ecological, social and economic values in a sustainable way, accessible, valued and where responsibility for river health is shared by all. WALGA has also developed Erosion and Sediment Control Guidelines for Local Government to provide practical ways to minimise impact to the River system.

The Draft Strategy provides a framework for funding and an implementation plan to achieve the outcomes that are essential to Local Government. The Submission includes detailed comments on the key elements of the Draft Strategy and identifies the need for an adequately funded, strategic approach to managing the Swan Canning River System and catchment, taking an evidenced-based approach using best available science.

FLYING MINUTE OUTCOME

Poll created: 01/10/2024 at 17:00

Poll closed: 08/10/2024 at 23:59

The submission was endorsed.

Submission on the
Derbal Yiragan (Swan) and
Djarlgarro (Canning) Draft River
Protection Strategy

October 2024

About WALGA

The Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA) is an independent, member-based, not for profit organisation representing and supporting the WA Local Government sector.

Our membership includes all 139 Local Governments in the State. WALGA uses its influence, support and expertise to deliver better outcomes for WA Local Governments and their communities.

We advocate to all levels of Government on behalf of our Members, and provide expert advice, services and support to Local Governments. WALGA's vision is for agile and inclusive Local Governments enhancing community wellbeing and enabling economic prosperity.

Acknowledgement of Country

WALGA acknowledges the continuing connection of Aboriginal people to Country, culture and community. We embrace the vast Aboriginal cultural diversity throughout Western Australia, including Boorloo (Perth), on the land of the Whadjuk Nyoongar People, where WALGA is located and we acknowledge and pay respect to Elders past and present.

1. Introduction

WALGA appreciates the opportunity to comment on the [Derbal Yiragan \(Swan\) Djarlgarro \(Canning\) Draft River Protection Strategy](#) (Draft Strategy). This Draft Strategy relates to the Swan Canning Riverpark, which comprises the waters and foreshores of the Swan Canning River system and was created under the *Swan and Canning Rivers Management Act 2006*, in addition the Draft Strategy also highlights the importance of the catchment which feeds into, and impacts, the Riverpark. The total catchment area for the river system is approximately 126,000km² including both the Swan Canning Catchment and Swan Avon Catchment.

The Draft Strategy was developed with input from the 21 Local Governments which border the Swan Canning Riverpark, State Government agencies, natural resource management groups and the community. Local Government input was through multiple workshops and an opportunity to provide feedback in draft goals and objectives for the Strategy. The Draft Strategy builds on the [Swan Canning River Protection Strategy 2015](#), and many of the themes and actions are a continuation of the approach outlined in that document.

The Draft Strategy's vision is "a healthy, thriving river system for nature and people, to be cared for and enjoyed as the heart of our community". Key threats to the river system are identified as coming from population growth, climate change and resourcing. Threats include weeds, pests and disease, agriculture, urban drains, fertilisers and pesticides, construction and development, vegetation clearing and fire, sediment, human disturbance, growing user demand, wildlife entanglement and ingestion of pollutants, water abstraction, contaminated water and erosion.

The Draft Strategy identifies that Local Government is integral to the management of the river system, with the sector having a vital role in maintaining the balance between recreational use, development and ecosystem health. Local Governments are the key land managers with the capacity to make real improvements to water quality. Local Governments manage most drainage networks in the catchment (80%), which can be a source of nutrient and non-nutrient contaminant. Local Governments also have the capacity to improve water quality through foreshore rehabilitation, local laws, land use planning and community education.

WALGA has advocated for Local Governments interests in the Swan Canning River, including through the [Priority Plan for Investment in the Swan Canning Catchment](#) which was developed on behalf of the Swan Canning Policy Forum. This Priority Plan was underpinned by a Local Government Charter for the Swan and Canning River system, signed by 21 Local Governments and WALGA, which outlined a vision for a healthy Swan Canning River system. The aim was for the river system to be managed for its ecological, social and economic values in a sustainable way, accessible, valued and where responsibility for river health is shared by all. WALGA has also developed Erosion and Sediment Control [Guidelines](#) for Local Government to provide practical ways to minimise impact to the river system.

This Submission outlines Local Governments comments on the Draft Strategy Values (Section 2), Goals (Section 3), and Objectives, Strategies and Management Targets (Section 4).

2. Values

The vision of the Draft Strategy is “a healthy, thriving river system for nature and people, to be cared for and enjoyed as the heart of our community”. Figure 1 shows the interconnected approach the Draft Strategy is seeking to take, with a strategic framework including the values of Healthy People and River System and the relevant elements of the river system.

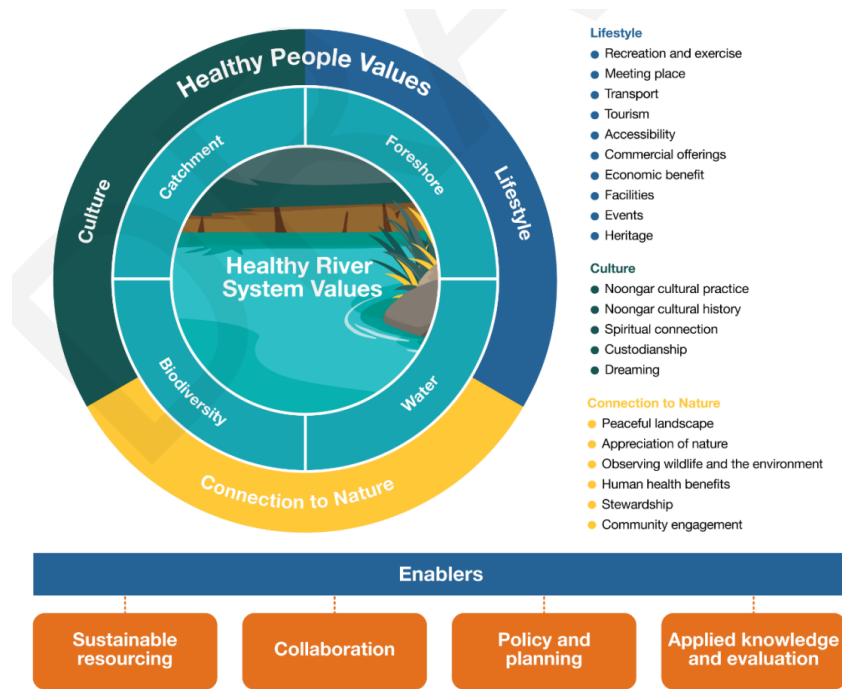


Figure 1: Strategic Framework for the Draft Strategy

These values and enablers reflect Local Governments priorities in relation to the river park, including the balance between the community and ecological values. WALGA considers it is essential that an evidence-based approach to policies and programs, built on best available science, with appropriate funding to meet the long-term needs of the river system is taken.

3. Goals

The Draft Strategy includes the key goals:

1. **Provide strategic direction and clear guidance** to all stakeholders and agencies involved in the care and management of the river system and their surrounding catchments and ensure that collective efforts are aligned and purposeful.
2. **Identify and communicate priority threats** facing the river system and set achievable objectives to tackle these challenges.
3. **Identify core values** that can drive strategic decisions through engagement with stakeholders and the community.
4. **Foster collaboration** by bringing together partner agencies, stakeholders, and the wider community.
5. **Secure sustainable resourcing** to be used by all stakeholders by identifying resourcing required to achieve the Strategy's vision.
6. **Establish a long term, high level framework** that can be applied in its implementation to specific management actions at local scales over shorter periods.

The Goals meet Local Governments needs in relation to establishing clear guidance, roles and responsibilities and ensuring sufficient resourcing for the implementation of the Strategy.

4. Objectives, Strategies and Management Targets

The 11 Objectives are grouped under health river system, healthy people and enablers. For each Objective there are several strategies and management targets. Table 1 provides an outline of the Objectives and commentary on the key strategies and targets.

Table 1: Objectives from Draft Strategy and Comments

Objective	Comment
<i>Heathy River system</i>	
<p>Catchment</p> <p>1. Manage the catchment to protect biodiversity, waterways and wetlands.</p>	<p><i>Strategies - Conditionally Support</i></p> <p>One strategy recommends the updating of Water Quality Improvement Plans, WALGA is seeking feedback from Local Governments about the benefits/challenges relating to these Plans.</p> <p>This section of the Draft Strategy does not include reference to any enforcement activities or approaches. WALGA recommends including a strategy related to targeted enforcement, such as through the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation Light Industries Program, which is delivered in partnership with Local Government. Feedback from Local Government indicated this effective program comprises both an education and enforcement element.</p> <p><i>Management Targets - Suggest Amendments</i></p> <p>One of the management targets mentions an increase in canopy cover but does not set a specific target. WALGA advocates for a canopy target for 30% by 2040 for the Perth and Peel Regions (WALGA Urban Forest Position). The river foreshore reserves provide a significant opportunity to contribute to the greening and biodiversity enhancement of our city, as well the creation and extension of ecological linkages with areas of remnant vegetation.</p> <p>The Strategy needs to specify whether the target refers to the Swan Canning catchment or the entire Swan Avon catchment, as separate targets for different areas may be appropriate. Feedback from Local Government also identified that the target of 'net canopy cover on public land' did not address that much canopy loss is on private land and the focus should be canopy increase across the catchment.</p> <p>WALGA suggests ensuring the management targets and objectives of the Strategy talk to and, where possible, align with</p>



	<p>the State Government's Perth and Peel Urban Greening Strategy currently being finalised and the urban forest / greening strategies, tree planting programs of the relevant Local Government.</p> <p>Feedback from Local Government recommended that a glossary of terms be included, with definitions of a range of terminology including nutrient concentration and nutrient load. This would assist in differentiating this target from those relating to nutrient concentration target under Objective 2.</p>
<p>Water</p> <p>2. Manage water quality and quantity to support the river system's ecological and cultural values.</p>	<p><i>Strategies - Support</i></p> <p><i>Management targets - Suggested Amendments</i></p> <p>The Target of 'Cultural and ecological values are protected' is likely to be difficult to measure. Suggest a specific measure related to freshwater flow into the river system.</p>
<p>Biodiversity</p> <p>3. Protect and enhance local biodiversity of the river system and build resilience to climate change.</p>	<p><i>Strategies - Support</i></p> <p>WALGA notes that one emerging threat for the system is likely to be increasing biosecurity incursions, which will have an effect on the biodiversity of the river system.</p> <p><i>Management targets - Support</i></p>
<p>Foreshore</p> <p>4. Restore and revegetate foreshores and implement fit-for purpose foreshore treatments that are maintained and enhanced.</p>	<p><i>Strategies - Support</i></p> <p>Climate change is a key threat to the river system, WALGA suggests additional focus on developing scenario/adaptation plans for the river system. WALGA notes that the DBCA is currently undertaking risk identification and mapping of the Swan Canning Riverpark to identify future erosion and inundation risks. It should be recognised that identification of these future risks will require river managers to plan and adapt for these risks and that these risks will likely have a significant impact on foreshore areas.</p> <p><i>Management targets - Support</i></p>
<p><i>Healthy People</i></p>	
<p>Lifestyle</p> <p>5. Enhance culture, community lifestyle and connection by providing appropriate places in the river system to socialise, recreate and relax.</p>	<p><i>Strategies - Support</i></p> <p><i>Management targets - Support</i></p>
<p>Culture</p> <p>6. Strengthen respect of and care for the river system by recognising, conserving and sharing Noongar and other Aboriginal culture and</p>	<p><i>Strategies - Support</i></p> <p>WALGA supports the recognition, protection, conservation and preservation of Aboriginal cultural heritage and recognises the fundamental importance of Aboriginal cultural heritage to Aboriginal people and the State.</p>



<p>knowledge and retaining and conserving Aboriginal sites and places.</p>	<p>In relation to links to culture, feedback also identified that other legislation relating to heritage could be relevant. In particular the <i>Underwater Cultural Heritage Act 2018</i> and the <i>Maritime Archaeology Act 1973</i>.</p> <p><i>Management targets - Support</i></p>
<p><i>Connected to Nature</i> 7. Connect people with nature in the river system.</p>	<p><i>Strategies - Support</i></p> <p><i>Management targets - Suggested Amendment</i> For the Target, "The community feel increasingly connected to nature", it is not clear what will be measured. Suggest specific measure of satisfaction/connection be used.</p>
<p><i>Enablers</i></p>	
<p><i>Sustainable Resourcing</i> 8. Obtain ongoing and sufficient resourcing for improved management of the river system.</p>	<p><i>Strategies - Strongly Support</i></p> <p>The preparation of an Investment Plan for the protection and enhancement of the river system is essential, without this the Strategy will not achieve the vision and objectives. WALGA notes that there is much existing infrastructure along the foreshore, such as seawalls, that are ageing and reaching end of life. Significant resources will be required to upgrade or maintain these seawalls for future risk or to convert these foreshores with nature-based protection treatments.</p> <p><i>Management targets - Support</i></p>
<p><i>Collaboration</i> 9. Collaborate and effectively work together to protect and improve the river system.</p>	<p><i>Strategies - Strongly Support</i></p> <p>WALGA considers It essential that the Implementation Plan for the River Protection Strategy is developed with key stakeholders, and to align with the Investment Plan.</p> <p><i>Management targets - Support</i></p>
<p><i>Policy and Planning</i> 10. Policy and planning protects and enhances the ecological and community benefits and amenity of the river system.</p>	<p><i>Strategies - Support</i></p> <p>WALGA notes that <i>State Planning Policy 2.6: State Coastal Planning Policy</i> applies to estuarine areas that are tidally influenced and as such Local Governments in the Swan Canning Riverpark may be required to undertake coastal hazard risk management and adaptation planning in order to plan for future erosion and inundation risk over a 100-year planning timeframe.</p> <p><i>Management targets - Support</i></p>



<p>Applied knowledge and evaluation</p> <p>11. Implement strategies and approaches for managing the river system that are adaptive and based on appropriate knowledge, monitoring and evaluation, with river health reported clearly and regularly.</p>	<p><i>Strategies - Support</i></p> <p><i>Management targets - Amendment Suggested</i></p> <p>In the Targets specify how regularly the public reporting will occur and the number of volunteers that are required to adequately monitor the river.</p>
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5. Conclusion

WALGA and Local Government have long advocated for an adequately funded, strategic, approach to managing the Swan Canning River System, taking an evidenced based approach using best available science. The river system is facing increasing challenges from climate change, such as reduce water flows and changes to the salinity in portions of the river. WALGA strongly urges the State Government to ensure that there is equitable and on-going funding available to improve the health to the Swan Canning catchment and river park.