



Local Government
BIODIVERSITY PLANNING
Guidelines

for the Perth Metropolitan Region

EDITION ONE

Local Government

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Guidelines

for the Perth Metropolitan Region

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Foreword

Local Governments directly manage more than 7,800 ha of native vegetation, as well as many wetlands and waterways in the Perth Metropolitan Region. They are required to make land use planning decisions which have the potential to significantly impact on biodiversity.

To assist Local Governments to take a more strategic approach to the retention, protection and management of bushland, wetlands and other natural areas, the Australian Government provided over \$1 million to the Western Australian Local Government Association's Perth Biodiversity Project. The project involved the production of the 'Local Government Biodiversity Planning Guidelines for the Perth Metropolitan Region' and assisted Local Governments through a variety of other on-ground and capacity building activities.

The Perth Biodiversity Project is a major Local Government initiative to promote the long-term protection and management of natural areas in the Perth Metropolitan Region. The project is a partnership of numerous groups, funded through the Australian Government's Natural Heritage Trust, the Department for Planning and Infrastructure, and Perth's 30 metropolitan Local Governments. The Perth Biodiversity Project provides technical and financial assistance to Perth metropolitan Local Governments to help improve their capacity to conserve biodiversity.

These Guidelines have been prepared as a working document, and the experiences gained by the Association and Local Government will be used to prepare updated editions. Comments and feedback are invited, and these will immediately be considered by the Perth Biodiversity Project to further assist Local Governments using the Guidelines.

We hope that the Guidelines will significantly help Local Government staff, Councillors, the community, consultants and State Government staff, and lead to greater protection and management of Perth's world-class biodiversity.

These Guidelines are a significant resource to assist Local Governments to strategically conserve their biodiversity assets.



Hon. Dr David Kemp MP
Minister for the
Environment and Heritage
Australian Government



Cr Clive Robartson
President
Western Australian
Local Government
Association



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Australian Government
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Environment and Heritage



swan catchment
council



Department of
Environment



DEPARTMENT OF
Conservation
AND LAND MANAGEMENT
Conserving the Natural World



Department for Planning and Infrastructure
Government of Western Australia

Acronyms

CALM	Department of Conservation and Land Management
CAMBA	China Migratory Bird Agreement
CCW	Conservation Category Wetland
DIA	Department of Indigenous Affairs
DLI	Department of Land Information
DoE	Department of Environment
DPI	Department for Planning and Infrastructure
DRF	Declared Rare Flora
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
ENR Policy	Environment and Natural Resources Statement of Planning Policy (under Section 5AA of the Town Planning and Development Act 1928)
EOI	Expression of Interest
EPA	Environmental Protection Authority
EPBC Act	Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999
EPP	Environmental Protection Policy
EPP Lake	Environmental Protection (Swan Coastal Plain Lakes) Policy 1992
FESA	Fire and Emergency Services Authority
GIS	Geographic Information System
IBRA	Interim Bioregionalisation of Australia
IUCN	International Union for the Conservation of Nature
JAMBA	Japan Migratory Bird Agreement
LA Act	Land Administration Act 1997
LBS	Local Biodiversity Strategy
LG	Local Government
LGA	Local Government Area
LGR	Local Government Resource Target
LNA	Local Natural Area
LPP	Local Planning Policy under a Town Planning Scheme (Town Planning and Development Act 1928)
LSNA	Locally Significant Natural Area
MRS	Metropolitan Region Scheme
NAC	Natural Area Condition target
NHT	Natural Heritage Trust
NRM	natural resource management
PBP	Perth Biodiversity Project
PDWSA	Public Drinking Water Source Area
PFI	Priorities for Further Investigation
PLSNA	Potentially Locally Significant Natural Area
PMR	Perth Metropolitan Region
POS	Public Open Space
Ramsar	Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (signed in Ramsar, Iran in 1971)

SCP	Swan Coastal Plain
SPP	Statement of Planning Policy (under Section 5AA of the Town Planning and Development Act 1928)
TEC	Threatened Ecological Community
TPD Act	Town Planning and Development Act 1928
TPS	Town Planning Scheme
UBAG	Urban Bushland Advisory Group
UCL	unallocated Crown land
UMR	unmanaged Reserves
UNEP	United Nations Environment Program
VCA	Voluntary Conservation Agreement
VMP	Vegetation Management Plan (as proposed under amendments to the Environmental Protection Act 1986)
VPO	Vegetation Protection Order
WALGA	Western Australian Local Government Association
WAPC	Western Australian Planning Commission
WWF	Worldwide Fund for Nature

Key technical terms used in this manual are defined in the Glossary.

Glossary terms appear in **bold** for the first occurrence within the text.

Executive summary

“These Guidelines provide Local Governments and their communities with a clear picture of where the Perth Metropolitan Region is positioned in regards to its biodiversity resource and values.

The key outcome of this scientifically gathered information is that we are at a critical decision making stage which requires immediate commitment, funding and resources to protect the natural values that Perth has become renowned for all over the world. If no direct action is taken by Local Governments, the continuation of the business as usual approach to development and land use planning activities will systematically erode our biodiversity values to a point beyond repair and reinstatement. Our future generations will not be able to enjoy the same natural experiences within, and so close to Perth, as we have done.

The Local Government Biodiversity Planning Guidelines and supporting mapping information is the best tool available to Local Government to protect what bushland we have got today and to actively manage what we can into the future.”

Mick McCarthy
Eastern Metropolitan Regional Council
Executive Manager Environmental Services

Background

One of the most significant challenges confronting Perth as it grows is the conservation of its unique biodiversity. Perth's biodiversity is part of the South West Botanical Province of Western Australia, which is now internationally recognised as one of the world's top 25 biodiversity hotspots (Myers et al 2000). It has been recognised as globally significant not only because of the huge diversity of plants, animals and habitat types that are highly endemic, but the significant and continuing loss of natural areas by clearing and urban development.

Local Government has a key role in the retention, protection and management of Perth's biodiversity because it represents the level of government closest to the community, is responsible for the management of at least 7,800 ha of native vegetation, and is required to make land use planning decisions with the potential to impact on more than 75,000 ha of native vegetation.

To assist Local Government to strategically plan for the retention, protection and management of Perth's biodiversity, the Western Australian Local Government Association with funding assistance from the Natural Heritage Trust and the Department for Planning and Infrastructure, has prepared the 'Local Government Biodiversity Planning Guidelines'. These Guidelines introduce a four-phase local biodiversity planning process culminating in the preparation and implementation of a Local Biodiversity Strategy.

Local Biodiversity Strategies prepared in accordance with these Guidelines address the expectation that Local Governments will prepare local bushland strategies. This expectation was first created in the Urban Bushland Strategy (Government of Western Australia 1995), reinforced in Bush Forever (Government of Western Australia 2000a, 2000b and 2000c), and is being formalised in the Draft Statement of Planning Policy - Bushland Policy for the Perth Metropolitan Region (Western Australian Planning Commission in preparation).

Bush Forever is based upon the concept that the protection of regionally significant bushland is the responsibility of State Government, and the protection of other natural

areas is primarily the responsibility of Local Government (with the support of State Government). Bush Forever's focus on regionally significant bushland does not detract from the importance of conserving Locally Significant Natural Areas.

Consequently these guidelines and resulting Strategies focus on Local Natural Areas (and other natural areas that occur within Local Government reserves), as decisions regarding the retention, protection and management of these natural areas are largely the responsibility of Local Government. Local Natural Areas are natural areas that exist outside of Bush Forever Sites (Swan Coastal Plain), and the CALM Managed Estate and Regional Parks, and can be areas of native vegetation, vegetated or open water bodies (lakes, swamps), waterways (rivers, creeks and estuaries), springs, rock outcrops, bare ground (generally sand or mud), caves, coastal dunes or cliffs (adapted from Environmental Protection Authority 2003a). Natural areas exclude parkland cleared areas, isolated trees in cleared settings, ovals and turfed areas.

In 2001, approximately 75,000 ha of native vegetation considered to be Local Natural Areas were mapped in the Perth Metropolitan Region. Approximately 58,000 ha of these Local Natural Areas occur on private land, with about 8,900 ha of this zoned under the Metropolitan Region Scheme for intensive development.

A key challenge for Local Governments will be to protect the more common natural areas rather than the rare and threatened.

Local biodiversity planning process

The local biodiversity planning process promoted in these Guidelines assists Local Government to:

- ▶ Determine the protection status of all Locally Significant Natural Areas (areas that meet one or more Local Significance Criteria)
- ▶ Formalise policies and processes to ensure biodiversity considerations are integrated into their assessment of development proposals and construction activities
- ▶ Develop and provide incentives to encourage private land conservation
- ▶ Plan for the management of local reserves and other Local Government lands to conserve biodiversity.

The local biodiversity planning process consists of four Phases: scoping, preparation of a Discussion Paper, preparation of a Strategy and implementation of the Strategy. Associated with the process are milestones that should be achieved upon completion of each Phase.

Phase 1 – Scoping

This involves initiating the local biodiversity planning process by obtaining Council support for the process and a commitment to undertake Phase 2.

Phase 2 – Preparation of a local biodiversity planning discussion paper

The purpose of the Discussion Paper is to inform the community and all stakeholders of the extent and potential ecological values of the remaining biodiversity resource and develop a vision, objectives and targets for biodiversity retention, protection and management.

A component of the target setting involves establishing Natural Area Condition targets. Natural Area Condition targets enable the Local Government to formalise their ecological criteria for determining which Local Natural Areas are locally significant. The Guidelines provide a standardised set of ecological Local Significance Criteria that are grouped under the following themes:

- ▶ Representation of ecological communities (at the local and regional scales)
- ▶ Diversity within the natural area
- ▶ Rarity of species and ecological communities
- ▶ Maintaining ecological processes or natural systems
- ▶ General criteria for the protection of wetland, streamline and estuarine fringing vegetation and coastal vegetation.

The adoption of standardised criteria will ensure that each Local Government contributes to regional biodiversity conservation targets, whilst preserving its own sense of place. Importantly, the criteria challenge Local Government to retain ecological communities at thresholds that may prevent the exponential loss of species and maintain ecosystem processes (30% retention of natural areas), rather than at levels where communities are considered threatened (10% retention).

Phase 3 – Preparation of Local Biodiversity Strategy

An Action Plan is developed that will underpin and guide the development and implementation of the Strategy through Phases 3 and 4, and will provide detailed information on how the targets and objectives will be met. A Strategy should consist of four major components, including a Local Planning Policy for Biodiversity Conservation, Incentives Strategy for Private Land Conservation, planning for the management of biodiversity on Local Government lands, and formalising the protection status of Locally Significant Natural Areas. The first three components of the strategy provide the process for a strategic ecological assessment of all natural areas (on private and public lands) to determine areas that are locally significant. The assessment of natural areas to determine those that are locally significant requires completion of a thorough desktop and field assessment process, utilising information and natural area assessment templates provided within the Guidelines. The final component of the Strategy ensures that the Local Government Town Planning Scheme is reviewed or amended to include appropriate zonings and scheme text to allow formal recognition of Locally Significant Natural Areas to be protected.

Phase 4 – Implementation of a Local Biodiversity Strategy

Once the Strategy has been prepared (Phase 3), a number of new activities and policies will need to be implemented, to ensure the four components of the strategy are well integrated into existing and future Council processes, including:

- ▶ Review/Amendment of the Town Planning Scheme
- ▶ Application of a Local Planning Policy
- ▶ Application of an Incentives Strategy for Private Land Conservation
- ▶ Management of Local Government land for biodiversity outcomes
- ▶ Monitoring and review of the Strategy.

The Strategy provides the process and framework for assessing the ecological significance of Local Natural Areas and for determining their protection status. However, it is likely that when the Strategy is released, some Local Natural Areas (particularly those occurring on private land) will be unassessed and their future status unresolved. Additionally, the implementation of management actions for Local Government reserves will be ongoing. Consequently, it is important that progress on the retention, protection and management of natural areas, achieved through implementation of the Strategy, is regularly communicated to all stakeholders.

Key benefits from using the Guidelines

Certainty of process not certainty of outcome

The local biodiversity planning process does not guarantee the protection of all Locally Significant Natural Areas, but provides a transparent process for determining whether a natural area is locally significant, and identifies the opportunities for and constraints to protecting the site. Many Locally Significant Natural Areas may not be able to be protected due to the prevailing economic and social constraints associated with the site. In these situations, difficult decisions need to be made by the Local Government, in consultation with all stakeholders, and in some cases, State Government.

Assistance and support for local biodiversity planning

Local Governments will receive mapping and GIS information, and technical assistance from the Perth Biodiversity Project, the State Government, and regional natural resource management groups to help progress through the four Phases of local biodiversity planning. Nevertheless, Local Governments face an enormous challenge in implementing the resulting Strategies, and will require significant ongoing support and cooperation from State Government, the community and the private sector.

To ensure that Local Governments invest appropriately in local biodiversity planning, it is essential that the relevant parts of Strategies are endorsed by both the Western Australian Planning Commission and the State Government's environmental agencies.

Benefits of local biodiversity planning

Preparation of a Local Biodiversity Strategy is not compulsory; however Local Governments with significant Local Natural Areas, and high rates of land development, will find that a Strategy will assist in creating more sustainable, liveable communities, and clearer pathways for future development.

Importantly, local biodiversity planning will assist Local Government and State Government to meet legislative and policy obligations under the following:

- ▶ Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999
- ▶ WA Wildlife Conservation Act 1950, proposed to be replaced by a Biodiversity Conservation Act
- ▶ WA Environmental Protection Act 1986, and amendments to introduce land clearing control
- ▶ National Objectives and Targets for Biodiversity Conservation 2001-2005
- ▶ Bush Forever (Government of Western Australia 2000abc)
- ▶ Urban Bushland Strategy (Government of Western Australia 1995) and
- ▶ Draft Bushland Policy for the Perth Metropolitan Region (Western Australian Planning Commission, in prep.).

Local Biodiversity Strategies prepared in accordance with the Guidelines have the potential to assist State Government with the implementation of the above-mentioned policy and legislation.

Overall local biodiversity planning provides greater certainty to the community, as it clearly describes the decision-making process to be undertaken by Local Government when determining whether natural areas are locally significant, and if so whether they will be protected, and how.

Using the Guidelines

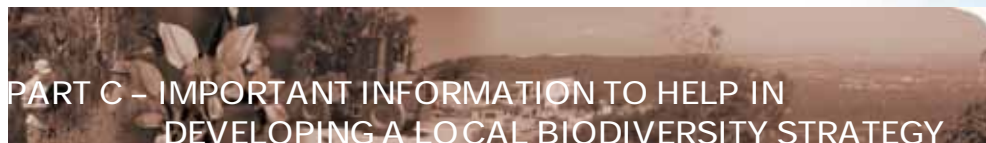
The Local Biodiversity Planning Guidelines have been prepared to provide Local Government with an understanding of the values of biodiversity in the Perth Metropolitan Region and a methodology for preparing and implementing Local Biodiversity Strategies. The Guidelines consist of 3 parts that are described below.



Part A provides important background information on the biodiversity of the Perth Metropolitan Region and defines the ecological criteria relevant for recognising the biodiversity values of Local Natural Areas. Part A also clarifies the roles and responsibilities of Local Governments for protection and management of biodiversity as defined by key Federal, State, regional and local legislation and policy. It is important that Part A is read and understood before embarking on local biodiversity planning as it provides the principles and criteria that underpin the local biodiversity planning process outlined in Part B.



Part B of the Guidelines aims to guide Local Government through the 4-phase local biodiversity planning process that includes scoping, preparation of discussion paper, preparation of the Local Biodiversity Strategy and implementation of the Local Biodiversity Strategy.



Part C provides information and templates to assist Local Government in completing the 4 Phases of the local biodiversity planning process. Information specific to each Local Government within the Perth Metropolitan Region is provided along with templates for natural area assessment and planning policies.

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