The significance of Perth’s biodiversity is renowned all over the world - 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. Perth’s Local Governments have an important role to play in the conservation of biodiversity through their involvement in the land use planning process and the direct management of many natural areas. These Guidelines are a significant step forward for Local Governments to strategically plan for the retention, protection and management of Perth’s biodiversity.

The Perth Biodiversity Project is a major Local Government initiative to improve the conservation of biodiversity in the Perth Metropolitan Region. It is a partnership project between the metropolitan Local Governments, the Western Australian Local Government Association, the Natural Heritage Trust and the Department for Planning and Infrastructure.

Acknowledgments

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- Department of Environment
- Department of Conservation and Land Management
- Urban Bushland Council

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Perth Biodiversity Project Team: Karen Clarke, Julia Cullity, Andrew Del Marco, Kate Savage and Ryan Taylor.
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

Sue Metcalf
Chairperson
Swan Catchment Council

Jan Star
Acting Chair
South West Catchments Council
### Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CALM</td>
<td>Department of Conservation and Land Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAMBA</td>
<td>China Migratory Bird Agreement</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCW</td>
<td>Conservation Category Wetland</td>
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<tr>
<td>DIA</td>
<td>Department of Indigenous Affairs</td>
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<td>DLI</td>
<td>Department of Land Information</td>
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<td>DoE</td>
<td>Department of Environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>DPI</td>
<td>Department for Planning and Infrastructure</td>
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<tr>
<td>DRF</td>
<td>Declared Rare Flora</td>
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<tr>
<td>EIA</td>
<td>Environmental Impact Assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>ENR Policy</td>
<td>Environment and Natural Resources Statement of Planning Policy (under Section 5AA of the Town Planning and Development Act 1928)</td>
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<td>EOI</td>
<td>Expression of Interest</td>
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<tr>
<td>EPA</td>
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<tr>
<td>EPBC Act</td>
<td>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</td>
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<tr>
<td>EPP</td>
<td>Environmental Protection Policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>EPP Lake</td>
<td>Environmental Protection (Swan Coastal Plain Lakes) Policy 1992</td>
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<tr>
<td>FESA</td>
<td>Fire and Emergency Services Authority</td>
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<tr>
<td>GIS</td>
<td>Geographic Information System</td>
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<tr>
<td>IBRA</td>
<td>Interim Bioregionalisation of Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>IUCN</td>
<td>International Union for the Conservation of Nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JAMBA</td>
<td>Japan Migratory Bird Agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LA Act</td>
<td>Land Administration Act 1997</td>
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<tr>
<td>LBS</td>
<td>Local Biodiversity Strategy</td>
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<tr>
<td>LG</td>
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<tr>
<td>LGA</td>
<td>Local Government Area</td>
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<td>LGR</td>
<td>Local Government Resource Target</td>
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<td>LNA</td>
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<td>LPP</td>
<td>Local Planning Policy under a Town Planning Scheme (Town Planning and Development Act 1928)</td>
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<td>LSNA</td>
<td>Locally Significant Natural Area</td>
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<td>MRS</td>
<td>Metropolitan Region Scheme</td>
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<td>NAC</td>
<td>Natural Area Condition target</td>
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<td>NHT</td>
<td>Natural Heritage Trust</td>
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<td>NRM</td>
<td>Natural resource management</td>
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<td>PBP</td>
<td>Perth Biodiversity Project</td>
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<td>PDWSA</td>
<td>Public Drinking Water Source Area</td>
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<td>PFI</td>
<td>Priorities for Further Investigation</td>
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<td>PLSSNA</td>
<td>Potentially Locally Significant Natural Area</td>
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<td>PMR</td>
<td>Perth Metropolitan Region</td>
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<td>POS</td>
<td>Public Open Space</td>
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<td>Ramsar</td>
<td>Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (signed in Ramsar, Iran in 1971)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Definition</td>
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<td>SCP</td>
<td>Swan Coastal Plain</td>
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<td>SPP</td>
<td>Statement of Planning Policy (under Section 5AA of the Town Planning and Development Act 1928)</td>
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<td>TEC</td>
<td>Threatened Ecological Community</td>
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<td>TPD Act</td>
<td>Town Planning and Development Act 1928</td>
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<tr>
<td>TPS</td>
<td>Town Planning Scheme</td>
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<tr>
<td>UBAG</td>
<td>Urban Bushland Advisory Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>UCL</td>
<td>unallocated Crown land</td>
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<tr>
<td>UMR</td>
<td>unmanaged Reserves</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNEP</td>
<td>United Nations Environment Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>VCA</td>
<td>Voluntary Conservation Agreement</td>
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<tr>
<td>VMP</td>
<td>Vegetation Management Plan (as proposed under amendments to the Environmental Protection Act 1986)</td>
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<tr>
<td>VPO</td>
<td>Vegetation Protection Order</td>
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<td>WALGA</td>
<td>Western Australian Local Government Association</td>
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<td>WAPC</td>
<td>Western Australian Planning Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>WWF</td>
<td>Worldwide Fund for Nature</td>
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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:
Executive Summary

- 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 – SETTING THE SCENE**

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 – LOCAL BIODIVERSITY PLANNING PROCESS**

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 – IMPORTANT INFORMATION TO HELP IN DEVELOPING A 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.
# Table of Contents

## Part A - Setting the scene ....................................................... 1

1. All about biodiversity ........................................................................................................... 1  
   1.1. What is biodiversity? ......................................................................................................... 1  
   1.2. Measuring and describing biodiversity ........................................................................ 2  
   1.3. Other key definitions .................................................................................................... 3  
   1.4. What is a Local Biodiversity Strategy? ................................................................. 6  
   1.5. Local Government’s role in conserving biodiversity ............................................. 7  
   1.6. Guiding principles for local biodiversity planning and conservation ................. 9  
   1.7. Factors influencing the protection and management of Perth’s biodiversity ...... 13  

2. Important considerations in developing a Local Biodiversity Strategy .......... 18  
   2.1. Difference between a biodiversity strategy and a bushland strategy ............... 18  
   2.2. Who to involve? ............................................................................................................... 18  
   2.3. The importance of community consultation .............................................................. 19  
   2.4. The importance of ecological expertise ....................................................................... 19  
   2.5. Can a Strategy cover more than one Local Government area? ............................ 20  
   2.6. Embracing biodiversity throughout the organisation ....................................... 20  
   2.7. Resourcing the development of a Local Biodiversity Strategy ......................... 20  
   2.8. What about existing greening plans, corridor strategies and other related information? ................................................................. 21  
   2.9. Can a Local Biodiversity Strategy be produced as part of a larger plan? .......... 21  

3. Legislation and policies ................................................................................................. 22  
   3.1. Federal Government legislation and policies relating to biodiversity .................... 22  
   3.2. State Government legislation and policies relating to biodiversity ......................... 23  
   3.3. Regional Natural Resource Management Strategies ............................................. 31  
   3.4. Other formal protection mechanisms for Perth’s natural areas ............................ 31  
   3.5. Local Government legislation and policies .............................................................. 33  

4. Status of Perth’s natural areas ...................................................................................... 35  

5. Ecological criteria to identify Locally Significant Natural Areas ....................... 38  
   5.1. Ecological criteria ........................................................................................................... 38  
   5.2. Essential and Desirable criteria ............................................................................... 50  
   5.3. Potentially Locally Significant Natural Areas ......................................................... 54  
   5.4. Consideration of other environmental and social values ...................................... 59  

6. Guidelines for viability assessment and determining ecological linkages ....... 61  
   6.1. Assessing the viability of natural areas ............................................................... 61  
   6.2. Regional and local ecological linkages ................................................................. 66  

## Part B - Local biodiversity planning process ............................................. 73

7. Local biodiversity planning framework ................................................................. 73  
   7.1. Local biodiversity planning Phases ............................................................................. 73  

8. Scoping (Phase 1) ................................................................................................. 76  
   8.1. Local Government executive and officer support ................................................. 76  
   8.2. Council support ........................................................................................................ 76  
   8.3. Biodiversity training .................................................................................................. 76  
   8.4. Formation of a Steering Committee ..................................................................... 77
# Table of Contents

9. Preparation of local biodiversity planning Discussion Paper (Phase 2)......78
   9.1. Identify the resource.............................................................................. 78
   9.2. Setting your vision, objectives and targets........................................... 80
   9.3. The four components of a Local Biodiversity Strategy........................... 90
   9.4. Formal public consultation ................................................................... 93

10. Preparation of Local Biodiversity Strategy (Phase 3)............................94
    10.2. Preparing a Local Planning Policy for Biodiversity Conservation......... 95
    10.3. Preparing an Incentives Strategy for Private Land Conservation........... 99
    10.4. Managing biodiversity on Local Government land..............................103
    10.5. Formalising the protection status of Locally Significant Natural Areas .....114
    10.6. Identification of Locally Significant Natural Areas.............................116
    10.7. Guidance on prioritising Locally Significant Natural Areas...............118

11. Implementation of Local Biodiversity Strategy (Phase 4).....................130
    11.1. Resourcing ongoing implementation of the Strategy............................130
    11.2. Amendment of Town Planning Scheme .............................................130
    11.3. Application of Local Planning Policy and Incentives Strategy for Private Land Conservation ..............................................................131
    11.4. Manage Local Government controlled natural areas..........................131
    11.5. Monitoring and review of Strategy....................................................131

Part C – Important information to help in developing a Local Biodiversity Strategy..............................................................133

12. Natural Area Initial Assessment templates and supporting information...133
    12.1. Initial desktop and field assessment methodology..............................133
    12.2. Natural Area Initial Desktop Assessment...........................................135
    12.3. Natural Area Initial Field Assessment A..............................................138
    12.4. Natural Area Initial Field Assessment B – Significant Species and Communities .................................................................146
    12.5. Natural Area Initial Assessment Summary...........................................151
    12.6. Skill level matrix for natural area assessment......................................154
    12.7. Vegetation condition scales for natural area assessment......................156
    12.9. Common indicator species for the presence of disease caused by Phytophthora cinnamomi.................................................................158
    12.10. Significant species and ecological communities known to occur or that may occur within Local Government Area.................................159

13. Local Government policy templates.........................................................160
    13.1. Sample agenda item to Council: initiating a local biodiversity planning process ...............................................................160
    13.2. Sample Local Planning Policy for Biodiversity Conservation............167
    13.3. Terms of reference – local biodiversity planning Steering Committee ......178

14. A guide to the Planning System.................................................................180
    14.1. What is Planning? ..............................................................................180
    14.2. Who does Planning? ........................................................................180
    14.3. Planning tools ...................................................................................180
    14.4. The Planning Steps ..........................................................................181
    14.5. Planning Levels ..............................................................................182
    14.6. The role of the Environmental Protection Authority...........................185

15. The Planning System and protection mechanisms for Locally Significant Natural Areas .................................................................186
15.1. Summary of protection mechanisms .................................................. 186
15.2. Case studies .................................................................................. 195

16. Information and statistics ................................................................. 199
16.1. Native vegetation extent in the Swan Coastal Plain Interim Bioregionalisation of Australia (IBRA) subregions south of the Moore River for vegetation complexes occurring within the Perth Metropolitan Region ................. 199
16.2. Remnant vegetation extent in the Bush Forever study area .............. 203
16.3. Datasets to assist Local Governments identify and describe natural area resources ............................................................................. 206
16.4. Threatened Ecological Communities .............................................. 231
16.5. Key to map figures ....................................................................... 236
16.6. Useful GIS datasets ..................................................................... 243

17. The science behind biodiversity conservation thresholds .................. 245

18. Some helpful hints for involving the community .................................. 248
18.1. Consult your community during preparation of the Strategy ............ 248
18.2. Identifying your community ............................................................ 248
18.3. Consulting with the Indigenous community .................................... 249
18.4. Why involve the public? ................................................................. 249
18.5. What is your purpose behind public involvement? ......................... 250
18.6. Suggested consultation methods .................................................. 250
18.7. Some common problems of public involvement ......................... 251
18.8. Committees or working groups of Council ................................... 251
18.9. Handy references ...................................................................... 251

19. Local Biodiversity Strategy Action Plan .............................................. 253

20. Checklist and draft milestones framework for local biodiversity planning 264

21. Cost estimates for local biodiversity planning ..................................... 269
21.1. General assumptions .................................................................. 269
21.2. Costing categories for each Phase of the local biodiversity planning process.. 269

22. Management activities and estimated cost ranges ............................. 274
List of tables and figures

Tables

Part A
Table 1. Urban Bushland Strategy criteria for identifying regionally and locally significant bushland (Government of Western Australia 1995).
Table 2. The extent of native vegetation within the Swan Coastal Plain and Jarrah Forest portions of the Perth Metropolitan Region (PMR).
Table 3. Vegetation complexes that currently meet Criterion 1 a) ii) based on circa 1997 statistics.
Table 4. Vegetation complexes that currently meet Criterion 1 a) v) based on 1997 statistics.
Table 5. Vegetation complexes that currently meet Criterion 3 i) based on circa 1997 statistics.
Table 6. Vegetation complexes that currently meet Criterion 3 ii) based on 1997 statistics.
Table 7. Summary of ecological criteria to identify Locally Significant Natural Areas, their priority (‘Essential’ or ‘Desirable’) and the appropriate methods to determine natural areas that meet each criterion.
Table 8. Area (ha) of Local Natural Areas (LNAs) predicted to meet Essential and Desirable Criteria based on desktop analysis: Potentially Locally Significant Natural Areas (PLSNAs).

Part B
Table 9. Key Components of a Local Biodiversity Strategy Recommended for Each Local Government.
Table 10. Priority 1, 2 and 3 Locally Significant Natural Areas and subsequent ranking of value within each prioritisation grouping.
Table 11. Summary of Local Significance Criteria to identify Priority 1, Priority 2 and Priority 3 Locally Significant Natural Areas.
Table 12. Prioritisation within the Priority 1A natural areas based on Federal and State government legislation and policy providing opportunities for protection.
Table 13. Priorities for Further Investigation (PFI) of Local Natural Areas.

Part C
Table 14. Perth Metropolitan Region (PMR) Scheme zones compared with typical Town Planning Scheme zones that fit under the Metropolitan Region Scheme (MRS) zones.
Table 15. Circa 1997 Remnant Vegetation Extent in the Swan Coastal Plain IBRA Subregions South of the Moore River for Vegetation Complexes Occurring within the Perth Metropolitan Region (PMR) (combined data from Environmental Protection Authority 2003a and Department of Environment 2003).
Table 16. 1998 Remnant Vegetation Extent in the Bush Forever Study Area (adapted from Government of Western Australia 2000a).
Table 17. 2001 Native Vegetation Extent by Administrative Planning Category (Perth Biodiversity Project, unpub. 2003).
Table 18. 2001 Native Vegetation Extent by Ownership Category (Perth Biodiversity Project, unpub. 2003).
Table 20. 2001 Vegetated Local Natural Area by Ownership Categories (Perth Biodiversity Project, unpub. 2003).
Table 22. 2001 Native Vegetation Extent by Metropolitan Region Scheme (MRS) Zoning (Perth Biodiversity Project, unpub. 2003).

Table 23. 2001 Vegetated Local Natural Area by Metropolitan Region Scheme (MRS) Zoning.

Table 24: Example for the City of Swan of the information that should be considered when setting representation – retention and protection targets.

Table 25. Threatened Ecological Communities (TECs) that occur in the Perth Metropolitan Region (PMR) (on CALM Threatened Ecological Community [TEC] Database (Department of Conservation and Land Management 2003c), and endorsed by the Minister for the Environment).

Table 26: Example Local Biodiversity Strategy Action Plan.

Table 27: Checklist and Milestones for local biodiversity planning.

Table 28 Cost estimates for the tasks and activities associated with the local biodiversity planning process.

Table 29. Management activities and associated estimated cost ranges.

Figures

Part A
Figure 1 Native Vegetation Extent by Administrative Planning Category.

Figure 2. Biodiversity loss in relation to native vegetation loss (Smith & Silversten 2001).

Figure 3. Natural Resource Management, Biogeographical, Administrative and Study Regions relevant to local biodiversity planning in the Perth Metropolitan Region (PMR).

Figure 4. Potentially Locally Significant Natural Areas (PLSNA) for the Perth Metropolitan Region (PMR).

Figure 5. The red flowering gum (Eucalyptus ficifolia) and the Splendid Blue Wren (Malurus splendens) are the flora and fauna emblems of the Shire of Denmark.

Figure 6. Draft Regional Ecological Linkages for the Perth Metropolitan Region (PMR).

Part B
Figure 7: Local biodiversity conservation context for the Perth Metropolitan Region (PMR).

Figure 8. Native Vegetation Extent by Administrative Planning Category (Discussion paper example 1)

Figure 9. Local Government Controlled Natural Areas and Local Natural Areas by Ownership Category (Discussion Paper example 2)

Figure 10. Native Vegetation Extent by Vegetation Complex (Discussion Paper example 3)

Figure 11. Native Vegetation Extent by Metropolitan Region Scheme (MRS) Zoning (Discussion Paper example 4)

Figure 12. Potentially Locally Significant Natural Areas (PLSNAs) (Discussion Paper example 5)

Figure 13. Natural area restoration concepts (adapted from Corbyn unpub. 2003, Kaesehagen unpub. 2001 and McDonald 1996)

Figure 14: Local Natural Area Protection Status

Part C
Figure 15. A summary of the Planning Process.