

# Celebrating thirteen years of **Action for Biodiversity**

Celebrating the Legacy of Local Action for Biodiversity in Priority Landscapes of the South West of Western Australia.



# FOREWORD



For 13 years, the dedicated people working for the Local Biodiversity Program (and its various other iterations) have been part of the the WA Local Government Association family. Together we have

achieved so much for Local Government, and the unique Western Australian natural environment that we call home.

Major achievements during my time as WALGA's CEO include assisting 17 Local Governments to develop Local Biodiversity Strategies and the development and delivery of the Environmental Planning Tool, designed to help Local Governments make strategic and effective planning decisions.

We have recognised significant Local Government achievements through the Program's Biodiversity Milestone

Awards, and we have provided technical services and advice to all Local Governments seeking it.

Not only have we provided these tools and services for Western Australian Local Governments, we've also forged strong partnerships with the State Government's Department of Planning and Department of Parks and Wildlife. We've created opportunities for Local Government capacity building through our Natural Area Management Forums, and we've developed a strong network of Local Government staff, as well as planning and biodiversity management stakeholders.

I am sad that this chapter of the Local Biodiversity Program must come to an end, but am proud of all we have achieved together. In these tough fiscal times, I am delighted that WALGA is able to continue supporting components of the Program through a fee-for-service model, and believe this is evidence of the value that the Local Biodiversity Program has brought to the sector.

I thank our staff, both past and present, and I admire their passion, their knowledge and their dedication to our unique and special local biodiversity.

**Ricky Burges, WALGA CEO**

# PRESIDENT'S FOREWORD



We are blessed to live amongst such wonderfully diverse and beautifully unique natural areas in Western Australia. The Local Biodiversity Program has helped Local

Government to protect and manage these areas, benefiting the whole community for generations to come.

Since 2001, Local Governments have been using the services and tools provided through the Program to identify biodiversity assets in the early stages of land use planning. As a result we now have Local Governments

from across Western Australia planning for biodiversity conservation, and working with their local communities to strategically protect and manage native flora and fauna. The success of the Local Biodiversity Program can be attributed to the Program's collaboration with all spheres of government, industry and community groups.

The Western Australian Local Government Association remains committed to supporting Local Government to protect biodiversity, and will continue to provide important tools and services.

Biodiversity is a crucial component of thriving communities and as the peak body for Local Government, the Local Government Association will continue working with and for the sector to conserve this internationally recognised biodiversity hotspot that we are fortunate to call home.

**Mayor Troy Pickard, WALGA President**

# BEGINNINGS



The Local Biodiversity Program (LBP) has been promoting and enabling long-term conservation of natural areas in regions of Western Australia subject to rapid development for the last 13 years. Through this time, we have provided Local Governments with expert and technical advice, data and mapping to inform biodiversity planning and management, decision support tools and direct financial assistance.

This booklet examines WALGA's biodiversity program journey since it was first initiated in 1999, and the positive contribution it has been making to the unique local biodiversity of Western Australia.

## CONCEPTION

In 1999, the Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA), the Federal Bushcare Program and leading Perth Local Governments together recognised the need for financial and technical support to Local Governments to become more involved in bush care and biodiversity conservation.

The State Government's Urban Bushland Strategy released in 1995, for the first time defined characteristics of regionally and locally significant natural areas and acknowledged the need to conserve both. This was further re-iterated in Bush Forever, a whole government initiative adopted in 2000, but no specific guidance, data adequate for local level strategic biodiversity planning or agreed governance structure was available to support conservation of locally significant natural areas.

In 2001, WALGA obtained funding from the Commonwealth Government through the Natural Heritage Trust, and formed a formal partnership with Perth's Local Governments, the Department for Planning and Infrastructure, and the Swan Catchment Council. This Partnership was named the Perth Biodiversity Project (PBP).

The Project was set up to be delivered in three phases:

1. 2001-2004 Establishing guidelines for local biodiversity conservation planning for the Perth Metropolitan Region
2. 2004-2008 Piloting the methodologies for development of Local Biodiversity Strategies and extension of the geographic application outside Perth via the South West Biodiversity Project 2006-2009
3. From 2008 onwards – Implementation and extension to regional centres experiencing development pressure; clarification of the roles of State Government in endorsing local biodiversity strategies; and integration into land use planning.





## PBP GETS STRATEGIC

In 2002, PBP surveyed the 30 Perth metropolitan Local Governments. Through this survey, PBP investigated Local Government's capacity to conserve biodiversity, and gauged how to best assist the sector in the strategic protection of native vegetation and other natural assets.

The survey documented numerous shortcomings in the ways biodiversity conservation was considered at local level, highlighting discrepancies between the amount of biodiversity within a municipality and the human resources available to address its management. Further gaps in adequate statutory provisions in local land use planning frameworks as well as the lack of State Government

support for management of local reserves with regionally significant assets have been recorded. While more than half of responding Local Governments had internal policies or greening plans to manage biodiversity, their scope was limited to public lands. Only four out of ten responding Local Governments with more than 500 hectares of native vegetation on private land had guidelines in place for assessing the potential impacts of development on native vegetation and biodiversity values.

A number of recommendations came from this survey, but perhaps the most significant recommendation to affect the future of PBP was that Local Governments should develop biodiversity plans as an important component of their Local Planning Strategies and Town Planning Schemes, the need to establish standards for natural area management and financial support to facilitate improved management of regionally significant natural assets.

# TOOLS AND SERVICES

## TARGETED GRANTS

On 1 July 2002, PBP opened its first targeted grants funding round for Local Government. Money was distributed to 18 projects across 17 Local Governments, and each project helped improve biodiversity conservation through on-ground works and capacity building initiatives. This enabled some good Local Government projects to begin.

Between 2002 and 2009, eleven rounds of targeted grants were distributed via PBP and SWBP, with nearly \$1,190,000 devolved to Local Governments funding for 90 projects. Targeted grants supported on-ground reserve management, community engagement, and strategic reserve assessment, preparation of Local Biodiversity Strategies and strategies for private landholder incentives. Local Governments invested more than the value of this funding into the delivery of these projects via cash and in-kind contributions.

### TOOLS SUPPORTING STRATEGIC RESERVE MANAGEMENT



In 2003, PBP published the Natural Area Initial Assessment (NAIA) Templates. This was the first step in helping Local Governments to assess site-specific ecological values, biodiversity significance and threatening processes to natural areas, at a level that is consistent with

regional scientific standards. The Templates facilitate strategic prioritization of reserves for management, a process described in the Local Government Guidelines for Bushland Management. A NAIA database was also created to house and share the information collected by Local Governments via the Templates.

### MAPPING AND STATISTICAL DATA

Access to current spatial information on the distribution of biodiversity assets within a Local Government and in the wider bioregion is essential to effective strategic planning for improved environmental outcomes and sustainable growth. Maintenance and provision of consistent, high quality mapping of vegetation and other biodiversity attributes to Local Governments have proven to be one of the most utilised services provided by WALGA's biodiversity programs. These datasets benefited not only Local Governments, but the Program responded to numerous requests from university students, researchers and consultants. Regional ecological linkages have been the most frequently requested datasets.

### NAMN AND BIODIVERSITY PLANNERS FORUMS

The Natural Area Managers Network (NAMN) Forums and the Biodiversity Planners Forums were designed to provide networking opportunities for Local Government practitioners. They facilitate the exchange of information and experience with most up-to-date, best-practice approaches to reserve management and ways of integrating local biodiversity strategy objectives into land use planning. Numerous training sessions were held to demonstrate the use of Reference Site information, NAIA Templates and the on-line Environmental Planning Tool. These sessions benefited not only Local Governments but other professionals involved in natural area management and community volunteers.



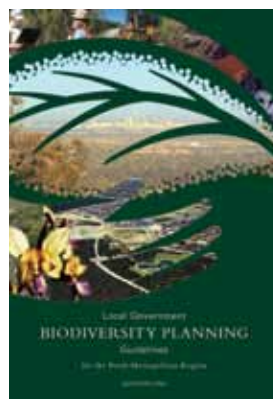




# LOCAL GOVERNMENT BIODIVERSITY PLANNING GUIDELINES

Following an extensive stakeholder engagement, the 'Local Government Biodiversity Planning Guidelines for the Perth Metropolitan Region' were published in 2004. These Guidelines were developed to help Local Governments with preparation of Local Biodiversity Strategies, and with their implementation via improved local land use planning provisions and other mechanisms. The Guidelines revolutionised how Local Governments managed their local reserves, and how Councils made decisions that affected natural areas, encouraging a transparent and consistent process.

Local Biodiversity Strategies provide for assessment of the ecological significance of local natural areas, their prioritisation for conservation, assessment of opportunities and constraints to their conservation, and identification of appropriate mechanisms to achieve



plans for sustainable development.

The local biodiversity conservation planning methodology described in the Guidelines has been endorsed by the Environmental Protection Authority and the Western Australian Planning Commission as a significant resource for Local Governments and proponents required to assess impacts of their development proposals.

It has also been endorsed by the Swan Catchment Council (now Perth Region NRM), South West Catchment Council and the Australian Government Department of Environment and Heritage.

agreed conservation outcomes. This approach facilitates consideration of biodiversity at the beginning of a decision making process. By having a Council endorsed Biodiversity Strategy; Local Governments are able to demonstrate how they would meet quantifiable biodiversity conservation objectives, as part of their



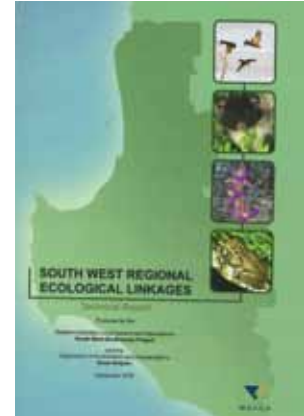
# SPREADING OUTWARDS – SOUTH WEST BIODIVERSITY PROJECT

The tools and advice being provided to Local Government through the PBP were successfully enabling Local Governments in the Perth Metropolitan Region to strategically consider biodiversity locally.

The results were speaking for themselves, and so the decision was made to extend the project further. In 2005, WALGA launched the South West Biodiversity Project (SWBP) to engage twelve Local Governments in the South West Natural Resource Management Region. This project used the same approach taken by PBP, and strategically planned for biodiversity conservation in the ecologically significant and diverse coastal areas of the South West that also experience development pressures.

In 2007, the SWBP published the *Local Government Biodiversity Planning Guidelines Addendum to the South West Biodiversity Project Area*. Keeping to the same methodology, the Addendum provides access to additional information on ecological attributes and planning principles specific to the South West project region.

One of the key initiatives of the SWBP was the South West Regional Ecological Linkages project, delivered



in partnership with the Department of Environment and Conservation. The project aimed to provide a tool for more effective recognition of ecological linkages in land use planning. The project published a technical report that provides a sound and replicable ecological framework for assessing impacts of land use changes on landscape connectivity. The publication of this technical report in October 2009 was accompanied with a release of an EPA Environmental Bulletin No 12 and a statement by the WAPC Chairman.





### PERTH REGION PLANT BIODIVERSITY PROJECT – REFERENCE SITES

A collaborative project between the PBP, the Department of Environment and the Department of Conservation and Land Management. The project provides a web-based, self-guided training resource on plant communities represented across the typical landscapes of the Perth Region. By studying the Reference Sites, users can gain better understanding of vegetation at their local bushland of interest or plan their next revegetation activity with appropriate species selection. Since its release, this on-line resource has been utilised by Conservation and Land Management students at TAFE.

### BIRDS SURVEYS

In partnership with Birds Australia (now known as BirdLife Australia), three rounds of bird surveys were completed between 2002 and 2006. These surveys focused on Local Government managed nature reserves. Information collected was used by participating Local Governments in the publication of numerous bird guides. The consistent and systematic method of data collection led to a significant bird data set for the Perth region which was used in studies examining the impacts of urbanisation on bird species diversity.

### LOCAL NATURE SPOT PROJECT



Working in partnership with five Local Governments in the Perth region, this pilot project tested the effectiveness of community-based social marketing techniques in addressing human behaviour which threatens the conservation values of local natural areas. Despite the short implementation timeframe, in several areas cooperative partnerships were formed between the Local Government and the local community.



## SUPPORTING LOCAL BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION IN REGIONAL CENTRES

With the growing population in Western Australia, several regional centres are experiencing pressure for development. While some are surrounded by remnant vegetation, others are within regions where vegetation was cleared extensively in the past. In any case, unique and diverse ecosystems occur within these regional centres and new vegetation mapping studies in 2010-2011 provided an opportunity to investigate the conservation priorities in these regions. The Perth Biodiversity Project and the Local Biodiversity Program were engaged to develop local natural area prioritisation frameworks for the Geraldton Flora and Vegetation Survey area (2010) and the Albany Regional Vegetation Survey area (2011).

*The Geraldton Conservation Report* was published by the Perth Biodiversity Project in 2012 and it identifies priority areas for biodiversity conservation through retention, protection and restoration. The study area covered by the Conservation Report includes 32,410ha within portions of the Shire of Chapman Valley and the City of Greater Geraldton. This report formed the basis for the Geraldton Local Biodiversity Strategy that was adopted by both Local Governments in 2013.

*The Albany Regional Vegetation Survey Study Phase 2 - Conservation Report* provides information to support the prioritisation of vegetation units and natural areas for conservation in the Albany region. Its primary purpose is to assist land use planners with the consideration of the Albany Regional Vegetation Survey (ARVS) data, and other relevant information, in strategic planning and statutory decision making on proposals affecting natural areas in the Albany region. It is due to be published in 2014.

## REGIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR LOCAL BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION PRIORITIES FOR PERTH AND PEEL

The Regional Framework builds on the local biodiversity conservation planning process being implemented through the PBP and the SWBP. It was designed to provide a frame of reference for prioritisation of local natural areas, or natural areas outside the Department of Parks and Wildlife managed lands and Bush Forever Areas, using a set of criteria that assess the ecological values, opportunities and constraints to their retention and protection. A new approach to the assessment of landscape connectivity was developed to facilitate studies on impacts of development on patterning of natural areas and levels of connectivity between them. This new connectivity modeling has since been applied to inform regional structure planning in the inner City (WAPC, 2012), Perth Central planning sub-region, regional green network planning for the South West Group of Local Government and local biodiversity priorities for the Albany Regional Vegetation Survey area, and draft local biodiversity strategies for the Shires of Augusta-Margaret River and Northam.

Development of the Regional Framework led to an update of the State dataset required to support the assessment of the representation status of ecosystems at the regional and the local scale, replacing the outdated 1998 data for the Swan Coastal Plain. Since 2010, PBP published new statistics on the retention and protection status of vegetation complexes in the Swan Coastal Plain and Jarrah Forest bioregions, enabling Local Governments to accurately prioritise natural areas for their protection and management.

The Regional Framework mapping is available through the Program's on-line mapping viewer (Environmental Planning Tool) which is being regularly updated.



# ONLINE ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING TOOL

In September 2009, PBP and SWBP launched the Environmental Planning Tool (EPT). This is an easy-to-use mapping viewer, designed to help Local Governments consider biodiversity and other environmental matters in land use and reserve management planning. The tool has been systematically updated since its introduction, and now contains over 300 data layers.



Local Government staff can use the EPT to complete desktop studies and test development scenarios. For example, a quick search of the EPT would help a user to identify the presence of a threatened ecological community, threatened species, wetlands or important Carnaby's Black Cockatoo habitat. Users could also assess the potential impact of a development proposal on regionally and locally significant native vegetation.

From the 2014-2015 financial year, the login version of the Environmental Planning Tool will continue operating in a fee-for-service arrangement and will be limited to subscribing users. Arrangement for access to the reduced content public mapping viewer will remain unchanged in the short term.

While data availability varies across Western Australia, the EPT is available to all mainland Local Governments and State agencies. A publicly available version excludes sensitive datasets but can be used to effectively communicate and engage local bushcare volunteers in local reserve management.







## HOW EFFECTIVE WAS THE PERTH BIODIVERSITY PROJECT?

In 2007, PBP surveyed the 30 Perth metropolitan Local Governments to examine how the sector's capacity to conserve biodiversity had changed since 2002. The survey also investigated the impact that PBP's key guiding document 'Local Government Biodiversity Planning Guidelines for the Perth Metropolitan Region' was having on the sector, and reviewed the effectiveness of the other PBP services and initiatives.

The survey findings proved that the PBP was having a positive impact on local biodiversity conservation. More money was being spent on on-ground local biodiversity conservation, and more Local Governments adopted strategic approach to biodiversity conservation.

In 2007, Local Governments were allocating 31 percent more to biodiversity conservation through their annual budgets, compared with 2002 (up from \$5.14 million to \$6.75 million). Additionally, external grant funding to Local Government for biodiversity conservation had increased 59 percent, from \$600,000 in 2002 to \$1.05 million in 2007.

When Local Governments were surveyed in 2002, results showed that while a number of Local Governments had greening plans in place, there was no protection of bushland through statutory planning or Local Biodiversity Plans and Strategies. When the 2007 survey was conducted, fourteen Local Governments were in the process of producing a Local Biodiversity Strategy (LBS), one Local Government was in the preliminary stages of developing an LBS, and a further two Local Governments were intending to prepare a local biodiversity strategy in the future.

# LEVELS OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT INVOLVEMENT IN BIODIVERSITY

CONSERVATION PLANNING THROUGH WALGA (2006-2014)

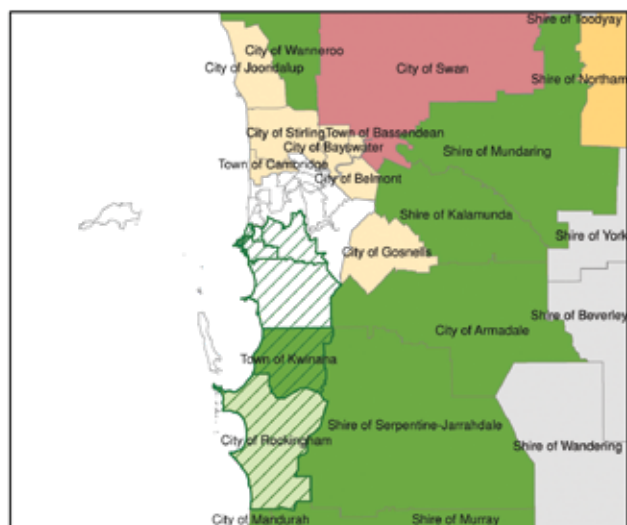
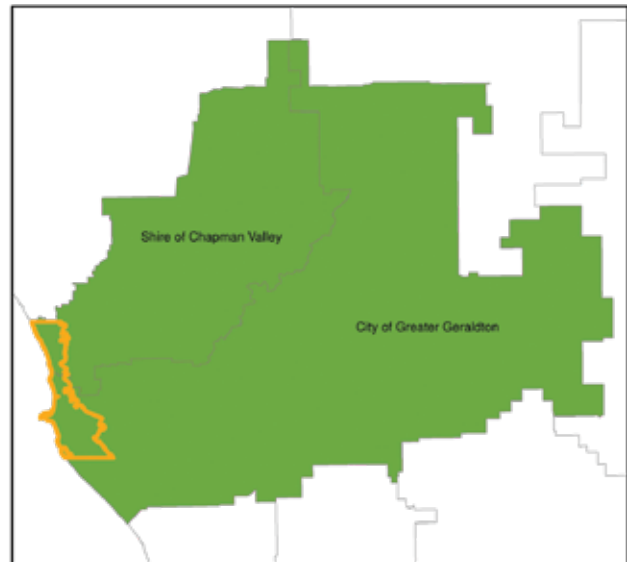


## LOCAL BIODIVERSITY PROGRAM

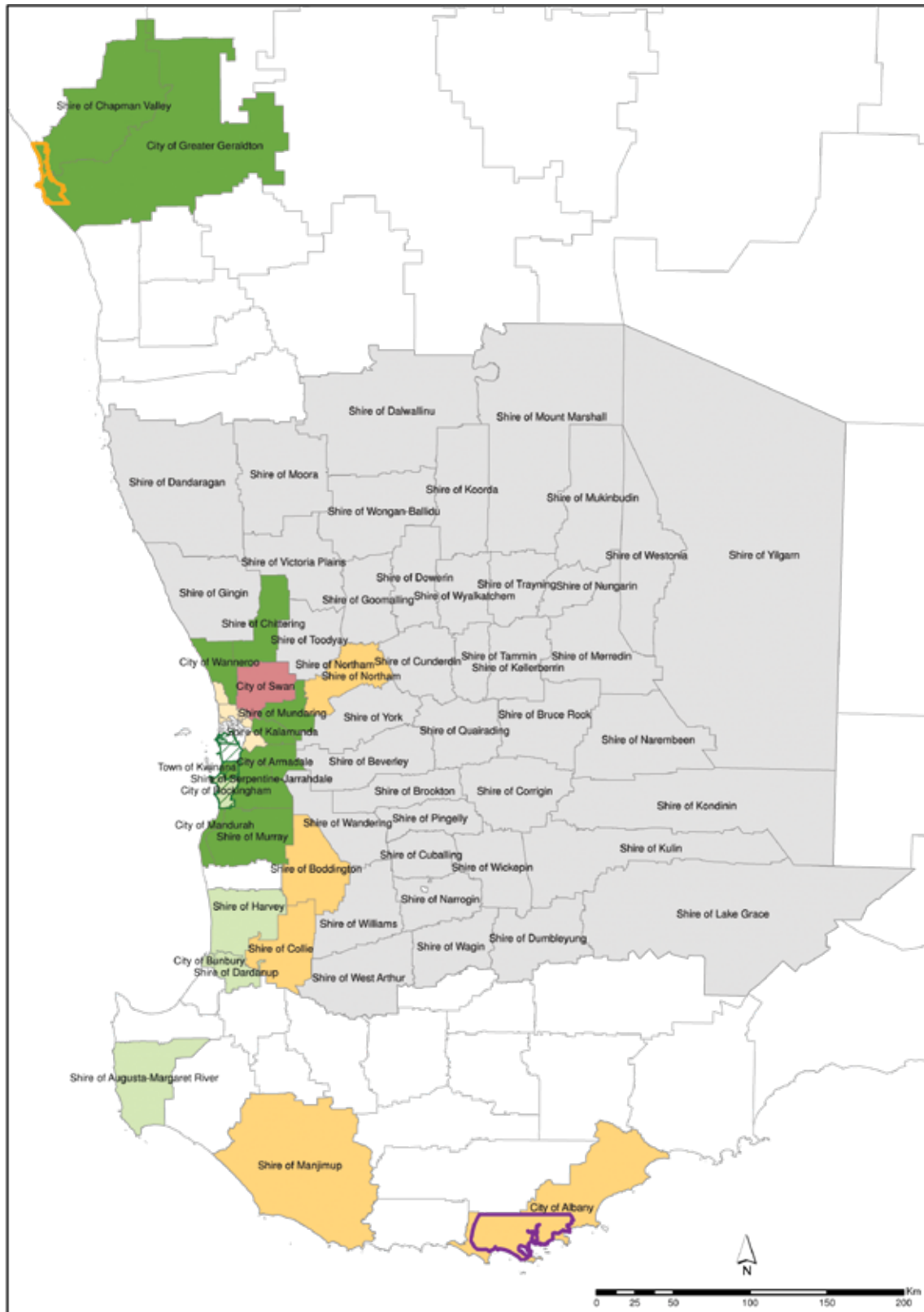
Councils Caring for their Natural Environment

### Legend

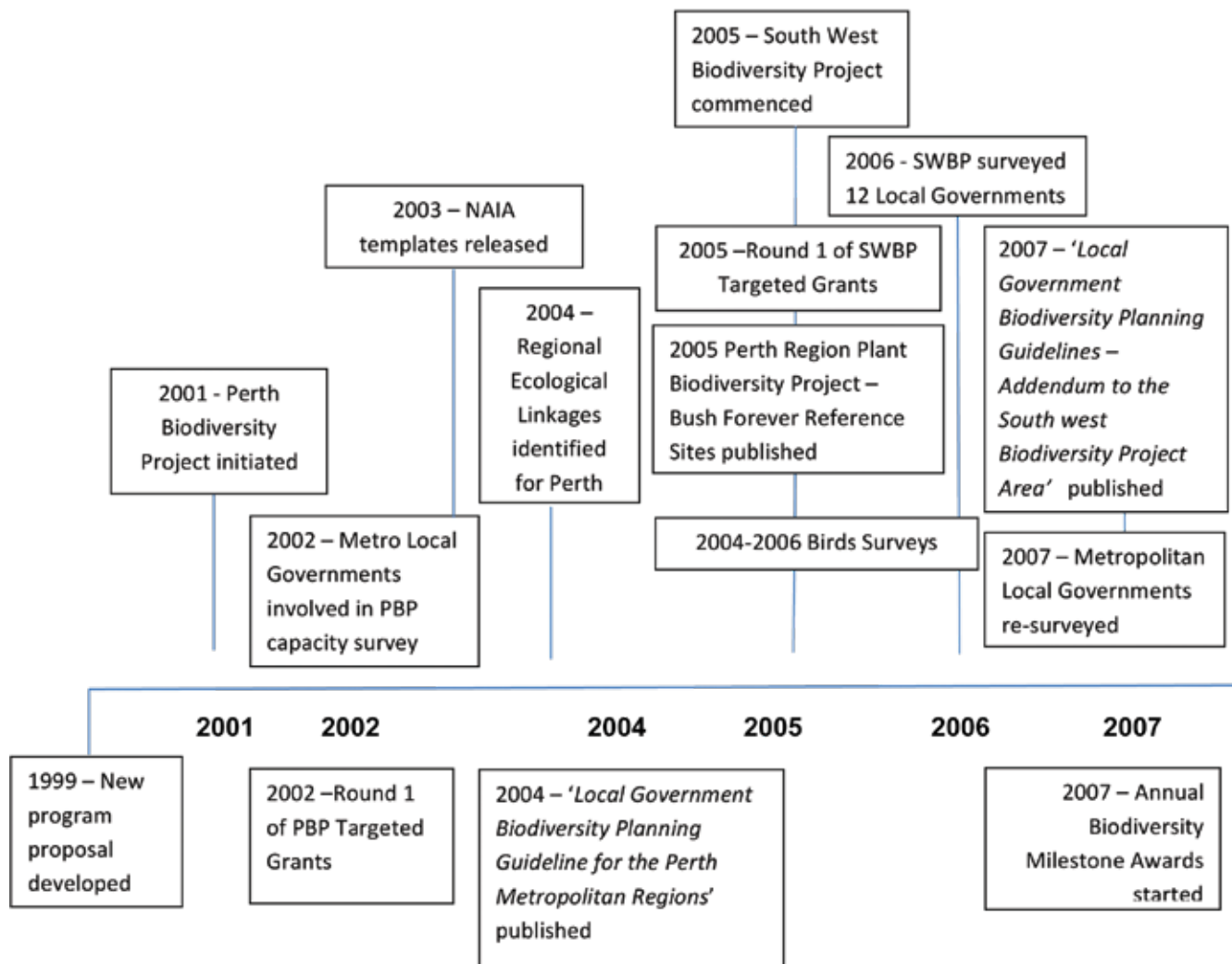
- Adopted LBS with quantitative targets
- Draft LBS awaiting public consultation or final adoption
- Adopted LBS or Action Plan without quantitative target
- Started or participate in the local biodiversity conservation planning process
- Updating an adopted LBS
- Greenways planning
- Natural area prioritisation considered in strategic land use planning
- Geraldton Regional Vegetation Study Boundary
- Albany Regional Vegetation Study Boundary







# SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES

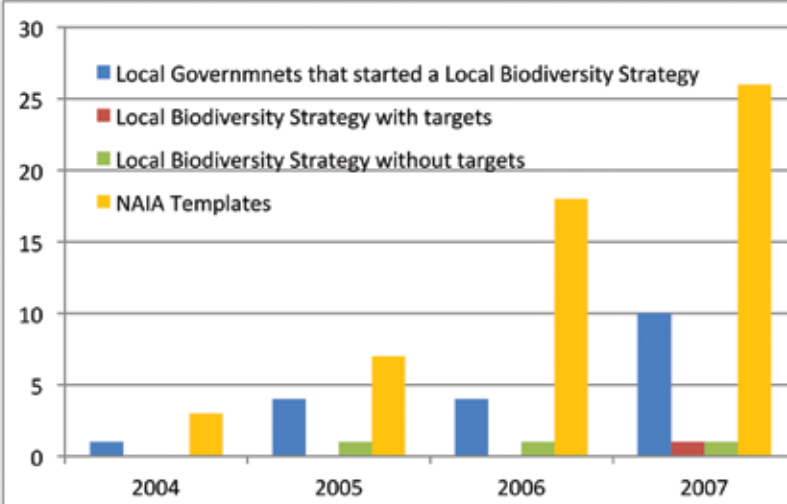


Number of Local Governments that assessed reserves using NAIA Templates, commenced preparation of and endorsed Local Biodiversity Strategies.

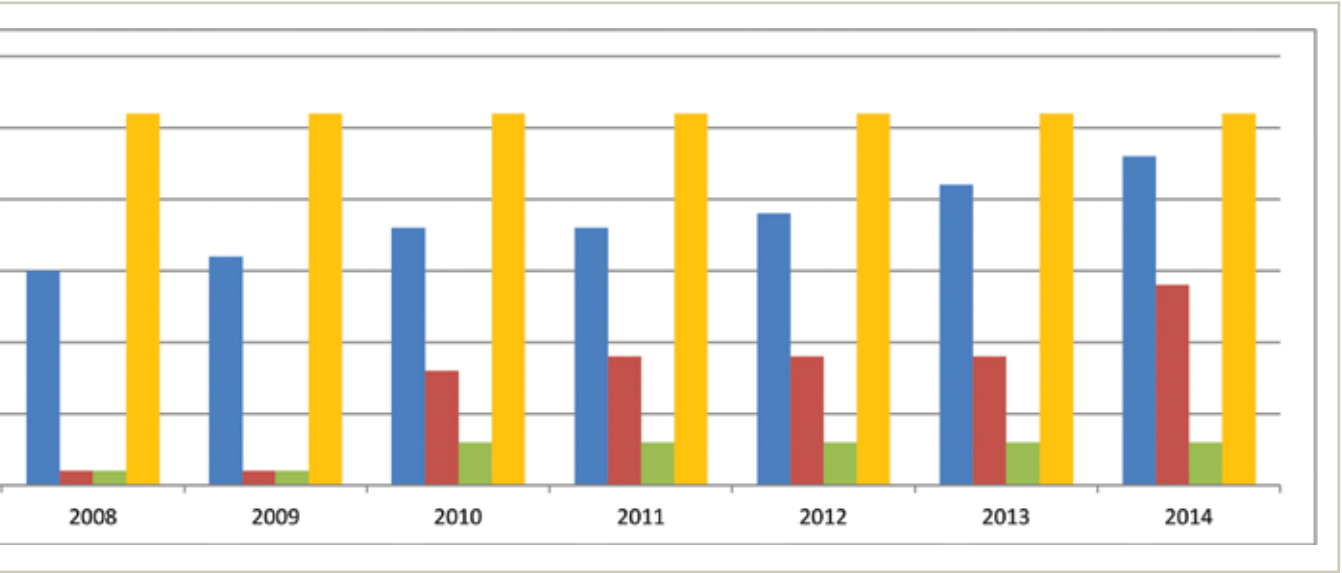
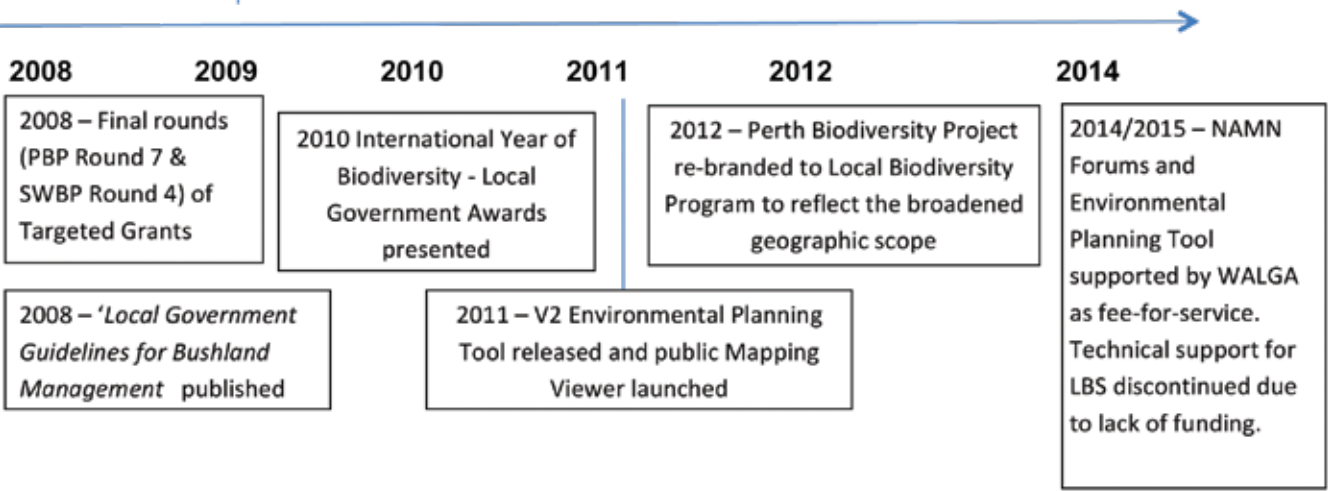
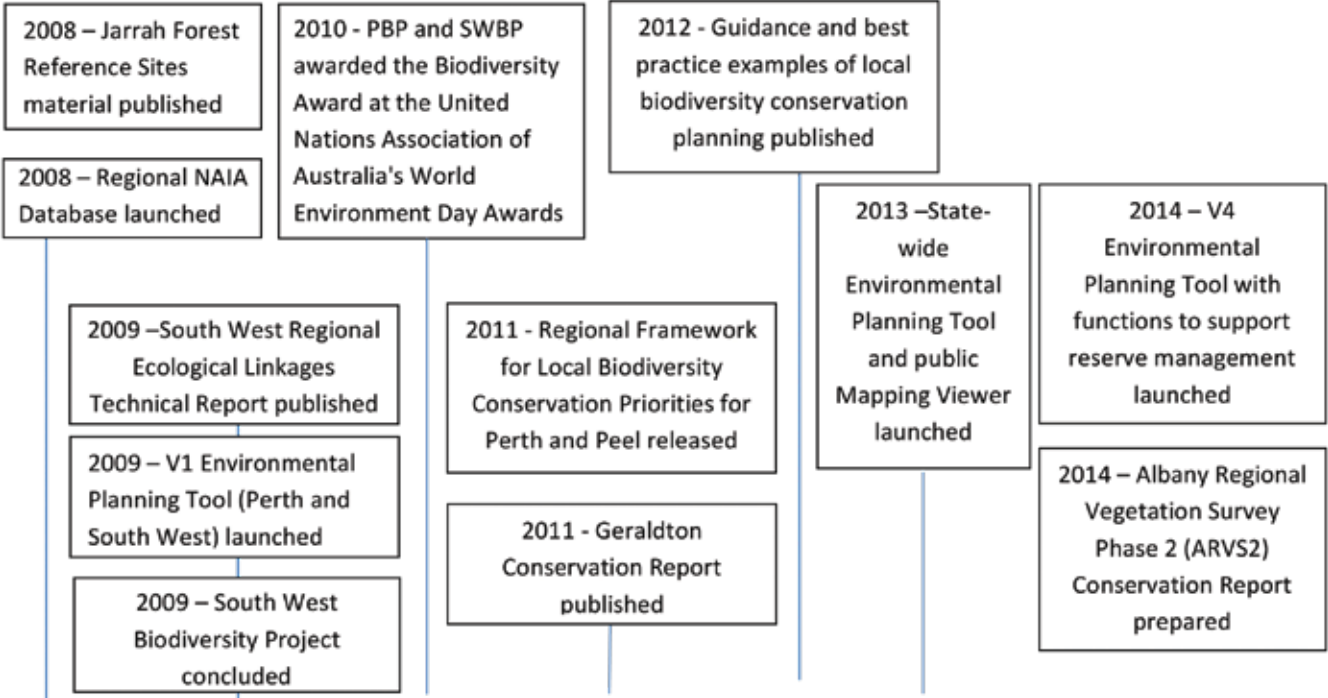
Notes to the graph: NAIA templates were used primarily by Local Governments with at least 10 hectares of natural areas in reserves.

90% of outer metropolitan Local Governments adopted a Local Biodiversity Strategy (LBS).

Difference between the number of Local Governments commencing and those with an endorsed LBS is due to the delays caused by SWBP ceasing in 2009. Several new Local Governments commenced development of LBS in 2013-2014. Completion of the LBS takes about 13-18 months.







# RECOGNISING EXCELLENCE

In 2006, PBP started its Biodiversity Milestone Awards program. Local Governments were eligible to apply if they committed to prepare a Local Biodiversity Strategy, in accordance with the 'Local Government Biodiversity Planning Guidelines'. These prestigious awards are presented annually at WALGA's Local Government Convention, whereby leading Local Governments are recognised in front of their peers.

To celebrate the International Year of Biodiversity in 2010, special awards were created to acknowledge Local Government efforts in best practice bushland management and community engagement. These awards focused on activities not captured by the Biodiversity Milestone Awards, yet are being provided by many Local Governments to their communities. The winner of the *Excellence in Local Biodiversity Management* award was the City of Belmont for progressive revegetation of local natural areas. *The Excellence in Community Engagement to Support Local Biodiversity Conservation* award was shared by the Cities of Armadale and Cockburn, demonstrating long-term commitment and continuous improvement to their programs encouraging biodiversity conservation on private land. The Shire of Serpentine-Jarrahdale received a Special commendation in recognition of their new stewardship program *Healthy Habitats*.

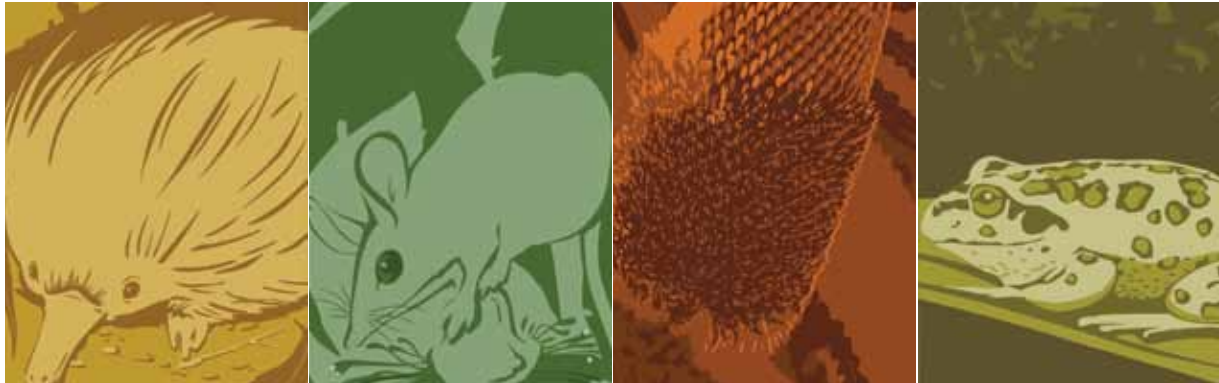




# RECIPIENTS OF BIODIVERSITY MILESTONE AWARDS

2006-2014

Note: The wording of the Milestone Awards shows the new updated version, but in brackets below the corresponding Milestone numbers show the link to the 2004 draft milestone program.



## BIODIVERSITY MILESTONE AWARDS PRESENTED FOR:

Scoping, training and resource identification to prepare a Local Biodiversity Strategy (Milestone 1)	City of Armadale, Shire of Augusta-Margaret River, Town of Bassendean, City of Bayswater, City of Belmont, City of Bunbury, Shire of Chapman Valley, Shire of Chittering, Shire of Collie, Shire of Dardanup, City of Greater Geraldton, Shire of Harvey, Shire of Kalamunda, Town of Kwinana, City of Mandurah, Shire of Manjimup, Shire of Mundaring, Shire of Murray, Shire of Northam, City of Rockingham, Shire of Serpentine-Jarrahdale, City of Wanneroo
Scoping and resource identification to review and update a Local Biodiversity Strategy	<i>Review &amp; update:</i> City of Swan
Preparing and endorsing for public consultation a Draft Local Biodiversity Strategy/Discussion Paper (Milestone 2)	City of Armadale, Town of Bassendean, City of Bayswater, City of Belmont, Shire of Chapman Valley, Shire of Chittering, City of Greater Geraldton, Shire of Kalamunda, Town of Kwinana, City of Mandurah, Shire of Mundaring, Shire of Murray, Shire of Serpentine-Jarrahdale, City of Wanneroo
Preparing and adopting a final Local Biodiversity Strategy including an Action Plan (Milestone 2)	Shire of Kalamunda, Shire of Mundaring, City of Armadale, Shire of Chittering, Town of Bassendean, City of Belmont, City of Bayswater, City of Wanneroo, City of Mandurah, Shire of Murray, City of Greater Geraldton, Shire of Chapman Valley, Shire of Serpentine-Jarrahdale
Preparing and adopting a Local Planning Policy for Biodiversity Conservation (Milestone 3)	Shire of Serpentine-Jarrahdale, City of Wanneroo
Preparing and adopting an Incentives Strategy for Private Land Conservation (Milestone 4)	Shire of Busselton, Shire of Mundaring, Shire of Serpentine-Jarrahdale
Preparing and adopting an action plan for the protection and management of Local Government lands and unallocated Crown land (Milestone 5)	Shire of Augusta-Margaret River, City of Bunbury, Shire of Busselton, Shire of Harvey, City of Joondalup, Town of Kwinana, Town of Cambridge
Preparing and releasing for public comment a Local Planning Strategy that provides for biodiversity conservation And/or Preparing and releasing for public comment Local Planning Scheme	Shire of Kalamunda, Shire of Mundaring (2), City of Wanneroo, Shire of Chittering
Releasing Annual/Biannual Report on progress with implementation of the Local Biodiversity Strategy (Milestone 7)	Shire of Serpentine-Jarrahdale



# PROGRAM RECOGNITION



The first recognition for the Perth Biodiversity Project's efforts came in 2004 when the Project was announced a category winner at the National Local Government Awards held in Melbourne.

The Integrating Biodiversity Conservation into Planning and Management award category recognized high-level Council commitment to conserving biodiversity through strategic planning and management processes.

In 2010, PBP and SWBP were awarded the Biodiversity Award at the United Nations Association of Australia's World Environment Day Awards held in Melbourne. The Award

acknowledged the continuous support provided by PBP and SWBP to Local Governments in their effort to conserve local biodiversity in the internationally recognised hotspot of the Southwest of Western Australia.



## PRESENTATIONS AT NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES:

### *2ND National Local Government Environmental Conference*

November 2010 Gold Coast, Queensland

### *Perth Urban Ecology Symposium*

August 2010 Bibra Lake, Western Australia

### *Understanding Landscape Conference*

March 2011 University of Western Australia, Perth

### *Perth's Bush Forever Report Card Conference*

December 2012 Murdoch University Western Australia

### *Carnaby's Black Cockatoos Symposium*

February 2013 Murdoch University Western Australia

### *2013 International BiodiverCities Conference*

September 2013 Joondalup Resort, Perth, Western Australia

### *Integrating Biodiversity Outcomes with Streamlined Planning Conference*

November 2013 Sydney, New South Wales

### *2014 Wetlands Conference*

January 2014 Bibra Lake, Western Australia

### *Tipping Point 2014 State NRM Conference*

May 2014 Busselton, Western Australia



# REFLECTIONS FROM SUPPORTERS

## DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING

As a direct and in-kind supporter of WALGA's biodiversity initiatives, the Department of Planning sees the benefits of providing local governments with the assistance to deal with biodiversity issues in their local planning strategies and schemes, and the program has helped to achieve a consistent approach to the issue, and to address the broad intent expressed in WAPC's State Planning Policy 2.

From a staff perspective, it has been helpful having officer/s 'embedded' in the Department to provide practical guidance in the assessment of planning proposals. The program has built capacity in the Department in regard to environmental issues, and has fostered closer working arrangements with environmental agencies.

## DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND WILDLIFE

The Biodiversity Program undertaken by WALGA and its representative Local Government Authorities across the South West, with support and in collaboration with the Western Australian Government's State NRM, Department of Planning and the Department of Parks and Wildlife has been a fantastic partnership that has delivered significant outputs to assist with the conservation of biodiversity and management of natural resources.

The Science & Conservation Division, Department of Parks and Wildlife have been a strong supporter and contributor to this collaboration and acknowledges WALGA for the achievements, accolades and enduring value the Biodiversity Program has delivered over the past 13 years. The ability of WALGA to successfully integrate biodiversity conservation considerations into the land use planning process and deliver tools, guidelines and support initiatives to manage land with biodiversity outcomes in mind has been an overwhelming success and will contribute to the sustainable development of Western Australia for years to come.

THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATION WISHES TO ACKNOWLEDGE ALL THE PROJECT PARTNERS FOR THE PAST 13 YEARS:





## URBAN BUSHLAND COUNCIL

The Perth Biodiversity Project is an outstanding highlight in the management of biodiversity by Local Government in the Perth region. The harmonious collaboration of suitably experienced expert officers and their agencies at State and Local Government levels together with community groups has been most welcome. Indeed it is a role model for others.

Some key reasons for its success and milestones of lasting significance are:

- Production and implementation of excellent comprehensive Biodiversity Planning Guidelines for Local Government. This manual and template is of world class.
- Training workshops and technical guidance for Local Government at each stage of the local biodiversity conservation planning process leading to the adoption of 17 Local Biodiversity Strategies.
- Grant programs to Local Authorities for holistic initiatives.
- Consistent ongoing guidance and professional support to Local Government.
- Consistent management and leadership by WALGA staff.
- Development of further initiatives such as the South West Biodiversity Project.
- Regular educational meetings and seminars for Environmental Officers from Local Government.

We have rich and rare biodiversity in the south west of Western Australia, where most of us live. But it is extremely complex and vulnerable to multiple disturbances and degradation. We are all still learning and programs such as this are essential to enable us as a community to meet our duty of care to nature in our own backyard of the Perth region.

## OFFICE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AUTHORITY

The Environmental Protection Authority and the Office of the Environmental Protection Authority have supported WALGA's Biodiversity Program since its inception, providing technical and policy advice, as well as endorsement of the outcomes.

During this collaboration, the project was always inventive, comprehensive and encouraged communication across all levels of government. The program identified and addressed

knowledge gaps for strategic land use planning and provided systematic evidence to identify and protect significant natural areas. The Biodiversity Program has

produced high quality local and regional biodiversity information that has been used to inform the EPA's regional policies and strategic decision-making process.



THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT  
ASSOCIATION WISHES TO ACKNOWLEDGE AND  
THANK FOR THE SUPPORT PROVIDED BY LOCAL  
GOVERNMENTS THROUGH ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS:

Armadale (PBP)  
Augusta-Margaret River  
(SWBP)  
Bassendean (PBP)  
Bayswater (PBP)  
Belmont (PBP)  
Bridgetown-Greenbushes  
(SWBP)  
Bunbury (SWBP)  
Busselton (SWBP)  
Cambridge (PBP)  
Canning (PBP)  
Chittering (PBP)  
Claremont (PBP)  
Cockburn (PBP)

Cottesloe (PBP)  
Dardanup (SWBP)  
Donnybrook-Balingup (SWBP)  
East Fremantle (PBP)  
Fremantle (PBP)  
Gosnells (PBP)  
Harvey (SWBP)  
Joondalup (PBP)  
Kalamunda (PBP)  
Kwinana (PBP)  
Mandurah (SWBP, PBP)  
Manjimup (SWBP)  
Melville (PBP)  
Mundaring (PBP)  
Murray (SWBP, PBP)

Nedlands (PBP)  
Peppermint Grove (PBP)  
Perth (PBP)  
Rockingham (PBP)  
Serpentine-Jarrahdale (PBP,  
SWBP)  
South Perth (PBP)  
Stirling (PBP)  
Subiaco (PBP)  
Swan (PBP)  
Victoria Park (PBP)  
Vincent (PBP)  
Wanneroo (PBP)  
Waroon (SWBP)







# A WORD FROM LOCAL GOVERNMENT

## ABSTRACTS FROM THE 'CELEBRATING THE LEGACY OF LOCAL ACTION FOR BIODIVERSITY' SURVEY, JULY 2014

### CITY OF BELMONT

The Biodiversity Program has provided a consistent basis for all local governments to develop biodiversity policies/ plans etc. through provision of guidelines and a set milestone process. This has been valuable as otherwise each Local Government may have had to develop their own process and determine their own guidelines.

Biodiversity Program guidelines have enabled many Local Governments to implement best practice natural resource management, which may otherwise have not been achieved.

### CITY OF MANDURAH

An excellent program that helped highlight local biodiversity in both planning and on ground works. Sad to see it not supported.

### CITY OF GOSNELLS

The most valuable aspect of our local government's association with WALGA's Biodiversity Program was the enhanced sophistication and sound science associated with natural areas management and planning.

WALGA's Biodiversity Program has helped to shape our local government's policy and direction on biodiversity planning and management via provision of frameworks and data for measurement, planning and management of natural areas; provision of Biodiversity Planning Tool.

### CITY OF ARMADALE

The most valuable aspect of our local government's association with WALGA's Biodiversity Program has been WALGA's impetus for the creation of the City of Armadale Local Biodiversity Strategy.

WALGA's NAMN forums have been invaluable in gaining insight into best practice environmental management.

Disclaimer: Views expressed here should not be considered as representative of the views of a Council but are expressions of individual staff.



## SHIRE OF MUNDARING

I have worked with the dynamic and passionate environmental staff at WALGA for a long time. They always showed drive and commitment to assisting the Shire of Mundaring to fulfil our outcomes for biodiversity protection both land vested with the Shire and private land conservation.

The most valuable aspect of our local government's association with WALGA's Biodiversity Program has been the constant and efficient support in all related works and helping provide a legitimate industry standard and guidelines to support environmental management in the City.

Without WALGA's Biodiversity Program assistance and targeted grants, information and expertise we would not have the protection of local natural area in our shire as we do today. We now have very strong conservation, protection and retention measures of local natural areas through our Local Planning Scheme 4.

We value the Program's consistent approach to biodiversity conservation across the metro and outer metro area, the accessibility of data relating to biodiversity and data sets and the additional mapping and technical advice and the funding which partnered the success of the Shire's projects.

We have the holy grail now. Our Local Biodiversity Strategy is imbedded into our Scheme text. This was always the outcome for myself as Environmental Coordinator at the Shire and was only achievable because of the assistance by Renata and her team as well as previous staff at WALGA.

The access to NAMN has been invaluable over the years, where networking with your colleague in another local

government has stopped the reinventing of wheels, wastage of ratepayers funds by learning from each other on natural area management.

I am saddened that there is not continued funding for biodiversity protection across Perth and the south west in this format. The Shire of Mundaring has been appreciative of all the assistance over the years.

## CITY OF KWINANA

WALGA's biodiversity program is/was a very useful source of information, support and advice. I expect that Local Government officers interested in protecting and managing Life of Earth will feel the lack of this program in the future.

For many years this program has been the strength in the arm of those seeking to protect and manage the incalculably precious remnants of pre-European biological diversity. The need to better protect and manage these areas remains - so why weaken effort to pass on some of these incredibly valuable areas to every future generation? How rare a 'perpetuity' is in the world of finance! – yet here we have assets which, unless destroyed by greed or ignorance, will pay their dividends to humanity forever into the future. These assets are worth saving and effort to protect them is worthwhile.

To all associated with this program over the years - I absolutely loved your work!

You all should feel immense joy in your achievements. I hope you can feel some peace from the understanding that it is very good that this program ever existed in the first place and that its legacy will surely endure.

I heartily thank you all.





## WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

The local biodiversity conservation planning process being delivered through WALGA's biodiversity programs have demonstrated:

- A consistent, transparent and rigorous approach to local biodiversity planning while addressing locally relevant issues and opportunities;
- The effectiveness of local biodiversity conservation planning as a mechanism for increased retention and protection of local natural areas through improved local land use planning provisions;
- That best outcomes for the environment but also for the development approval process can be achieved when adequate provisions for biodiversity are considered at all levels of land use planning, from strategic to subdivision and property development;
- Increased transparency on how biodiversity will be considered by Local Government - what 'significant' means locally and where these 'significant' areas are;
- That access to current data providing the regional and local context is critical to gaining trust in the prioritisation conservation actions;
- That local biodiversity strategies are a valid consideration in land use planning as noted by the Western Australian Planning Commission and the State Administrative Tribunal;
- Strategic local biodiversity planning facilitates community support and engagement in the implementation of conservation objectives and in biodiversity management on public and private lands;
- Improved ability to access external funding for on-ground management of biodiversity in local reserves and on private land;
- If on-going technical support is not provided, it may prevent Local Governments from developing local biodiversity strategies and integrating provisions into land use planning.



# CHALLENGES REMAINING

While there has been the general recognition and increasing support for the need to retain and protect biodiversity locally, there are still a number of institutional issues that present significant challenges to Local Governments as they implement Local Biodiversity Strategies:

- Limited ability to protect natural areas if they do not contain features with legislative protection.
- Lack of clarity or guidance on criteria for determining the effectiveness of ecological linkages and statutory protection for ecological linkages.
- Outside the Metropolitan Region Scheme area, limited opportunities exist to reserve lands for conservation.
- Necessary support for the use of public open space to protect regionally and locally significant natural areas in new urban subdivisions.
- Impacts of rural living subdivisions and associated clearing, including Fire Risk Management measures on the ability to retain biodiversity in rural and peri-urban landscapes.
- Support to Local Government is dependent on unreliable grant funding.
- Implementation of local actions often depends on external grant funding. With recent limited grant programs, opportunities to access external funding have been significantly reduced for Local Government.

The Association will continue to lobby State Government and other key stakeholders to address these institutional challenges.



Impacts of land use change from Rural Smallholdings to Rural Residential on vegetation retention in peri-urban landscapes.



# CLOSE OF AN ERA

“ WALGA is incredibly proud of everything achieved by the dedicated team throughout the life of the Biodiversity Program. ”



As with all grant funded projects, the long term future of PBP and SWBP was never sure. Lack of funding in 2009 caused SWBP to cease its activities. However, PBP was able to continue to support some of the Local Governments previously serviced SWBP.

As many times over the past 13 years, in 2012 again the future of PBP was looking uncertain, but at the last minute funding became available through the State NRM Program. With this new funding source, came expansion of the delivery area. PBP was rebranded to the Local Biodiversity Program (LBP), and the geographic area covered by the Program was expanded to cover the entire state of Western Australia.

Now as the 2012-2014 funding draws to close, there are no new funding opportunities for LBP at this time. Without this external funding source, WALGA is unable to provide all the services it has been delivering to Local Governments. Some of the tools and services will be provided for a fee, but the technical advice to develop Local Biodiversity Strategies cannot be delivered at this point in time. When funding again becomes available, WALGA hopes to reinvigorate LBP, and begin again delivering the full suite of biodiversity services to Local Government.

WALGA is incredibly proud of everything achieved by the dedicated team throughout the life of the Biodiversity Program. Thank you to everyone who has been part of the Program - for your expert knowledge, for your tireless effort, and for the positive difference you have made for our special Western Australian biodiversity.

*We only part to meet again ~ John Gay*

**Visit the WALGA website to access publications and on-line resources:**

Local Biodiversity Program and Perth Biodiversity Project resources: <http://lbp.walga.asn.au/>

South West Biodiversity Project resources:

<http://www.walga.asn.au/AboutWALGA/Policy/SouthWestBiodiversityProject.aspx>





# WALGA'S BIODIVERSITY PROGRAM'S STAFF

## PERTH BIODIVERSITY PROJECT/LBP

## SOUTH WEST BIODIVERSITY PROJECT

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Western Australian Local Government Association would like to thank all partners and supporters for their valuable contribution and support in the preparation of this publication.

*Photographs sourced from WALGA and Project libraries.*

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**LOCAL  
BIODIVERSITY  
PROGRAM**

Councils Caring for their Natural Environment

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