

WALGA Event: Management of Roadside Vegetation



Date: Friday, 3 May 2019
Time: 10:00am – 3:15pm (Registration from 9:30am)
Venue: Northam Recreation Centre, Hospitality Room, 44 Peel Terrace Northam
Cost: \$88.00 (Incl GST)

PROGRAM

- 10:00am** **Welcome and introduction**
Melanie Davies, Biodiversity and Sustainability Project Officer, WALGA
- 10:05am** **Local road networks – challenges and opportunities for Local Government**
Ian Duncan, Executive Manager Infrastructure, WALGA
- 10:15am** **Regulation of roadside clearing**
Mathew Gannaway, Manager, Native Vegetation Regulation, DWER
- 10:40am** **Managing roadside vegetation for competing values in Southern Western Australia**
Greg Keighery, former Senior Principal Research Scientist, DBCA
- 11:05am** **Morning Tea**
- 11:25am** **Management and maintenance of road reserves in the Shire of Jerramungup**
Murray Flett, Manager of Works and Steve Elson, Environment Officer; Shire of Jerramungup
- 11:55am** **Risk and liability in roadside management**
Paul McBride, Senior Risk Consultant – Legal, Local Government Insurance Scheme
- 12.20pm** **Assessing the conservation value of roadside vegetation**
Renata Zelinova, EPT Business Development Officer, WALGA
- 12:40pm** **Panel question and answer session**
- 1:00pm** **Lunch**
- 1:40pm** **Best practice stewardship of roadside vegetation**
Dr Ken Atkins, Chair, Roadside Conservation Committee
- 2:10pm** **Road verges – a delight and dilemma**
Greg Warburton, Reserves Management Officer, Shire of Toodyay
- 2:40pm** **Identifying the Eucalypt Woodlands of the Western Australian Wheatbelt**
Rowan Hegglun, Program Manager Healthy Environments, Wheatbelt NRM
- 3:15pm** **Close of Event**

PRESENTATION OVERVIEW



Ian Duncan, Executive Manager Infrastructure, WA Local Government Association (WALGA), will discuss how roads dominate the asset portfolio of most Local Governments in Western Australia, with \$904 million invested by the sector on the local road network in 2016/17.

Ian will discuss external drivers that impact changes to the road network, and the challenges they may present for Local Governments in the maintenance and renewal of existing roads, or construction of new roads. Ian will also discuss WALGA's advocacy work to ensure that the road network is safe and efficient, and how roadside vegetation is considered as part of road asset management. Initiatives include the recent establishment of a Roadside Clearing Regulations Working Group, to work with the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation on roadside clearing regulation and issues.

Mathew Gannaway, Manager, Native Vegetation Regulation, Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER), will discuss the approvals process for clearing of native vegetation in road reserves as per the provisions of the *Environmental Protection (Clearing of Native Vegetation) Regulations 2004*, exemptions that may apply, and timelines for a decision and appeals. Mathew will discuss what information is required to be submitted in support of a clearing permit application. The Department is also working with WALGA and Main Roads WA to facilitate a more strategic approach to clearing requirements. Mathew will outline the benefits of a strategic approach to assessments of clearing permit applications.

Greg Keighery, former Senior Principal Research Scientist, Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA), will discuss how Western Australia is a vast and highly biodiverse state, where the highly cleared road verges in the southern area provide a variety of uses, often seen as conflicting. They are corridors for the movement of wildlife between reserves and in some areas the only remaining habitat for native plants and animals. Greg will discuss how fine-scale biodiversity differences due to a high rate of species turnover are common along roadsides, and the implications of continued incremental losses. Importantly, roadside vegetation also gives an area its landscape character and 'sense of place' for both tourists and local communities. Greg will also outline how roadsides are the places readily seen by tourists and are a mirror to our treatment of the land and our sense of being a West Australian.

Murray Flett, Manager of Works, and Steve Elson, Environment Officer, Shire of Jerramungup will focus on past and present work practices in the Shire's road reserves. They will outline the processes involved in the implementation of current work methodologies to minimise environmental impacts and maintain the ecological integrity of the road reserves and associated ecosystems. Improvements include the adoption of a Roadside Vegetation Policy, improved roadside vegetation mapping, and qualification of works crews in Certificate II in Conservation and Land Management. Murray and Steve will also explain that while providing safe roads is a priority, the Shire's approach to road design and maintenance takes into account the local context of each road and environmental values present.

Renata Zelinova, EPT Business Development Officer, WA Local Government Association (WALGA), will demonstrate ways to use WALGA's Environmental Planning Tool (EPT) in planning and delivery of road projects. The EPT allows for identification of matters subject to environmental regulations within local road reserves or defined road sections (e.g. by SLK numbers). Through its unique reporting functions and tools, the EPT can help increase efficiency in meeting regulatory requirements and facilitate strategic approaches to roadworks planning.



Paul McBride, Senior Risk Consultant – Legal, Local Government Insurance Scheme (LGIS), will discuss how Local Government and road agencies have a duty of care to provide for safe travel, and are guided by recommendations from Austroads that cover the design, construction and maintenance of the road network in Australia.

In instances where the recommended guidelines are difficult or unable to be achieved, a risk-based approach may be applied, which determines the engineering and safety treatments in areas of inherently higher risk. This approach can ensure safety is a priority but also accommodate the conservation of vegetation in areas shown to have low risk, or where the risk has been suitably mitigated by management actions. Paul will outline the liability context in WA in respect to roads, the preferred risk management approach, and highlight the reasonable steps local governments need to consider to reduce the risk of negligence claims against the sector. Paul will provide some case studies that illustrate how Local Governments have applied this approach in practice.

Dr Ken Atkins, Chair, Roadside Conservation Committee (RCC), will provide an overview of key aspects of guidance documents that are being prepared by the Roadside Conservation Committee. The “Planning to enhance roadsides guide” encourages a stocktake of conservation value of roadsides and incorporation of this information into road planning and management. The “Biodiversity context for road design and safety guide” highlights the unique biodiversity values of the vegetation of south-west WA, and ways to help arrest adverse trends affecting natural values. The “Pruning and trimming guide” recommends suitable equipment and methods for maintenance works, and encourages a works program according to the vegetation requirements, rather than adoption of a blanket approach. Ken will also outline how the protection of vegetation may be better considered along with safety objectives the Austroads safety guidelines.

Greg Warburton, Reserves Management Officer, Shire of Toodyay, will discuss how road verge management in the Shire of Toodyay has historically involved both the community and Shire. Greg will discuss the importance of the Shire’s road verges for conservation and local tourism, given the presence of many Declared Flora Roads. Greg will outline the Shire’s approach to road upgrades and maintenance works, including a strong focus on stakeholder engagement with Main Roads and Community Reference Groups. The Shire undertakes training and awareness raising on the value of roadside vegetation for works crew and contractors, and has also trialled new maintenance practices to mitigate the risk of bushfire and manage problem woody weed species. Greg will address the perceived problems associated with road verge management, and outline the Shire’s successes and future challenges.

Rowan Hegglin, Program Manager Healthy Environments, Wheatbelt NRM, will discuss how the Eucalypt Woodlands of the West Australian Wheatbelt were recently listed as a Threatened Ecological Community (TEC) under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. The intent of the listing is to secure remaining remnants of high quality eucalypt woodlands throughout the Wheatbelt. Patches of the community in roadside verges are quite possibly some of the best representations of this threatened ecological community that exist, as they are less impacted by spray drift and have their mycorrhizal complexity (diversity of soil fungi) still intact. Road verge populations also have some of their own specific identification criteria that are used to determine if the vegetation meets the requirements to be considered part of the TEC. However, definitive assessments of whether patches of the community meet the definition of the TEC are challenging, providing a lack of clarity for decision makers. Rowan will discuss how Wheatbelt NRM have developed a survey methodology and delivery tool to simplifying vegetation surveys of the Eucalypt Woodlands TEC, allow for wider community participation, and provide mapping information to inform roadside management.