



A Co-operative venture of the municipalities of:
Cockburn, East Fremantle, Fremantle, Kwinana, Melville & Rockingham

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Contact: Mick McCarthy (08) 9364 0631

Reference: Letter to EPBC Act Strategic Assessment SRG Chair

Mr Jim Limerick
Chair Stakeholder Reference Group
EPBC Act Strategic Assessment of Perth and Peel Regions
c/- Department of Premier and Cabinet
Level 5, Dumas House
2 Havelock Street
WEST PERTH WA 6005

Dear Jim

EPBC ACT STRATEGIC ASSESSMENT OF PERTH AND PEEL REGIONS

The South West Group provides this submission for consideration by the EPBC Act Strategic Assessment Stakeholder Reference Group (SRG) and subsequently by the State Government Steering Committee, chaired by the Director General of the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

South West Group Overview

The South West Group, formed in November 1983, is a Voluntary Regional Organisation of Councils (VROC). It comprises the Cities of Cockburn, Fremantle, Kwinana, Melville, Rockingham and the Town of East Fremantle. The South West Group is managed by a Board consisting of the Mayors and CEOs of its member local government authorities.

The South West Group seeks to work with these six local governments and through cooperation with industry, community and the other spheres of government to capture a wide range of opportunities to enhance economic growth as well as supporting a diversity of quality lifestyles whilst servicing and sustaining cohesive, productive communities in an enviable environmental setting.

EPBC Act Strategic Assessment of Perth and Peel Regions

The Federal Government Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (SEWPaC), in partnership with the WA State Government, are currently undertaking an EPBC Act Strategic Assessment of the Perth and Peel Regions. This is expected to be completed by the third quarter of 2013. The strategic assessment is being led by the State Government through the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

The outcomes of the assessment will have major implications for future planning and land use covering an area with almost 80% of WA's population. Local Government are a key stakeholder that will be impacted upon by the outcomes of the EPBC Act Strategic Assessment, particularly in regards to implementation through the planning and development process.

The Department of Premier and Cabinet has formed the Stakeholder Reference Group (SRG) with representation of Local Government, which is commendable. The Director South West Group is a member of the SRG and is representing the member Councils in the South West Metropolitan Region.

The South West Metropolitan Region

Our region is the most productive in the metropolitan area and the protection of key infrastructure corridors, industrial land, future port developments and freight networks is essential to ensure that the region remains sustainable and continues to contribute toward the State's economy. Also, the region is rich in biodiversity and natural values which need to be conserved and managed for protected species and future generations.

The South West Group has developed a draft Regional Natural Resource Management Strategy, which has been forwarded to the Department of Premier and Cabinet for consideration in the strategic assessment. The South West Group, in cooperation with relevant State Government agencies and the Western Australian Local Government Association (WALGA), has undertaken regional scale Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping of natural assets that may also be of interest to the strategic assessment.

The GIS mapping and analysis work has highlighted that the region has higher than average representation of high conservation value natural assets compared to the Perth Metropolitan Region.

Key Issues and Recommendations

The key issues and recommendations for consideration by the SRG related to the following:

- Impact on planned and future development
- Translation of strategic assessment outcomes into planning response
- Identification and management of offsets
- Implementation and support for Local Government

Impact on planned and future development

There are a number of major developments and land use changes planned in the South West Metropolitan Region that will be impacted upon by the outcomes. Some of these projects have been identified in the Metropolitan Region Scheme (MRS), such as Roe Highway Extension and the Fremantle Rockingham Controlled Access Highway, and reservations acquired. Other major projects with the potential to impact on the strategic assessment include the Fremantle Outer Harbour (and connecting roads, rail and intermodal facilities), Cockburn Coast, Cockburn Central West, Keralup townsite, Latitude 32 and East Rockingham industrial areas, Jandakot City expansion as well as numerous residential developments in future urban and urban deferred zones.

The EPBC Act Strategic Assessment needs to reflect that these projects may be in advanced stages of planning and may represent critical infrastructure that is required to support the State's economy. As a consequent, there may be limited opportunities to achieve conservation outcomes and therefore offsets will be required.

It is also understood that all of the key government agencies have provided the strategic assessment team with detailed information regarding major projects (ports, intermodal terminals, electricity sub-stations etc), corridors (highway, road, rail, power, telecommunications, water), development footprints and facilities expansion plans for consideration in the impact assessment and offset requirements. This information would be of particular interest to the South West Group, should it become available to the SRG or the general public.

Recommendation 1

That planned and future development in the South West Metropolitan Region be factored into the EPBC Act Strategic Assessment in a manner that does not compromise its original purpose, whilst ensuring achievable and practical conservation outcomes.

Translation of strategic assessment outcomes into planning responses

The EPBC Act Strategic Assessment of the Perth and Peel Regions is the most extensive and complex strategic assessment undertaken to date. Given this complexity and the level of resources available to complete the assessment within desired timeframes, it is likely that there will be a heavy reliance upon existing information datasets and GIS analytical tools, with limited “on-site” ground truthing.

As a consequence of this approach, it is possible that there will still be significant areas where further information is required to make a definitive assessment on planning and development impacts on species listed on the Matters of National Environmental Significance or protected by State Government legislation and policies.

It will be difficult to translate the high level strategic assessment into a meaningful planning response (Sub-regional Structure Plans, MRS Amendments, Local Planning Scheme) due to the gap in information required to support sound decision making. This situation would create additional grey areas that will require consideration, negotiation and referrals for developments that are consistent with Directions 2031 and Beyond.

The potential lack of clarity and delays would have a negative impact on the current approvals process and lead to greater uncertainty for Local Government and scepticism from proponents involved in the planning and implementation of changes in land use and development.

This would be contrary to the intent of the EPBC Act Strategic Assessment which seeks to provide greater certainty and streamline the approvals process.

It is considered prudent to identify and mitigate these and other potential risks through a risk assessment process involving key stakeholders.

Recommendation 2

That a forum be established to better engage Federal, State and Local Government agencies to consider the implications and potential risks, associated with translation of the EPBC Act Strategic Assessment into a planning response, through a risk assessment process.

Identification and management of offsets

The issue of offsets will feature prominently in the strategic assessment outcomes, particularly for those areas where it is not possible to avoid or mitigate biodiversity losses resulting from past decisions/approvals and planned development.

The Local Governments in the South West Metropolitan Region support the offsets concept of as a measure to compensation for biodiversity values that would otherwise be lost. The preference would be for local offsets to be used to manage local impacts and regional offsets to be used to manage regional scale impacts.

Local Governments play an active role in the protection and management of local reserves and local natural areas, and are therefore well placed to be involved in the identification and management of biodiversity offsets.

Further consultation with Local Government on the opportunities and constraints associated with the identification and management of offsets is required to ensure that the outcomes of the EPBC Act Strategic Assessment are realistic and achievable.

This consultation event or workshop should be led by the Department of Premier and Cabinet and could be facilitated through WALGA.

Recommendation 3

That the Department of Premier and Cabinet arrange a consultation event or workshop for Local Government to discuss the identification and management of biodiversity offsets associated with likely outcomes of the EPBC Act Strategic Assessment of the Perth and Peel Regions.

Implementation and support for Local Government

The implementation of legislation, policy and strategy developed by Federal and State Government, but requiring active participation for implementation by Local Government, is rarely supported by the required resources and training to enable effective implementation.

Local Governments have a legislative responsibility and will play a key role in the implementation of the EPBC Act Strategic Assessment and subsequent planning responses.

The outcomes associated with the EPBC Act Strategic Assessment of the Perth and Peel Regions are likely to be complex and multi-disciplinary and therefore requires increased understanding and agreed practices to deal with issues in a consistent manner.

Recognition of the need to provide support and resources in the training of Local Government practitioners should be reflected in the EPBC Act Strategic Assessment implementation activities.

Again, this is an initiative that the Department of Premier and Cabinet could partner with WALGA to facilitate across all affected Local Governments.

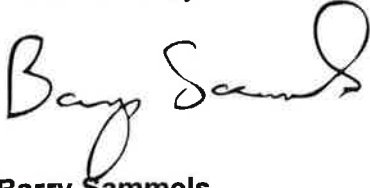
Recommendation 4

That the Department of Premier and Cabinet provide adequate resources and arrange for the training of Local Government practitioners in the implementation of the EPBC Act Strategic Assessment of the Perth and Peel Regions.

I trust that the EPBC Act Strategic Assessment for Perth and Peel Regions SRG and State Government Steering Committee will consider the issues raised and recommendations in progressing this important study.

Should you require further information or wish to discuss this submission, please contact the South West Group Director, Mick McCarthy on ph: 9364 0631, mob: 0478 325 469 or email director@southwestgroup.com.au

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barry Sammels". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial 'B'.

Barry Sammels
Chair South West Group