

# The *Environmental* challenge

A new era for conservation in Western Australia

Conservation Council of WA  
The Wilderness Society  
DECEMBER 2004

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# The *Environmental* Challenge

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### ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

The authoring organisations have approached this document in the spirit of a discussion paper and welcome comment. Those urgent policy initiatives marked with a superscripted number, for example “<sup>1</sup>”, have further information in the respective appendix.

Updated versions of this document will be available at [www.VoteEnvironment.com.au](http://www.VoteEnvironment.com.au)

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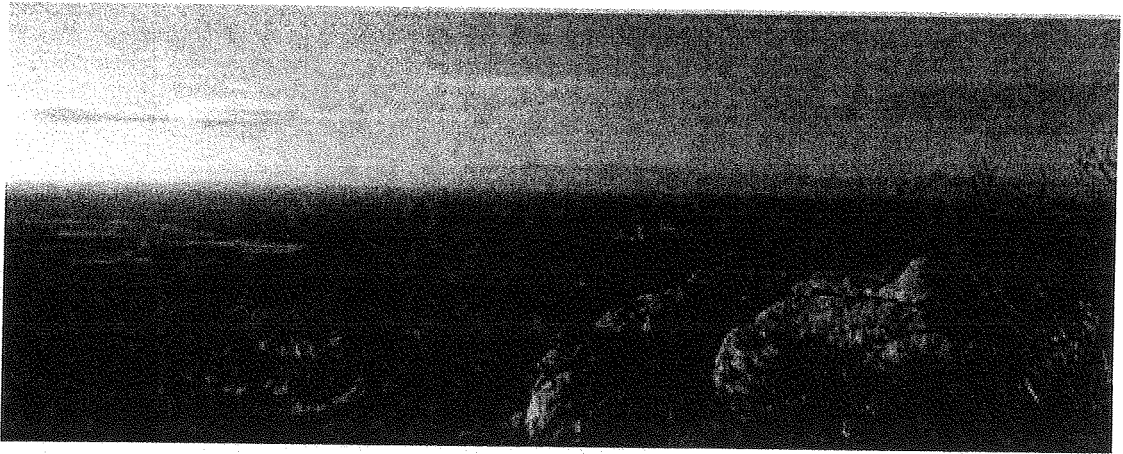
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## THE ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGE

Western Australia is blessed with extraordinary natural treasures. The ancient gorges of the Kimberley; the diverse marine life of Ningaloo Reef; the vast arid wild lands of the Pilbara; wet eucalypt karri and tingle forests; the channels of the Fitzroy River, now dry, now in flood; the myriad complex bush ecosystems – heathlands, woodlands, mallee scrub; the extensive coastline with offshore islands and submerged rocky reefs; the long pure-white beaches; seasonally flowing rivers, above and below ground.

There is nothing more Western Australian than these original landscapes. They have helped shape our character, our history and who we Western Australians really are. They remind us of where we have come from, and where we need to go after the last 175 years of unprecedented environmental change.

Western Australia is also lucky to be a state rich in natural resources – minerals, land that grows beef, wool, wheat, sugar, cotton, timber and much more, seas that spawn fish, prawns, corals. A booming tourist industry, a growing service sector, a resilient but declining rural community.

Western Australia has built much of its wealth on the natural environment, but at a significant environmental cost. We are losing a football field of land to salinity every hour due to land

clearing and subsequent damaging land use. This is destroying farms and wildlife. Our sources of water are stretched to the limit. Almost all of our fisheries are either at or above sustainable levels, greenhouse gas pollution is increasing at a rapid rate and our rainfall declining, vast areas of inland bush suffering from over-grazing, and mining and forestry are compromising our internationally-recognised south-west biodiversity hotspot.

Housing and urban development is expanding rapidly, replacing good farming land and bushland with concrete, bricks and bitumen. Air quality is deteriorating, traffic congestion is worsening, and poor planning sees residents and project proponents clash in conflicts that should never arise.

And while our political leaders have started to recognise the extent of Western Australians' passion and concern for the environment, they cannot ignore the toll our current economic path continues to take on the environment. It is time to shift our efforts - to find a new way forward that provides for a prosperous community without risking the unique and fragile natural environment around us.

Woodland wilderness  
south of Kalgoorlie.  
Photo: Charles Roche

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## SIX KEY STEPS TOWARDS A NEW ERA FOR CONSERVATION

The Conservation Council of WA and The Wilderness Society WA have combined to produce a charter to help the State meet its most pressing environmental challenges and usher in a new era for conservation – one which serves the future as well as the present.

Six key environmental challenges have been outlined along with the policy initiatives needed to meet those challenges. There are many other pressing environmental policies not included here which will also be necessary. However, the policies outlined represent some of the urgent action points requiring immediate attention.

The Conservation Council of WA and The Wilderness Society WA call on all political parties to consider this document thoughtfully, to discuss its contents with environment groups, and to adopt the policies it contains prior to the next election.

It is critical to note, however, that policy commitments are just the first step toward tackling our environmental challenges.

Over the past three terms of government an average of just 40% of environmental election commitments have actually been implemented – a sad reflection on the priority successive

governments have given to caring for our environment. If we are to continue to enjoy the things we take for granted - clean air, clean water, a healthy environment, a sustainable future – our political leaders must follow through and ensure their political commitments become environmental reality. Their success in doing so affects not only us, but our children and their children as well.

Western Australia's  
faunal emblem,  
the Numbat.  
Photo: James Evans

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## Challenge ONE – *Governing now, for the future*

The Government with its enormous regulatory powers and vast land management responsibilities has the potential to take the necessary lead in demonstrating how decisions can be made now, so that future generations can have the same opportunities as we enjoy today. In enlisting industry and the community to play their part, it must show the way, and provide the regulatory framework, to give the environment the same weight in decision-making as economic, social and political factors.

A Sustainability Act should be passed to ensure the incorporation of the environment as core business in our financial and accounting systems, health services, education system, resource management practices and planning processes. WA's laws and institutions must be updated and work effectively to give the necessary priority to our environment.

This will make ecological sustainability a key objective for everything Western Australians do - a fundamental and necessary change. Such change should be systematically introduced with the same vigour as National Competition Policy reform.

### Urgent Policy Initiatives:

#### 1.1 Government agency reform

- Develop, pass and implement a 'Sustainability Act' to ensure that all legislation, development approvals and government decisions are consistent with, and result in, achieving agreed targets for ecological sustainability<sup>1</sup>;
- Establish a Sustainability Commission<sup>1</sup>;
- Require government to regularly report against headline sustainability indicators which are embedded in the policy-making, decision-making and budgetary processes of government<sup>1</sup>;
- Establish a robust Sustainability Assessment process for major resources projects to allow the decision-making process to select the most sustainable option in an open and transparent manner<sup>1</sup>.

WA's largest freshwater lake, Lake Jasper.  
Photo: Andy Wildman

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### 1.2 Conservation through sensible financial management

- Increase funding to all environmental agencies and programs by approximately 15% (in real terms) every year for the next four years so that spending on the environment reaches at least 3% of overall government expenditure by the end of the next term of government<sup>2</sup>;
- Immediately increase the royalties being paid in the petroleum and mineral sector so that royalties increase beyond 3.7% of the value of this sector's exports. All revenue from an increase in royalties must be directed towards environmental protection, regulation and rehabilitation, and towards the conservation estate in order to better compensate for the environmental harm caused by extractive and exploitative industries;
- Require that the State Government's employees' superannuation scheme avoid investment in environmentally and socially deleterious activities and favour those investments which promote the principles outlined in the Earth Charter. Preference should be given to environmentally sound Western Australian investment opportunities<sup>2</sup>.

### 1.3 Improving the focus and efficiency of environment agencies

- Promote a strong public conservation advocacy culture within all environment agencies<sup>2</sup>;
- Require Sustainability Action Plans prepared by State Government agencies to be monitored and audited by a Sustainability Commission<sup>1</sup>;
- Further develop tools and guidelines, such as Sustainability Assessment Guidelines for policies, projects and plans, to enable State Government agencies to meet their commitments to the Sustainability Code of Practice;

- Remove CALM's conflict of interest in, and need for, sourcing income from tourism activities. CALM should continue to hold tourism management responsibilities under transparent and equitable tendering systems, and income should go to consolidated revenue;
- Explicitly require CALM's Executive Director to promote and implement off-reserve conservation programs. Key indicators of success would be the achieving of targets for land contiguous with the CALM estate such that (a) the area managed specifically for conservation was increased, and (b) the standard of conservation management on those lands was improved;
- Increase the emphasis on off-reserve conservation through cooperative assistance programs delivered to landholders. This should be through a \$50 million incentives package that supports private land conservation through land tax relief, stamp duty relief and rate relief;
- Establish an on-line Environmental One Stop Information and Resource site. This site would make it easier for the public to access the relevant information when faced with a development proposal, possible contaminated site or Metropolitan Region Scheme amendment.

### 1.4 Environmental commitments

- Sign the international Earth Charter and incorporate it into government agency policies and programs to be audited as part of the role of the proposed Sustainability Commission (see [www.earthcharter.org](http://www.earthcharter.org))<sup>2</sup>;
- Commit WA to greenhouse gas reduction targets which are in line with the Kyoto Protocol, even in the absence of Federal Government ratification.

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### 5.5 Improve environmental impact assessment

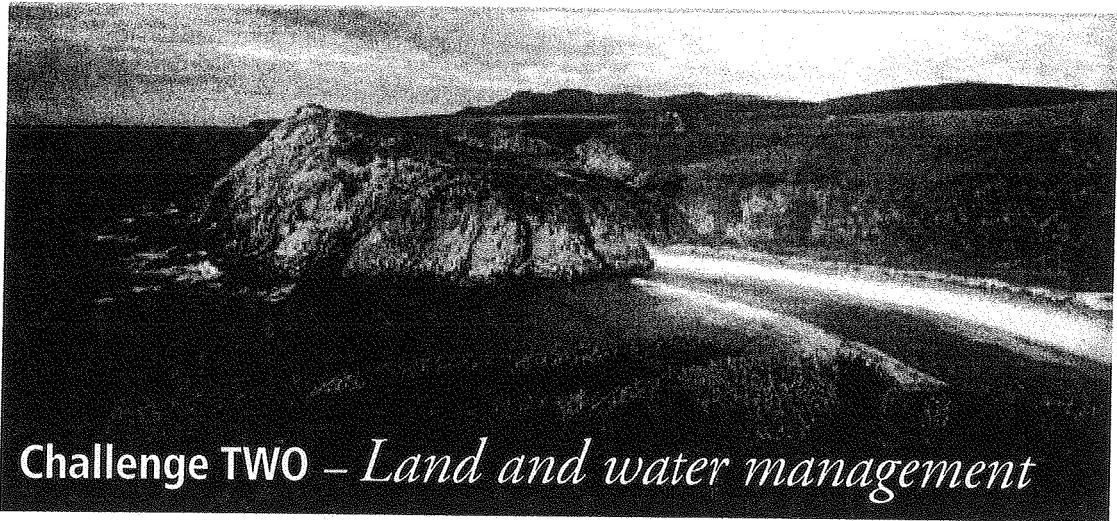
- Within the next term of government review the Environmental Protection Act, and in particular the Environmental Impact Assessment process so that it is consistent with priority policies outlined in this document<sup>2</sup>;
- Within the next term of government require all formal environmental impact assessments to include a comprehensive assessment of at least one alternative to the particular development proposal being promoted;
- Within the next term of government require that environmental consultants who prepare formal environmental impact assessments be appointed by an independent government authority not connected with the proponent;
- Within the next term of government legislate to establish and enforce mandatory minimum ecological standards endorsed by the Ecological Society of Australia for project site revegetation;
- Require all agencies including the EPA to establish bonds and penalties for project proposals commensurate with the full cost of rehabilitation, factoring in inflation, price rises, and past performance in meeting government standards and requirements. This would not diminish the responsibility of proponents to respect the environmental offset framework presently outlined by the EPA;
- Require that EPA proposal assessment always include cumulative impact assessment;
- Require that all major project proposals referred to the EPA be formally assessed;
- Require all proposals referred to the EPA to be listed on the EPA's web site;
- Require the EPA to take into account wilderness quality, landscape integrity, ecological connectivity and natural processes in all proposal assessments;
- Develop a system of post approval independent monitoring of major projects to ensure that measures and targets set during the approval process are achieved;
- Within the next term of government, ensure that compliance with ministerial conditions is fully enforced to meet community expectations.





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Since European settlement the exploitation of natural resources has driven the generation of wealth in Western Australia. While this has brought many people in our State great prosperity, we now know that it has often been at great expense to the environment.

Science and technology now permit us a far greater understanding of how to use our natural resources in ways that don't permanently damage the environment or compromise the ability of future generations to enjoy a comparable quality of life. We also have the means to repair past damage in ways that benefit both the environment and the economy.

Legislative reform is essential if we are to use our natural resources wisely and efficiently for the long term. Such reform must encompass concepts such as ecologically sustainable development, dealing cautiously with risk, and public participation in both the making of decisions and the enforcement of environmental laws. Natural resource management must be integrated - WA's salinity problems are evidence of the damage caused by exploiting one natural resource in isolation from others. We must manage our landscapes holistically, which also means that our natural resource management agencies need to be better integrated and adequately funded.

## Urgent Policy Initiatives:

### 2.1 Government agency reform

- Incorporate the loss-making Forest Products Commission into a separate section within the Department of Agriculture and abolish its entrepreneurial functions before 2007;
- Increase the funding given to CALM to manage Unallocated Crown Land by \$5m every year for the next four years<sup>2</sup>;
- Increase prices for logs from native forests by 10% every year for the next 4 years so that they better reflect the true value of our native timber<sup>2</sup>;
- Establish a wilderness and wild rivers unit in CALM within the first half of the next term of government<sup>2</sup>.

Quoin Head,  
Fitzgerald River  
National Park.  
Photo: Simon Nevill

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### 2.2 Conserving our precious water and wetlands

- Ensure the application of Ecologically Sustainability Development indicators in the assessment of all land use activities which may affect wetlands, so that healthy wetlands become an indicator of sustainable land use. This will require an extensive monitoring program to be applied to all conservation-category wetlands;
- Ensure the protection of our wild and scenic rivers and develop management plans, in partnership with Indigenous peoples, to safeguard these unique river systems;
- Before 2006 require a minimum setback for development from all rivers and wetlands of 100 metres from the first line of stable vegetation;
- Before 2007 undertake a scientific study of the needs of the southern foreshore of the Moore River Estuary then review the proposed development setbacks;
- Undertake a detailed audit of all Western Australian wetlands including monitoring to ascertain loss, modification and degradation;
- Prepare rehabilitation plans for wetlands where ecological values have been or are being eroded;
- Develop, pass and implement separate legislation to properly protect WA's groundwater supplies;
- Immediately present for Ramsar listing: Cape Range Subterranean Waterways, Ellen Brook Swamps, Lake Macleod, Spearwood Creek, Lake Ballard, Millstream Pools, Shark Bay East (Hamelin Pool), Lake Gregory (Paruku);
- Urgently implement the Swan Coastal Plain Wetlands Environmental Protection Policy (EPP);
- Update and implement the State Water Strategy so that domestic consumption is steadily reduced to 100 kilolitres per person per annum before 2007;

- Implement the draft State Water Conservation Strategy within the next term of government;
- Require all users of water for irrigated agriculture to measure their water usage so meaningful efficiency targets can be set;
- Create a Parliamentary Secretary for Water Conservation to assist the Minister for the Environment.

### 2.3 Protecting our marine biodiversity

- Commit to a new scientifically-based, ecosystem-based planning process - a key part of which will be the establishment of a network of well-managed sanctuary zones ('marine National Parks') throughout the State and to deliver ecologically sustainable management of all state waters (see 4.2)<sup>3</sup>;
- Develop and implement a new framework of policy, legislation, institutional arrangements, regulation and integrated multi-sector planning processes to meet ecosystem based marine planning objectives (see 4.2)<sup>3</sup>;
- Introduce an Environmental Protection Policy (EPP) for the coastal zone to establish environmental objectives; measure environmental quality; set minimum standards for pollution control and establish a program by which objectives are to be achieved and maintained.

### 2.4 Getting serious about salinity

- Develop and implement a strategy to secure the funding necessary to implement recommendations made in a report by BIS Shrapnel for the National Farmers Federation and the Australian Conservation Foundation to spend \$2 billion per year for 10 years to remediate the damage caused by salinity;

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- Ban further clearing of remnant native vegetation in the agricultural area, and rapidly phase out such clearing in other parts of the State;
- Fund research and a publicly-available report on the technical and commercial feasibility of deep-rooted perennial crops.

### 2.5 Developing sustainable industries

- Reform the pastoral industry to remove the threats of overstocking (including removing the obligation to meet minimum stocking levels) and inappropriate fire management, and to minimise weeds and feral animals (including goats) before 2015<sup>2</sup>;
- Work toward implementing ecologically sustainable forest management through initiatives such as ending the woodchipping and clearfelling of native forests by 2007, and reforming the grading system for logs<sup>2</sup>;
- Establish an independent scientific committee (composition to be decided by the Ecological Society of Australia) to thoroughly investigate the impact of global warming and rainfall decline on the ability of South West native forests to regenerate and to make recommendations to government regarding the implications of its findings for silvicultural prescriptions and wood volumes logged;
- Prohibit any proposed increase in the expansion of bauxite mining in the jarrah forest;
- Extend the current moratorium on genetically modified crops through to the end of 2010<sup>2</sup>;
- Invest \$50 million over the next term of government in the research and control of invasive plant species consistent with recommendations in the State Weed Plan;
- Invest \$50 million over the next term of government in protecting Western Australia from cane toads and assisting Commonwealth government research programs into methods of control;
- Develop, implement and fund full participation in a Memorandum of Understanding for deep drainage so that all agencies including the Departments of Agriculture, Environment, Conservation and Land Management and Planning and Infrastructure, Main Roads WA and the Environmental Protection Authority are given the opportunity to comment on all deep drainage proposals;
- Within the next term of government, develop and implement a levy on units of agricultural production, as a means to raising funds for nature conservation;
- Immediately provide funding for implementation of the Department of Agriculture's proposed Regional Model for Better Animal and Plant Pest Management;
- Immediately develop and implement a system that guarantees the sound accounting of public investment in Natural Resource Management through assessment of outcomes and funding of projects;
- Within the next term of government, develop, pass and implement sustainability legislation to ensure that all industries use water sustainably;
- Within the next term of government, develop and implement policies for a diversified, sustainable water supply that uses an increasing proportion of renewable energy consistent with renewable energy targets mentioned elsewhere in this document.



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### 2.6 Legislative and policy reform

- Undertake a comprehensive independent evaluation of policy, legislative and institutional structures for Natural Resource Management in Western Australia before 2007;
- Within the next term of government, develop, pass and implement a Natural Resource Management Act;
- Within the next term of government, develop, pass and implement separate legislation to protect WA's coastal zone.

### 2.7 Preserving the ecological abundance of the north

- Legislate to prohibit the development of Ord Stage Two in the east Kimberley<sup>2</sup>;
- Prohibit mining in the Mitchell Plateau, de-gazette the temporary reserve over the area, and place the area into a formally protected tenure such as an Indigenous Protected Area or a jointly managed National Park;
- Reject new cotton production proposals north of the 24th parallel<sup>2</sup>;
- Undertake significant research into the impacts of baiting in remote areas on dingo populations and the subsequent knock-on impacts on other species. Until this research is complete, adopt a precautionary approach to baiting of remote areas;

- Work toward ecologically sustainable fire management by (a) fully implementing the recommendations of the 2004 EPA Review of the fire policies and management practices of the Department of Conservation and Land Management; (b) implementing the recommendations for ecologically sustainable forest management prepared by the WA Forest Alliance; and (c) requesting the EPA to review fire policies and management practices in other areas, such as the eastern agricultural areas, the Pilbara and the Kimberley;
- Reject proposals to build a pipeline from the Kimberley to supply the State's South West with water;
- Conduct a comprehensive study to determine the connection between climate change, fire, cattle grazing and the current serious decline of mammals and birds in the Kimberley;
- Prohibit the extension of mining to any islands within the Buccaneer Archipelago and add the Archipelago to the conservation reserve system.

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The ecological integrity of Western Australia's urban areas is under constant pressure from competing demands for the air, water and land that sustain them. Our urban areas are expanding at an unprecedented rate with insufficient thought for the future. The small remaining patches of relatively intact urban natural habitat - highly valued by local communities - are being steadily eroded by urban development.

Our urban environment urgently needs protection. This will mean putting in place adequate systems of growth management including improving the way we deal with urban development, waste, transport, energy and water, and setting limits to the expansion of our cities. It will require education, incentives and the means for people to use less space, take public transport, reduce their resource use and recycle. It will also mean protecting and adequately managing natural habitat, air and water quality within urban areas.

## Urgent Policy Initiatives:

### 3.1 Planning for liveable cities

- Implement an urban growth boundary around Perth as recommended by the participants in the 'Dialogue with the City' process<sup>4</sup>;
- Implement Network City: Community Planning Strategy for Perth and Peel<sup>4</sup>;
- Introduce third party appeal rights into planning legislation;
- Expand BushForever to protect all remaining locally and regionally significant urban bushland in Perth;
- Implement a BushForever protection program in Albany, Bunbury, Busselton, Mandurah and Geraldton;
- Expand the Regional Park System to include Albany, Bunbury, Busselton, Mandurah and Geraldton and give it a conservation emphasis;
- Phase out the clearing of bushland and wetlands for housing by 2006 by providing incentives to encourage future urban development on cleared or brown fields sites.

Perth - a city for people, or cars? Photo: DPI

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### 3.2 Urban Bushland

- Immediately move to conserve the regionally significant bushland on government-owned sites;
- Introduce a Memorandum of Understanding between all government agencies and statutory authorities to ensure the conservation of BushForever sites under Government control;
- Monitor the effectiveness of the MoU and make any necessary changes to ensure the conservation of BushForever sites;
- Implement land swaps where appropriate in order to conserve BushForever sites held by government agencies and statutory authorities;
- Require formal assessment by the EPA for developments proposed for BushForever sites and initiate comprehensive community consultation as a part of the process;
- Implement a Statement of Planning Policy to cover BushForever sites;
- Implement land tax, stamp duty and rate relief for BushForever sites which are privately owned and managed under conservation covenants.

### 3.3 Minimising waste and pollution

- Increase funding for the implementation of Perth's Air Quality Management Plan;
- Establish an independent Waste Management Authority that has the goal of achieving zero waste to landfill by 2020;
- Develop, pass and implement waste minimisation legislation that incorporates the principle of Extended Producer Responsibility.

### 3.4 Transport

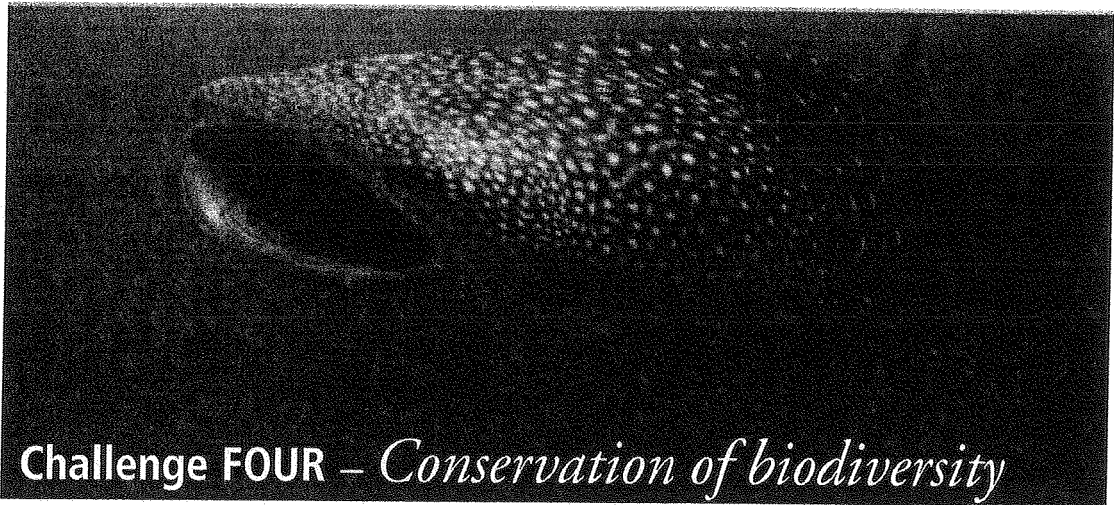
- Work with industry to increase the regional availability of LPG and LPG conversion outlets;
- Provide an incentive for purchase of smaller, fuel efficient and alternative fuel motor vehicles through graded stamp duty reductions;
- Replace the fixed motor vehicle registration charges with a pay-as-you-drive charge so the impact of vehicle use is reflected in what people pay;
- Invest in improving and promoting environmentally sensitive travel alternatives, especially cycle paths, more frequent bus and train services and expanding TravelSmart. Coordinate bus and train services and increase their frequency;
- Require transport management plans for major residential and commercial development, universities and hospitals to limit car traffic and boost use of 'greener' travel modes;
- Review the fare structure to maximise incentives for people to use public transport;
- Investigate nodal free transit zones. Improve public transport systems in Perth, including the extending the Free Transport Zone to three stations out from Perth Railway Station on all lines;
- Establish an incentive program to encourage businesses to have their employees use public transport.

### 3.5 Contaminated sites

- Provide free public access to a comprehensive contaminated sites data-base;
- Provide for an independent appeals process to avoid any perception of a conflict of interest over contaminated sites.

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## Challenge FOUR – *Conservation of biodiversity*

Western Australia is endowed with an extraordinary range of plants and animals, and unique natural habitats that support them. We also have one of the highest rates of extinction in the world and many more species are becoming endangered every year. This is the legacy of land clearing, poor land management practices and an inadequate conservation reserve system that often takes second place to development.

Our biodiversity needs to be supported with its own dedicated legislation - legislation that has 'teeth'. We urgently need a Biodiversity Conservation Act that genuinely protects and conserves our biodiversity. This needs to be underpinned by a biodiversity strategy and a secure reserve system reflecting the State's great diversity and range of habitats. We must immediately stop the destruction of marine habitat, bush, wetland and wilderness areas. Conservation reserves must be for conservation, not mineral and petroleum exploration and mining, fishing or resort development.

### Urgent Policy Initiatives:

#### 4.1 Protecting our conservation reserves

- Reject any proposal for gas processing and industrial development on Barrow Island, based on previous advice from the EPA and the Conservation Commission and thereafter repeal the Barrow Island Act<sup>2</sup>;
- Within the next term of government ban through legislation all mining, exploration and industrial activities and cancel existing exploration tenements in all existing and approved national parks, nature reserves and conservation parks and other conservation reserves<sup>2</sup>;
- Protect Lake Jasper in D'Entrecasteaux National Park by dismissing the proposal to establish a sand mine nearby at South Jangardup, re-incorporating the excised mine site back into the National Park, and acquiring the parcel of private land directly to the north of Lake Jasper for rehabilitation and incorporation into the National Park<sup>2</sup>;

Our marine biodiversity –  
more than fish!  
Photo: Sue Morrison

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- Increase protection for wilderness areas through the declaration of four new wilderness areas within the next four years<sup>2</sup>;
  - Protect the Ningaloo Region by:
    - de-gazetting the township of Mauds Landing;
    - removing all mining tenements on Cape Range;
    - removing the 'temporary reserve' on Cape Range;
    - extending Cape Range National Park east through to the coast;
    - dismissing the proposal to establish a salt operation on eastern Exmouth Gulf;
    - incorporating the Muiron Islands into Ningaloo Marine Park;
    - supporting World Heritage listing with boundaries including Exmouth Gulf and Lake MacLeod;
  - Review management arrangements for the Abrolhos Islands so that biodiversity conservation is made a priority and conservation areas are given security of tenure.
- ### 4.2 Expanding our conservation reserves
- Immediately end the 'New Horizons' policy framework responsible for creating new Marine Parks and implement an appropriate, scientifically-based ecosystem management and planning process to replace it (see 2.2) <sup>2&4</sup>;
  - Review the adequacy of WA's terrestrial conservation reserve system on a bioregional basis and increase reservation by the end of 2008 in line with the commitments made as part of the National Objectives and Targets for Biodiversity Conservation 2001-2005;
  - Ensure that all government conservation work is underpinned by the need to go beyond securing natural values in the landscape to also preserve the large-scale natural processes that have helped shape them<sup>2</sup>;
  - Protect the high conservation value forests nominated by the WA Forest Alliance, including Helms Block, Arcadia Block, Chester Block, and the Petition Area in Palmer Block;
  - Protect our remaining Tuart ecosystems by implementing the conservation movement's Tuart reserve system proposal<sup>2</sup>;
  - Secure the values of Mount Manning Reserve by protecting it from mining and dedicating the reserve for conservation;
  - Protect the extraordinary biodiversity of the Ravensthorpe region by transferring into the conservation reserve system the Unallocated Crown Land to the south of Ravensthorpe, to the north of Ravensthorpe in the Ravensthorpe Range, to the east of Ravensthorpe in the corridors linking to the inland, to the west of Dunn Rock Nature Reserve and to the east of Lake Magenta Nature Reserve<sup>2</sup>.



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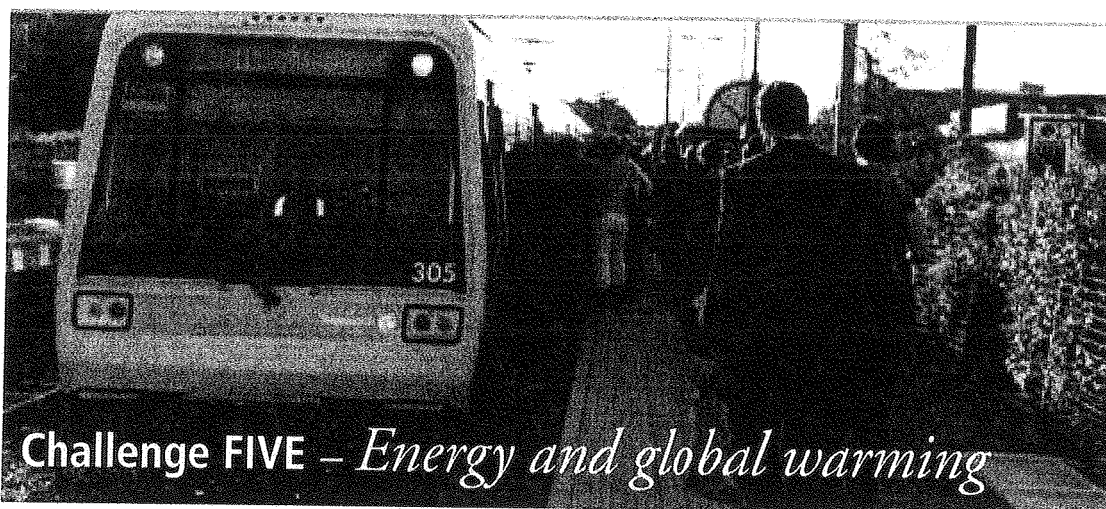
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### 4.3 Legislative reform

- Ensure that government agencies, utility companies and local governments proposing to clear vegetation on public or private land are subject to the same processes as private land-owners, so that all land clearing proposals are subject to the same rigorous assessment process;
- Urgently develop, pass and implement a Biodiversity Conservation Act and a develop and implement a Biodiversity Strategy that will help prevent further loss of locally indigenous native species and the ecosystems that they form<sup>5</sup>;
- Establish a Biodiversity Conservation Commission (the functions of which would include, but not be limited to, those of the current Conservation Commission of WA and the Marine Parks and Reserves Authority) and ensure it has the funding, authority and staff to carry out its monitoring, auditing, and enforcement duties;
- Within the next term of government amend the CALM Act to ensure proper identification, management and secure protection of wilderness areas, allow for the third party nomination of wilderness areas both on and off-reserve, allow joint management of conservation reserves, and to integrate it effectively with the new Biodiversity Conservation Act<sup>2</sup>;
- Before 2006 remove any administrative veto held by non-environment agencies or for non-conservation purposes over the creation of conservation reserves.

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## Challenge FIVE – *Energy and global warming*

Western Australia's economic expansion has been supported by cheap and plentiful fossil fuel energy, which has led us to be inefficient in the way we use energy. Issues such as global warming and the inevitable depletion of non-renewable resources have always been treated as secondary issues to the State's economic growth.

We need visionary leadership to address these longer-term issues now and steer the State towards a much more sustainable energy base. Renewable energy production (solar, geothermal, biomass, wind, photovoltaics, tidal) and energy conservation are an economic growth area in other states of Australia and overseas, while 'old' energy jobs are shrinking. With renewable energy resources that are the envy of the world, we have a natural advantage that must not be squandered.

### Urgent Policy Initiatives:

#### 5.1 Renewing commitment to renewable energy

- Make the Sustainable Energy Development Authority independent of the Office of Energy before 2006;
- Set a State-based mandatory renewable energy target of 20% to be attained before 2020;
- Within the next term of government develop and implement a renewable power solutions

scheme to more than double the above proposed State renewable energy target for 'end-of-grid' and 'off-grid' communities;

- Require that 30% of the whole WA Government vehicle fleet be fuelled by LPG or other alternative fuels by 2008.

#### 5.2 Reducing our greenhouse gas pollution

- Legislate for a greenhouse gas emission reduction target of 20% of 1990 levels by 2020 with incremental reductions of 7% every five years thereafter;
- Introduce a legislative requirement for new power generators, or those applying to extend their licences, to have GHG emissions of less than 0.5 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>/ MWhr;
- Promote demand management and end-use efficiency through programs targeted at both domestic and industrial users;
- Encourage consumer adoption of energy efficient technologies and renewable sources of energy.

#### 5.3 Moving beyond oil

- Implement a Transport Energy Policy to reduce our dependence on oil, switch to lower impact renewable fuels and reduce energy intensity of passenger and freight transport.

More sustainable transport options. Photo: Lisa Brideson

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## Challenge SIX – *Supporting community conservation*

Increasingly Western Australians are playing an active role in conservation work, from planting trees on farms, to utilising professional expertise in support of research and planning, to protesting against environmental destruction, to organising community awareness-raising events.

Without such generous and dedicated support from people from all walks of life, we would not today enjoy the diverse benefits that come from the protection and restoration of many of our natural areas: nature-based tourism, increased land productivity, opportunities for peace and solitude, camping, walking and other forms of recreation. Conservation through the community has undoubtedly improved our quality of life and secured valuable public assets for future generations.

However while community involvement in conservation increases, funding to regional and metropolitan-based conservation groups which facilitate community involvement has been decreasing. In many cases, funding has disappeared altogether. If we are to prevent the conservation volunteer from becoming an endangered species this needs to change.

We must increase investment in the non-government conservation sector so that we can reap the enormous benefits this will bring to

both the environment and society. Additionally, raising awareness through professional and accessible interpretative facilities better equips the community to be environmentally responsible, thereby preventing environmental problems before they arise.

### **Urgent Policy Initiatives:**

#### 6.1 Building conservation group capacity

- Immediately implement Recommendation 52 of the Keating Review so that community groups are fully funded to respond to proponents' environmental impact assessments. Monies should be paid into a trust fund through the project approval process;
- Before 2006 provide adequate funding for community groups, especially regional environment groups, to engage in conservation activities;
- Remove the administrative burden on community groups by funding a network of accountants and administrators at regional environment centres before 2007;

Conservation volunteers hard at work. Photo: Dave Bright, City of Cockburn

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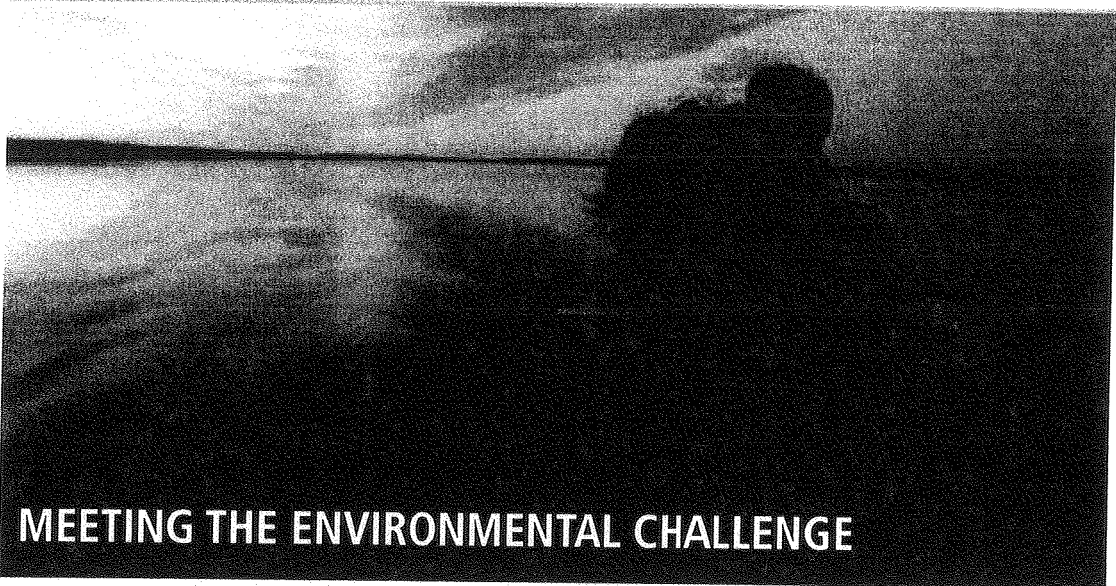
- Provide funding for the establishment of regional marine conservation advocacy groups before 2006;
- Make all government agency data pertaining to natural resource management freely and rapidly available;
- Ensure that public assistance and public grant programs to environment groups (such as that operated by LotteryWest) address the important need for administrative support for major groups with state-wide or regional responsibilities.

### 6.2 Community conservation education

- Fund one regionally-based and one metropolitan-based marine conservation education officer for ten years to raise awareness of the values of WA's marine environment in secondary and tertiary education institutions and among community organisations. The positions would be hosted by a peak conservation organisation;
- Fund a Liaison Officer for ecologically sustainable fire management for ten years to provide community input into local (ecologically sustainable) fire management planning. The position would be hosted by a peak conservation organisation;
- Fund the construction of two 'Biodiversity Hotspot' interpretative centres, one for the marine environment at Exmouth and one for the terrestrial environment in Ravensthorpe as a focal point for the local community and visitors to promote the conservation of these regions. Ensure that these centres are supported into the future through the creation of an endowment of \$1 million for each centre and through the strong involvement of local community conservation groups.

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With environmental issues high on the agenda, Western Australians are looking for political leadership that will take us into a new era for conservation.

The policies contained in this paper would help put Western Australia on the path to tackling the most significant environmental challenges we face today, while creating sustainable jobs and avoiding the economic and social costs of inaction.

And while significant environmental, economic and social rewards are possible, they will not eventuate without the vision of political parties to adopt this path forward. Such demonstrated vision has increasingly been recognised and rewarded by voters at the ballot box, as people see the imperatives created by our activities of the past. Only decisive action will create a future where our children have the same opportunities that we in Western Australia have been lucky enough to enjoy.

Looking to the future.  
Photo: Andy Wildman

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### APENDIX 1 – SUSTAINABILITY

#### 1.1 Government Agency Reform

The first priority for any government strategy for sustainability should be to establish the governance structures, institutional arrangements and processes that can drive the State's sustainability agenda into the future. If core sustainability institutional reforms can be identified and implemented, the finer details of implementing the sustainability agenda can be developed and guided through these institutional reforms.

If the governance, process and institutional reform aspects of the sustainability agenda are not strong and effective, it will be impossible for the State Government to continue to drive Western Australia towards a sustainability.

Develop, pass and implement a 'Sustainability Act' to ensure that all legislation, development approvals and government decisions are consistent with, and result in, achieving agreed targets for ecological sustainability

Legislating for sustainability has three core functions. Firstly, to enshrine sustainability principles for guidance in implementing legislation. Secondly to establish major institutional reforms to support and drive the sustainability agenda. And finally to provide legislative backing for major sustainability initiatives in a wide range of sectors.

Western Australia should enact a Sustainability Act which would require that all legislation, development approvals and government decisions are consistent with, and result in, achieving agreed targets for ecological sustainability. The Sustainability Act should legislate for a robust sustainability assessment process. See more below.

#### Establish a Sustainability Commission

To address the significant challenge of sustainability in all sectors a society, Western Australia requires a strong and well resourced institution to play a key driving role. In other national and state government jurisdictions, similar bodies have played an important role in driving sustainability, in particular the UK Sustainable Development Commission. While the Sustainability Roundtable is a good first step towards a more independent and powerful body such as a Sustainability Commission, what is required is an organisation that is substantially strengthened, better resourced and given greater independence to drive sustainability in the future.

The Sustainability Commission should be an independent statutory authority that is representative of State and Local Government, industry and the community, which would:

- Be a strong public advocate and promoter of sustainability in Western Australia;
- Coordinate the implementation of the State Sustainability Strategy, and other relevant efforts towards achieving sustainability, including regular reviews and refinements of a State Sustainability Strategy;
- Report on progress towards sustainability across government, the community and private sectors, through Headline Sustainability Indicators and a Sustainability Reporting system;
- Audit the performance of State Government agencies, authorities and publicly owned corporatised organisations, against their respective Sustainability Action Plans, and report to State Parliament on these audits; and
- Provide integrated advice to Cabinet on the sustainability assessment of major projects.

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Require government to regularly report against headline sustainability indicators which are embedded in the policy-making, decision-making and budgetary processes of government

The full potential of sustainability indicators will only be realised if the indicators are embedded in the policy-making, decision-making and budgetary processes of Government – rather than sitting outside the central business of government.

Some of the opportunities for embedding sustainability indicators in government include:

- Establish an independent, statutory based, and well resourced Sustainability Commissioner to assess the Government's performance against Headline Sustainability Indicators;
- Require the Auditor-General to audit departmental performance against relevant Headline Sustainability Indicators;
- Require the Performance Agreements of Director-General's of State Government departments to report against the relevant Headline Sustainability Indicators; and
- Include the Headline Sustainability Indicators in the annual budget preparation and reporting cycle.

Establish a robust Sustainability Assessment process for major resources projects to allow the decision-making process to select the most sustainable option in an open and transparent manner

Sustainability requires the integration of social, environmental and economic dimensions into the decision-making and policy-making process. Western Australia currently lacks the appropriate tools and techniques that would allow decision-makers and policy-makers in all sectors to weigh up different dimensions of sustainability, and to

choose the most sustainable option in an open and transparent manner.

Western Australia should develop sustainability assessment processes and techniques for use in the assessment of major projects as outlined in Recommendations 53 to 55 of the Keating Review.

Western Australia is currently at the forefront of the development of techniques and methodologies for decision-making based on sustainability. Therefore a significant amount of research and development, and therefore resources, will be required to develop these tools further.

### 1.3 Improving the focus and efficiency of environment agencies

Further develop tools and guidelines, such as Sustainability Assessment Guidelines for policies, projects and plans, to enable State Government Agencies to meet their commitments to the Sustainability Code of Practice

Sustainability requires the integration of social, environmental and economic dimensions into the decision-making and policy-making process. Western Australia currently lacks the appropriate tools and techniques that would allow decision-makers and policy-makers in all sectors to weigh up different dimensions of sustainability, and to choose the most sustainable option in an open and transparent manner. Western Australia should develop sustainability assessment processes and techniques to ensure that the development of major policies, projects and plans is based on sound sustainability principles.

Western Australia is currently at the forefront of the development of techniques and methodologies for decision-making based on sustainability. Therefore a significant amount of research and development will be required to develop these tools further.

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## APPENDIX 2 – A VISION FOR WESTERN AUSTRALIA'S GREAT WILD PLACES

'A vision for Western Australia's great wild places' produced by The Wilderness Society WA in December 2004 expands on this document by providing the background and rationale for many of the points listed here. For a copy contact The Wilderness Society or visit [www.VoteEnvironment.com.au](http://www.VoteEnvironment.com.au)

## APPENDIX 3 – MARINE PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

The problems with, and solutions for, institutional and legislative arrangements underpinning marine policy, planning and management in Western Australia.

This document reflects some of the work undertaken over many months by conservation organisations to consider and address the root causes of the problems that beset marine planning and management in Western Australia.

The groups see the paucity of sound marine conservation outcomes and the growing levels of frustration across all major marine sectors as symptoms of deeper problems in the State's marine planning and management. Some of these problems are outlined below.

The sector does not believe that the reforms, if implemented, would end all disagreement between naturally oppositional interests but that the debate would become much less destructive; leading to healthy tension rather than increasingly unhealthy dispute.

### The problems

Conservation groups agree that significant institutional and legislative reform is needed in the marine domain because:

1. There is an absence of an overarching governance framework for the protection and management of our marine environments. There presently exists no comprehensive and unambiguous policy, legislative or administrative system for delivering protection of marine biodiversity and marine ecological processes in WA. The system also therefore fails to meet sustainability objectives.



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2. Under the current system, multiple agencies involved in management of the State's marine environments function with internal and inter-agency inconsistencies, overlaps and conflicts in objectives and responsibilities. This has led to poorly disguised animosity between agencies and inefficiencies. It has fuelled conflicts at all levels, from stakeholder to ministerial, and delivered poor environmental outcomes.
3. A major constraint to the establishment of marine conservation reserves in WA was the introduction (in 1997) of a power of veto over the Environment Minister's ability to initiate and declare reserves. Only severely compromised environmental outcomes can be expected of a requirement for concurrence from ministers whose principal responsibilities are resource exploitation, maintaining access to resources and responding to constituents with vested interests in resource exploitation.
4. Currently around 2% of WA's state coastal waters are afforded complete protection from extractive activities. The weight of marine scientific opinion now recommends that a minimum of 20% by area of each marine habitat type (in each bioregion) should come under 'sanctuary' as the basis of responsible marine management.
5. The Fish Resources Management Act (and therefore Fisheries WA) has an inherent conflict of interest. Fisheries WA is responsible for the conservation AND the development AND the sharing of fish resources. These conflicts reduce the likelihood of ecosystem based management (EBM) approaches. Further, the focus on fish as a resource detracts from recognition of fish as part of the marine environment. That the definition of 'fish' under the Act includes flora, for example, also attracts attention to its deficiencies.
6. Negligible compliance in sanctuary zones. There is currently an impasse over the enforcement of compliance in (CALM) sanctuary zones. CALM want to do it but cannot, and Fisheries WA can do it, but won't (under their respective legislations). This lack of compliance means that marine parks are highly exposed to the charge of being 'paper parks.'
7. The role of science in WA marine management is undervalued, often ignored and applied in ad hoc ways. It is rarely independent. Science should have a defining role in marine planning and management, in decisions regarding targets for, design and establishment, of marine sanctuaries and in determining ecologically sustainable levels of resource exploitation and human interactions with marine ecosystems.
8. The existing 'New Horizons' policy framework for the creation of new marine reserves cannot deliver a Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative (CAR) reserve system. New Horizons is a localised multiple-use model, is not bioregionally-based and its outcomes are determined socially, not scientifically.
9. Poor integration of State/Commonwealth marine management processes. It is intended that parallel Bioregional Marine Planning processes be undertaken between State and Commonwealth Governments in adjacent jurisdictional areas. Ideally, state processes are integrated with commonwealth processes but at present no mechanism or agreement on process has been reached or defined.

It is regularly claimed that Western Australia has some of the best managed fisheries in the world. This could be true. Unfortunately, it does not therefore follow that we have one of the best managed marine environments in the world. The differences between managing fish stocks and managing biodiversity must be better understood and acknowledged.

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The reality is that our state waters are a multiple use system without an effective governance framework for the protection and management of our marine ecosystems. The two pillars of our current system are integrated fisheries management and the marine reserves program. As they are currently arranged, they cannot succeed in providing the levels of protection for the marine environment that scientists warn are needed. Even with the greatest goodwill the system cannot deliver adequately.

### The solutions

1. The conservation and management of the marine environment should be achieved through Bioregional Marine Planning and implementation. This approach should be enshrined in legislation (through the Biodiversity Conservation Act).
2. There should be a single agency responsible for conservation and management of the marine environment (including both flora and fauna).
3. A Biodiversity Commission, similar to the Conservation Commission, and Marine Parks and Reserves Authority should oversee, monitor and audit the marine conservation and management agency, (The responsibility of both of these existing authorities should be combined and carried out by the Biodiversity Commission).
4. The marine conservation and management agency should be responsible for bioregional marine planning and management of the marine environment. It should develop and implement management plans on an ecosystem basis, in line with the precautionary principle, and based on the evidence and advice of a statutory marine scientific committee.
5. The marine scientific committee should be independent of government and its contribution and independence should be enshrined in legislation.
6. There should be a separate agency responsible for issuing permission to extract flora and fauna from the marine environment (similar to the Forest Products Commission in respect of forest products)
7. Extractive permission should only be allowed if consistent with the bioregional management plans set by the marine conservation and management agency.
8. The requirement for concurrence should be removed from marine parks and reserves (similar to the removal of this requirement from management plans on terrestrial reserves).
9. State processes would be considerably more consistent with Commonwealth processes under these arrangements. Agreements should be defined.
10. Neither structural adjustment nor compensation clauses should undermine planning and ecosystem management.

### Conclusion

There is currently a unique opportunity to set up an effective framework for planning and management of the marine environment. The opportunity arises because there are currently only two agencies with responsibility for marine flora and fauna, so it would be a challenging, but relatively simple task to re-allocate their jurisdictions in a way which achieves more appropriate outcomes. (This opportunity no longer exists in the terrestrial environment.) There is also a recent precedent to make the necessary changes because similar changes were recently made to CALM in respect of forest products.

Finally, many of the necessary changes can be made simply, as part of the Government's commitment to a fully-fledged Biodiversity Conservation Act.

Any further delay in such reforms will only increase frustration among a wide range of marine stakeholders.



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### APPENDIX 4 – LIVING CITIES

#### Planning for liveable cities

Implement an urban growth boundary around Perth as recommended by the participants in the 'Dialogue with the City' process

The 1,300 participants at the Dialogue with the City event were overwhelmingly in favour of an urban growth boundary to help limit the spread of the Perth Metropolitan area. An Urban Growth Boundary was not included in the final Network City spatial plan, which seems to suggest a lack of commitment from the State Government to effectively manage the urban growth of the Perth Metropolitan area.

Many other cities around the world, including Melbourne, have effectively implemented an Urban Growth Boundary. Perth should learn from the experiences of these cities and implement an Urban Growth Boundary which would play an important symbolic role. The boundary would need to be supported by a range of other mechanisms, including incentives and disincentives, regulatory and non-regulatory, to ensure that future urban development happens only in approved areas.

#### Implement Network City: Community Planning Strategy for Perth and Peel

The Network City Strategy released by the Minister for Planning on 7 September 2004 is a big step forward in ensuring the future urban development of the Perth metropolitan area is more sustainable.

However, there is a significant amount of detail to be worked through in the implementation of the Strategy, which will require political commitment and significant resources for implementation.

Strategies included in the Network City Strategy which should be prioritised include:

- Strategy 1-2 Using land resources efficiently
- Strategy 1-3 Managing urban growth
- Strategy 5-1 Refocus planning decision-making procedures to bring environmental and heritage issues into equal partnership with social and economic factors
- Strategy 5-3 Protect Biodiversity
- Strategy 5-4 Protect areas of environmental heritage
- Strategy 5-7 Protect and manage water resources
- Strategy 5-9 Reduce the ecological footprint of Perth, Mandurah and Murray
- Strategy 5-10 Develop legislation and policy to reduce energy use, resource consumption and waste

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### APPENDIX 5 – BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION ACT

For an excellent background to the compelling case for a Biodiversity Conservation Act please obtain a copy of the submission by the Conservation Council of WA in response to the consultation paper on the proposed Biodiversity Conservation Act. These are available by contacting the Conservation Council or visiting [www.conservationwa.asn.au/biodiversity.pdf](http://www.conservationwa.asn.au/biodiversity.pdf)