

# *Western Everlasting*

*'It's Now or Never'*

Leadership and Organisational Development Program  
Department of Conservation and Land Management  
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Project Team: Alex Chapman  
Matt Dowling  
Val English  
Peter Fishwick  
Annie Keating  
Ray Lawrie



### ***Intended Outcomes:***

The Western Everlasting project team was tasked to provide a mechanism for implementing and integrating Western Everlasting as the primary initiative to conserve this State's threatened plants. The team aims to produce a report that takes into account a range of aspects concerning current flora conservation initiatives; current and future funding sources and structural issues within the State's primary conservation agency (Department of Conservation and Land Management), related agencies and relevant community groups to help integrate flora conservation initiatives under Western Everlasting.

### ***Strategies used by the group to achieve the outcomes.***

With this in mind the group decided on three goals to help us achieve our aim. These were:

1. To obtain information about the current status of initiatives for conserving threatened flora in Western Australia.
2. To assess the level of stakeholder support for the Western Everlasting concept.
3. To provide recommendations on implementation of Western Everlasting, including strategies for management, integration of initiatives and identify funding sources.

Through a process of literature review and direct feedback from our project sponsor we developed a list of stakeholders and interested parties who were asked to participate in an interview, which included questions aimed at achieving the above goals.

This interview (Questionnaire and Initiatives Recording sheet) was published on the Internet to allow the data to be collected in digital form. Some interviews were conducted in person, however, the responses were entered onto the Internet questionnaire. A total of 59 responses (both questionnaire and initiatives sheet) were received, representing 39 individual responses from five organisations. Many thanks to those who participated.

This data was then collated by a process whereby each team member was allocated a set of responses for certain questions. The responses were grouped and main themes were identified. Where relevant, these themes were used to develop recommendations. Other quantifiable data was represented in tabular form.

A review of The Department of Conservation and Land Management's (the Department's) budget data, both recurrent and external, for the year 2000/01 was also conducted to identify where funds were being used in threatened flora conservation. The interviews also contained some elements of budget for financial year 200/01 and forecast 2001/02. Unfortunately budget figures for 2001/02 had not been released by the Department in time to be included in this report.

## **Actual Outcomes.**

The *Western Everlasting* team provided the following:

- A report that provides a mechanism for implementing and integrating *Western Everlasting* as the primary initiative to conserve this State's threatened plants and takes into account a range of aspects concerning current flora conservation initiatives;
- Recommended recurrent and external funding sources;
- Recommended changes to address structural issues within the Department, related agencies and relevant community groups to help integrate flora conservation initiatives.

Below is a summary of the outcome of the teams analysis.

## **CURRENT INITIATIVES**

It is appreciated that while the *Western Everlasting* initiative has not been fully implemented, much work has been and is still ongoing for threatened flora conservation.

A wide variety of initiatives were recorded, perhaps displaying the many faceted nature of threatened flora conservation.

- Statutory process
- Departmental Activity
- Biodiversity Conservation – Threatened Flora Management
- Threatened Flora Management Plans
- Natural Heritage Trust Programs
- Wetlands and Water and Rivers Grants
- Salinity Action Plan
- Biogene Projects
- Dieback research and control
- Seed Collection
- Bushrangers
- Bushcare
- Threatened Species Network
- Regional Nature Conservation Programs

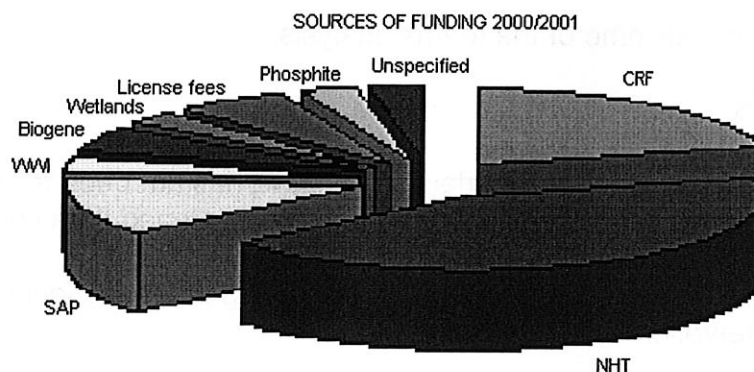
Programs that were recorded under these initiatives could be classified into a few themes. These include:

- Threatened and Priority flora listing and monitoring.
- Threatened flora management and recovery. actions, including protection against threatening processes such as dieback, salinity, predation and weeds.
- Conservation of Threatened Communities.
- Writing Interim Recovery Plans and Recovery Plans.
- Establishing and maintaining databases.
- Biological surveys.

A number of additional key points emerged as follows:

- Respondents listed a total of **447** flora taxa that are currently worked on.
- **337** taxa of flora are gazetted as in need of special protection.
- a further **2059** taxa are listed as priority flora by the Department.
- only **19%** of flora species which are either rare or priority listed are currently part of any initiative (most of those are simply mentioned in Regional Recovery Plans).
- only **75 (22%)** of the 337 Declared Rare Flora are currently managed under a Recovery Plan (RP) (2) or an Interim Recovery Plan (IRP) (73).

Clearly the bulk of projects listed by respondents were funded from external sources, in fact a total of 79% came from Natural Heritage Trust, research grants or license fees.



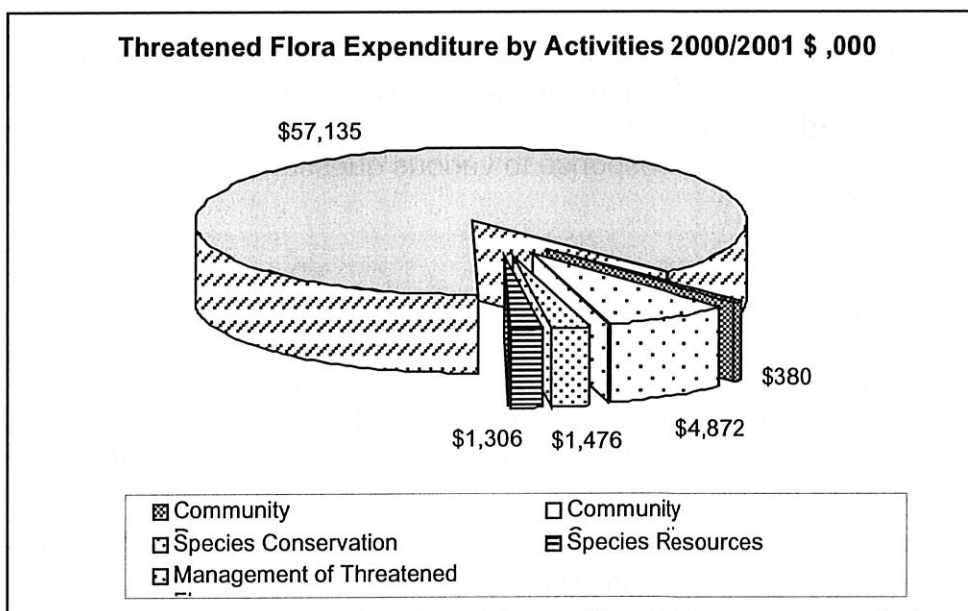
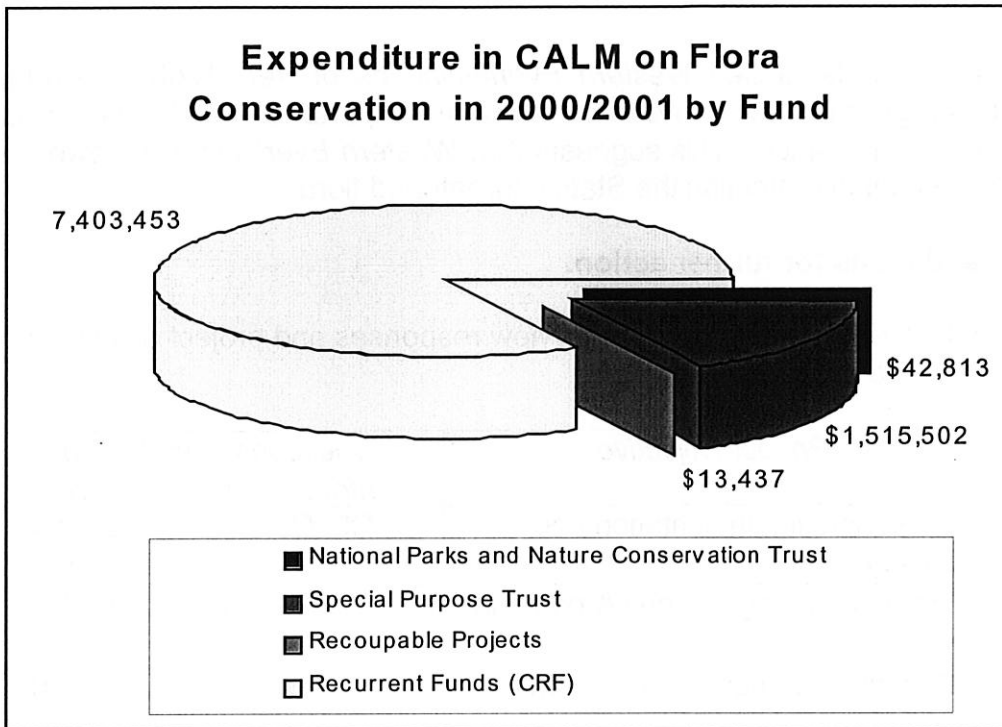
Of particular interest is the list of collaborators on projects given by respondents. The list is quite extensive and includes:

- Departmental staff
- Outside consultants
- Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority
- Mining companies
- Volunteers and Land Owners
- Research Institutions, University Students and Schools (incl. Bushrangers)
- Community groups, interest groups
- Local Government
- Land Management Agencies
- Private enterprise
- TAFE
- Regional Herbaria
- Land Conservation District Committees
- Water and Rivers Commission
- Westrail
- Main Roads
- World Wide Fund for Nature
- Department of Environmental Protection
- Aboriginal Groups
- WA Museum
- Wildflower Society of WA

A total of 1755 volunteers were recorded, spending a recorded total of 108,141 hours. Removing Bushrangers, a total of 555 volunteers were recorded spending approximately 8,141 hours on threatened flora conservation.

It is not possible to estimate how much time and money volunteer groups and individuals actually contribute to threatened flora conservation as there are many groups such as private land holders not covered by the survey.

**BUDGET**



A total of \$8,975,205 was expended against flora conservation during the financial year 2000-2001 in the Department of Conservation and Land Management. External Funding against Specific Purpose Trusts accounted for \$1,515,502 or 17 % of flora conservation money spent.

Internal allocation of funding (recurrent) accounted for the majority of flora conservation works amounting to \$7,403,453 or 82%, **however this could not be directly attributed to "rare flora" work**, and is likely to include some funds expended on fauna conservation, and on the taxonomy of non-threatened flora taxa.

**STAKEHOLDER SUPPORT**

49% of respondents ranked *Western Everlasting* as of Very High Importance, 37% ranked it as High Importance, 8% ranked it Some Importance, 3% Low Importance and 3% Very Low Importance. This suggests that *Western Everlasting* is viewed as a very important concept in protecting the State's threatened flora.

**Recommendations for further action.**

The model that was used for linking interview responses and project objectives is indicated in the table.

<i>Project Objective</i>	<i>Questions contributing information to objective</i>
Integration, implementation and funding:	Q8, Q10, Q11, Q12, Q13, Q14
Possible funding sources & potential budget:	Q2, Q3, Q5, Q7, Q10
Strategies for increased support:	Q11

The following are the main points around which our recommendations can be constructed. They are drawn from the summarised responses to various interview questions contributed by each team member (appended). The main points were reiterated a number of times in response to various questions, and this is an attempt to synthesise them.

**1. Integration**

Significant flora conservation work continues to be carried out throughout the Department, however, perceived areas of overlap as well as poor internal communication and information management must be addressed to ensure cohesive operations.

Similarly, there are a number of agencies and community groups focused on flora conservation in the State and their efforts should also be coordinated with the Department to ensure an integrated approach to managing threatened flora conservation.

- Develop more effective internal communication and information management practices
- Identify opportunities for integration within the Department and with other stakeholders.

## **2. Implementation**

In order to achieve an integrated, identifiable and well-supported long-term initiative addressing threatened flora conservation, four key elements have been identified.

- A strategic plan be developed to implement Western Everlasting. This will detail the needs of the Department and all other stakeholders to most effectively protect, recover and promote threatened flora.
- This strategic plan be developed with regard to the forthcoming State Biodiversity Conservation Plan and/or the Natural Resource Management Strategy. This plan may then serve as a model for how the overarching strategies might operate with regard to flora conservation. This will ensure integration of the Department's work with that of other stakeholders.
- In order to move forward, the Department should appoint and support a full-time coordinator to champion the strategic plan and act as a focus and contact for Western Everlasting.
- The coordinator should also be charged with developing and enabling a marketing strategy to raise both the project profile and additional funds to ensure the aims of Western Everlasting are met.

## **3. Funding**

In order for Western Everlasting to be properly implemented, a secure funding stream must be identified and allocated. The Department must commit sufficient recurrent funding for permanent personnel and resources for ongoing operations to enable effective operation of WE.

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- Additional funding and support must also be obtained from corporate and industry sectors, scientific and environmental granting agencies, through identifying opportunities for partnerships with other stakeholders.

## **4. Increased support**

Community support is essential for Western Everlasting to succeed. The community and involved industry groups must appreciate the value and significance of the WA flora in order to gain a better understanding and awareness of threatened flora conservation issues.

- Develop a marketing strategy for Western Everlasting to raise community awareness and promote flora conservation
- Develop community education programs and promote collaborative initiatives with industry, community and government on flora conservation projects.

**Review of project management processes, and issues that needed to be addressed.**

Absences due to staff leave, and other unforeseen staff absences resulted in a reorganisation of the time line and reallocation of tasks to more evenly distribute the work load. For example, a number of group members had leave in November, so these group members contributed more time prior to taking leave.

Two group members were not Perth based, so meetings were planned to coincide with times when these members were in Perth due to other commitments.

The use of e-mail was vitally important in the project management process. All members of the group could remain in contact without the need for time consuming phone conferences, or meetings. This was essential for those members based remote from Perth. The transfer of documents electronically allowed for quick editing of text (eg/ using track changes in Word), thereby speeding up the project management process and allowing the project to remain on target.

Regular meetings were held in Perth where group members were able to report on their tasks, which enabled group decisions to be made more effectively. Murdoch facilitator Max Scully attended one of these meetings. Project sponsor Keith Morris and Neil Burrows were also consulted about the questionnaire. These meetings helped to provide direction and focus for the project, in terms of allocations of tasks and definition of scope.

On reflection, the group could have specified a time limit on responding to the questionnaire. Responses were received well into the project during time allocated for writing of summaries and reports. This led to editing problems in writing summaries to questions. Also, after reviewing the answers to some of the questions posed to respondents, it appears that some questions were slightly ambiguous, or open to interpretation. One respondent replied that the questionnaire was very "deep". Also the wording of the questions led to some responses being of a quantitative nature, while others answering the same question were qualitative. This led to problems in writing of summaries.

Initial timelines were constructed aimed at delivery of the report by the original November 23 deadline . These deadlines took into account pre – existing leave arrangements and served only as a guide to final project delivery. Mid project deadlines were set at group meetings or through email. Due to conflicting work priorities members at various times were unable to fully participate in the group process.



## **Review of and reflect on (group) dynamics and issues that arose.**

The group possesses a variety of skills, so group members selected tasks that incorporated these skills wherever possible. In particular, a number of members possess particular computing skills, and these were very valuable, for example, in developing web-based information, time lines, and power-point presentations. Some members had good background knowledge of specific areas related to the topic, and were able to contribute more to specific parts of the project. For example, two members had a good knowledge of accounting within the department and were able to interrogate the Department's systems for accounting information relevant to the project.

The group as a whole agreed to a "best team practice", in that all decisions were undertaken after appropriate reflection, allowing for agreement within the group. In doing so, the group achieved its objectives, despite the absence of several members at various times during the project. The group was very dedicated to its task and there were always volunteers for individual tasks that needed to be performed.

With so much effort required from all team members to complete the project, due to heavy work commitments several team members completed their tasks after hours. This was an individual decision made by those team members.

The group dynamics during the live-in part of the leadership course went very smoothly with a very cooperative and effective relationship between members being established quite easily early on. It was therefore decided that no group leader was required for the project and that tasks would be allocated based on skills, expertise, time commitments and interests. In various aspects of the work undertaken though, all group members at some stage or other took on leadership roles in performing their tasks. Usually a team member led in their area of expertise and in so doing facilitated knowledge transference to other team members. This cross fertilisation of knowledge about specialist areas and Departmental practices was a particularly valuable part of the exercise of working with such a disparate team.

## **Reflect on lessons learnt from the project.**

On reflection there were several lessons learnt from working on such a project within a team environment. These were:

- The difficulty of coordinating team members from various parts of the state: This issue could have been a major obstacle but was overcome through cooperation between those members effected and the use of email.
- The need to set a timeline on responses to the questionnaire, and other parts of the project.
- The need for support from workmates and supervisors during the project: Not only within the district or section, but also from other regions and districts, particularly those who participated in the interview, or provided extra information when approached.
- A group with such a wide variety of skills and abilities helped enormously with the management of the project. Those skills and abilities are tools that should be utilised in the most efficient and effective manner possible to best achieve goals.

- Respect for the input from other team members was a strength of the group.
- All team members played a coordinating role at various stages of the project, negating need for an overall coordinator.
- Other issues will always arise which place obstacles in the path.
- Development of a web site was crucial for aiding communication between the group and with the stakeholders.
- Email and web pages while useful, do not guarantee that a response will be forthcoming. Sometimes face to face is the most effective way of gaining cooperation from people.
- Early identification of time restraints allowed group members to reorganise the time line and reallocate tasks as necessary
- In planning a project there is a need to tailor the scope and objectives to be achievable within timeline constraints.
- The combined outcome from all team members is greater than the sum of the parts for two reasons. Project outcome is enhanced by teamwork and learning, while knowledge is gained which is not achievable when working in isolation or within a single specialist area.

The Western Everlasting Team  
December 2001