



Land Management  
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DEPT OF BIODIVERSITY, CONSERVATION & ATTRACTIONS

# **CALM BRIEFING PAPER 1/94**

## **CONSERVATION OF THREATENED SPECIES AND THREATENED ECOLOGICAL COMMUNITIES**

### **BACKGROUND**

The Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) is developing new and rigorous procedures for the conservation of threatened species and ecological communities. This briefing paper provides guidance on these issues for those involved in the management of threatened species and ecological communities, or in research into their conservation biology.

Coordination of all threatened species and ecological community conservation is carried out by CALM's Western Australian Threatened Species and Communities Unit (WATSCU). A Threatened Species and Communities Management Committee has been set up by CALM with the following terms of reference:

- To develop, recommend and review CALM policy on threatened species and community matters, especially where issues cross Divisional boundaries.
- To set policy for the operations of WATSCU.
- To review WATSCU-developed priorities for CALM's threatened species and community research and management.
- To help resolve questions of priorities between WATSCU and other CALM staff.

### **THE RECOVERY PROCESS**

The 'recovery process' provides the overall framework for the conservation of threatened species and communities. It can be summarised in the following steps:

1. review the conservation status of all taxa and ecological communities,
2. prepare conservation priority lists of threatened taxa and ecological communities,
3. where insufficient information exists to prescribe conservation actions, conduct the necessary research,
4. produce costed Recovery Plans, and
5. for each Recovery Plan, obtain funding, implement, and monitor and review implementation.

This process can be followed at national, State or local levels. In CALM, we are concerned with the State level, but we must be aware of national and local issues that interact with our work. For example, the Australian Nature Conservation Agency (ANCA) provides money to CALM under contractual arrangements for research into and management of threatened species and ecological communities and threatening processes. Their decisions on funding will be based on a perception of national priorities, which may differ somewhat from those of the State.

CALM's approaches to implementing the recovery process are:

#### **1. Listing**

The Wildlife Conservation Act provides for taxa of plants and animals to be listed as threatened. CALM Policy Statements No. 9 *Conservation of threatened flora in the wild* and No. 33 *Conservation of endangered and specially protected fauna in the wild* cover this area. Listings are reviewed and changes recommended by the Endangered Flora Consultative Committee and the Threatened Fauna Scientific Advisory Committee. Ministerial approval is necessary before changes are given legal status in a notice in the Government Gazette. There is currently no equivalent legislation or Committee covering threatened ecological communities. A non-statutory listing process, including the establishment of a scientific advisory committee, for ecological communities is being considered. Once developed, it will be the subject of a CALM Policy Statement.

## 2. Priorities

Methods used to decide priorities for conservation action for threatened species are described in CALM Policy Statement No. 50 *Setting priorities for the conservation of Western Australia's threatened flora and fauna*. A scoring system is used as a guide to allocating taxa to the IUCN Red Book categories of threat. For those taxa categorised as 'Critical' or 'Endangered' each known population will be listed and prioritised for conservation management.

An important strategy that CALM is using to assist the listing, prioritising and conservation management of vascular plants, is the development of Regional and District Flora Management Programs. These review the status of declared threatened flora and priority taxa in a CALM Region or District, and recommend management needs for declared rare and priority taxa.

A process is currently being developed for ranking threatened ecological communities.

## 3. Scientific research

Within CALM, scientific research priorities and projects are developed primarily by Science and Information Division. Two of the Division's Sections, Community Conservation and Species Conservation, both within the Bio-conservation Group, carry out most of the research relevant to threatened species and ecological communities, but other groups also contribute. Funding for research can come from CALM's budgetary allocation from the State Government or from external sources.

ANCA has described its approach to the recovery of threatened species and communities. This includes the preparation of "Research Plans" for threatened species and ecological communities. These are detailed plans for research into the conservation biology of threatened species and ecological communities, including detailed costs of Research Actions, prescribed in a similar way to recovery actions in Recovery Plans. Where CALM is intending to approach ANCA for significant research funding, the development of a detailed Research Plan will aid that request.

## 4. Recovery Planning and implementation

CALM Policy Statement No. 44 *Wildlife Management Programs* lays down procedures for the development and implementation of Recovery Plans and Interim Wildlife Management Guidelines (IWMGs). The Policy also covers the setting up and operation of Recovery Teams. As a general rule, the Team should be set up before the Recovery Plan or IWMG is written and should be involved in its preparation. Recovery Teams will also be set up to coordinate the preparation and implementation of Regional or District Threatened Flora Management Programs.

### RECOVERY TEAM MEMBERSHIP

Where CALM is the lead agency in developing and implementing a Recovery Plan, the membership of a Recovery Team must be approved by the Threatened Species and Communities Management Committee. Proposals to develop a Recovery Team should be discussed with the Director of WATSCU and submissions must be made via WATSCU. Where CALM is the lead agency, the chair of the Recovery Team will be a CALM officer. Where appropriate, the Chair will be a person from a Region or District in which the threatened species or community occurs. Where more than one CALM Region is involved, the chair may be a person with a wide knowledge of the species or ecological community, eg, a Research Scientist.

As a general rule, Recovery Teams should include among their membership representatives of all groups that have a stake in or may be affected by the Recovery Plan. These include, where appropriate:

- CALM staff involved in managing or researching the species or ecological community,
- a WATSCU staff member,
- staff from other State Government agencies, such as Perth Zoo, Kings Park and Botanic Garden, Main Roads, or the Western Australian Water Authority,
- scientists with expertise in the species or ecological community, eg, from Universities or CSIRO,
- persons from local Government,
- landowners or land managers, preferably representing a local organisation such as a Land Conservation District Committee or catchment management group,
- representatives of funding agencies such as ANCA or WWF Australia, and

- members of non-Government conservation groups, eg, wildflower societies. Such people are asked to join where they can make a major contribution to the development or implementation of the Recovery Plan, not because they represent a particular group.

People appointed to Recovery Teams are expected to meet their own costs. In exceptional circumstances, eg, where interstate travel is required to attend meetings or where extensive country travel is involved, costs may be identified in the Recovery Plan and funding sought.

Recovery Teams should meet as often as required. All Recovery Teams must meet at least once per year.

CALM staff have and will become members of Recovery Teams set up by other agencies, eg, the Northern Territory Conservation Commission and the South Australian Department of Environment and Natural Resources. Approval for a CALM staff person to join such teams must be given by the relevant Director and the Threatened Species and Communities Management Committee.

### **DUTIES OF RECOVERY TEAM CHAIRS**

The chairperson of a Recovery Team is primarily responsible for the efficient operation of the Team and for ensuring, in association with the Team, that the Recovery Actions are properly identified, prescribed in the Recovery Plan or IWMG, and implemented. The Recovery Team chair's duties include:

- Arranging meeting agendas, dates, times and places (where appropriate, dates should be coordinated via WATSCU to minimise travelling of CALM staff and to assist members from the eastern States).
- Circulating to Team members a Summary Record of each Team meeting. This should be a brief summary of outcomes and information, not detailed minutes, and should be done within two weeks of the meeting date. Using a junior staff person to keep minutes is not appropriate - the Chair should keep notes during the meeting and prepare the Summary Record him/herself.
- Arranging for an annual (calendar year) report to be prepared and ensuring that it is forwarded to WATSCU by 15 January each year. The report should describe progress in relation to each Recovery Action specified in the Recovery Plan or IWMG and highlight any difficulties encountered.
- Ensuring that any allocated external funds are spent only as specified in the contract.
- Ensuring that the Recovery Plan is updated if significant changes to recovery actions or funding are agreed by the Recovery Team.
- Ensuring that all relevant papers are placed on the CALM Recovery Plan file (a separate file for each Recovery Plan and IWMG will be created by Records Branch on advice from WATSCU).

### **RECOVERY PLANS AND INTERIM WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES**

CALM is developing a three level approach to the conservation of threatened species and ecological communities via Recovery Plans and IWMGs:

1. For all critically threatened species and ecological communities and the highest priority endangered species and ecological communities, to develop and implement detailed Recovery Plans. Where threatened species and ecological communities are critically threatened and there is insufficient information to prepare a Recovery Plan, IWMGs will be used as an interim measure.
2. For threatened species and ecological communities classified as Endangered, which do not have a Recovery Plan, to develop and implement IWMGs for their conservation.
3. For other threatened species and ecological communities (including those classified as Vulnerable and Susceptible) to ensure that monitoring and conservation actions are integrated into routine operations at the District level.

Policy Statement No. 44 provides guidelines for the preparation of Recovery Plans and Interim Wildlife Management Guidelines. The most important part of a Recovery Plan or IWMG is the list of Recovery Actions; tasks that must be implemented in order to ensure the conservation of the species or ecological community.

Recovery Plans are detailed documents and are appropriate for species or communities where sufficient information is available to prescribe recovery actions with confidence. Interim Wildlife Management Guidelines prescribe immediate actions that are necessary to conserve a species or ecological community.

Recovery Plans and Interim Wildlife Management Guidelines must include full costing of recovery actions for the full period of the Plan or Guideline. CALM and other agency contributions, of both staff time and contingency funds, should be clearly identified. Details of calculations used to develop CALM's contribution and to develop the amounts of external funds to be requested should be recorded, either in an Appendix to the Plan or on the CALM file. Figures should be those worked out at the time of writing (ie, no allowance for future inflation).

Recovery Plans will be published by CALM after approval by the Corporate Executive, referral to the National Parks and Nature Conservation Authority and endorsement by the Minister for the Environment. However, Recovery Plans are not immutable and should be considered to be evolving documents that will be amended in the light of new discoveries and experience.

Any translocations proposed must be approved according to procedures laid down in CALM Policy Statement No. 29 *Translocation of threatened flora and fauna*. Translocations, including establishment of plants into wild sites of any land status, must not take place without approval.

WATSCU keeps a register of existing and proposed Recovery Plans, IWMGs and of membership of Recovery Teams. Any person considering writing a Recovery Plan or IWMG should contact WATSCU. Because resources are scarce, it is vital that Recovery Plans and IWMGs are prepared for threatened species and ecological communities in priority order as provided in Policy Statement No. 50.

### **EXTERNAL FUNDS**

External funds are sometimes available for research into and management of threatened species and ecological communities and threatening processes. The major sources at present are ANCA's Endangered Species Program and Feral Pests Program; other ANCA programs, eg, States Cooperative Assistance Program, National Conservation Reserve System Cooperative Program and Save the Bush Program, may be appropriate for some applications. Other sources of funds include WWF Australia, corporate sponsorship and various Foundations.

Dr Andrew Burbidge coordinates all applications to the Endangered Species Program. The coordinator for the Feral Pests Program is Dr Tony Start, who works closely with WATSCU to ensure that project applications are placed in the correct program. Dr Ken Atkins coordinates the Save the Bush Program. Coordination of other external funding applications is the responsibility of Colin Ingram, CALM's Community Involvement Coordinator.

### **ROLE OF WATSCU**

The role of WATSCU is to coordinate, assist with and promote the conservation of Western Australia's threatened plants, animals and ecological communities. WATSCU staff are available to assist Recovery Team chairs and members to fulfil their duties. WATSCU has prepared a Strategic Plan, and copies are available.

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