


Australian Government

Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts

Measuring Success and the EPBC Act

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Overview

- Andrew Weavers on project by project decision-making
- Peter Burnett, First Assistant Secretary, Approvals and Wildlife Division, on ways forward including strategic agreements

What does success mean?

The objects of the EPBC Act

- persistence and recovery of threatened species

What is sustainable development?

- create more habitat than you clear

Administrative goals

- timely and cost-effective
- removing uncertainties
- cumulative impacts

Elements of a Successful Strategy

Information Gathering

- WA DEC and other experts

Logical Framework

- a systematic way of understanding and communicating significant impacts

Significant Impact Thresholds

- Clear, spatial, and high level

Clear Advice to Developers

- the department's considerations during assessments
- the outcomes that are acceptable

Logical Framework (1)

- Potential impacts involve both direct and indirect impacts.
- Current overall population trend for the Carnaby's Black Cockatoo is declining.
- Occurs in the south-west including Swan Coastal Plain and the wheatbelt.
- Habitat is mainly in uncleared or remnant native eucalypt woodlands, especially those that contain Salmon Gum and Wandoo and in shrubland or kwongan heathland dominated by Hakea, Dryandra, Banksia and Grevillea species. Sometimes occurs in forests containing Marri, Jarrah or Karri.
- Breeding habitat is primarily in the Salmon and Wandoo, but also in Tuart, Red Morrell, York Gum, Jarrah, Marri, Swamp Yate and Gimlet.

Logical Framework (2)

- Habitat became severely fragmented during the 20th century due to the clearance of native woodlands, shrublands and heathlands for urban, logging and agricultural purposes.
- Habitat loss and alteration are the major threats to Carnaby's Black Cockatoo and cause changes in population density and habitat occupancy.
- A full recovery of the Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo to a state where the species is self sustaining in nature, and is no longer threatened, will require the persistence of robust flocks.
- The persistence of robust flocks requires the maintenance and enhancement of existing habitat values.

Logical Framework (3)

- The long-term survival of a robust population of the species depends on the availability of:
  - suitable woodland breeding habitat and tree hollows, and
  - foraging habitat capable of providing enough food to sustain the population.
- The proposed development site contains [x hectares of foraging and/or breeding] habitat for Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo, and [y hectares are proposed to be cleared].
- Based on the current understanding of the Carnaby's Black-Cockatoo's ecology the clearing from this proposed development site is likely to have a significant impact on the persistence of Carnaby's Black-Cockatoos.

Black Cockatoo Significant Impact Thresholds

- Any clearing of woodland stands of 0.5 ha or more that include 3 or more breeding trees of 500 mm DBH
- Any clearing of known breeding trees
- Clearing of more than 1 ha of foraging habitat
- Creation of a new gap of more than 4 kilometers between patches of black cockatoo habitat
- Clearing of a known roosting site (including individual trees)
- Shooting of birds or taking of eggs or chicks from the wild
- Introduction of invasive species such as honey bees that creates competition for hollows
- Spreading of known plant diseases such as Phytophthora, or
- Altering hydrology or fire regimes so that black cockatoo habitat of more than 1 ha would become degraded or destroyed

Minimum project outcomes sought

Avoid Clearing Habitat

- Don’t clear any habitat
- Minimise the clearing of habitat
- Protect as much habitat as possible onsite

Foraging Habitat

– 4 hectares of new habitat for every hectare cleared
– 6 hectares of protected habitat for every hectare cleared

Breeding Habitat

– 6 hectares of protected habitat for every hectare cleared
– 10 hectares of new habitat for every hectare cleared

Other

– Topsoil and seeds
– Street trees and landscapes

Outcomes obtained – 2009

Actual decisions have achieved 8.6 to 1 comprising:

- 500 hectares of foraging and breeding habitat cleared
- 4000 hectares added to WA DEC conservation estate
- 400 hectares of habitat created
- seed collection programmes
- street trees and landscape packages – 250,000 plants
- actual costs vary – around $250 per housing lot
- all achieved within greatly reduced timeframes

What does future success look like?

- *Increasing shift to landscape scale strategic approaches*
    - EPBC mechanisms - strategic assessments, conservation agreements
    - Kimberley, Keralup and hopefully Perth
    - Melbourne, Molonglo, Western Sydney

- *Early engagement & policy influence*, *especially in planning*

    Invited onto TAGs for regional planning in WA
    - Wanneroo and Busselton

What does future success look like?

- Also through national reform mechanisms - COAG (both working group and now Major Cities Strategic Planning Initiative) & Hawke Review lead further down this track

- *More collaboration* – not just on strategic assessments but on species listing & recovery, offsets policy; data and mapping
- *High level of awareness and acceptance of EPBC Act by proponents*

What does future success look like?

- What about for the environment itself?
    - IYB 2010 – stop the decline
    - CO_2 not beyond 450ppm, temp increase 2°
- More use of targets – eg *Caring for Our Country* Program
- Beyond measurement to outlooks – GBR Outlook Report (www.gbrmpa.gov.au under “publications”)

Conclusion

- The administration of the EPBC Act is evolving to deliver success
- It may be possible to achieve even more through cooperation with state agencies
- Hawke Review of EPBC Act – further down the track of landscape scale approaches