

Protecting the Swan River landscape



Ross Montgomery, Principal Environmental Officer and Peter Tapsell, Environmental Officer for the Swan River Trust share their views on managing the landscape amenity around the rivers.

We all take pride in our beautiful river and the landscape around the Swan and Canning rivers should be celebrated. Maintaining and protecting the natural landscape can only lead to a more sustainable and healthy river system.

Professor George Seddon (author of many books on landscapes and the Swan and Canning rivers) refers to the 'sense of place' and in particular notes that there is little point in replicating landscapes from elsewhere at the expense of the local landscape.

When dealing with development applications on and next to the Swan River Trust Management Area, one of the major issues that arise is the aesthetic impact of new structures and associated development.

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So how does a Swan River Trust assessment officer assess aesthetic impacts?

The task requires analysis of the 'sense of place' and the impact a proposed development will have on the visual character that makes up the Swan and Canning river landscape.

First one must define what makes up the environment in which the development is to sit. For example: the significant historical and cultural aspects; the dominant landform and prevailing characteristics; and the potential impact on the foreshore reserve.

If a building is taller than cliffs next to it, it changes the relationship between the built and natural elements of the landscape. The landscape becomes more 'urban' to the eye as the new building becomes the dominant visual aspect.

Foreshore reserves are often used for public recreation and it is therefore likely that development next to the reserve could have an impact on the public enjoyment and experience of that landscape. The development could cast shadows over the area or could attract more noise and traffic to the area if it is currently a quiet spot.

Other challenges that face Trust officers include the fashion to market new developments that are based on characteristics from overseas designs

rather than local ones. This could radically change the visual landscape of the river, particularly if they are close to significant landscape features.

There is also an increasing demand for higher density housing along some stretches of the river. This can result in less 'green' space, fewer trees and a hard urban skyline at odds with the current character of an area.

The factors that influence the assessment of a development application have been published in the Landscape Description, produced by the Swan River Trust in 1997. This description however does not make prescriptions for what does or does not complement the landscape character.

The assessment officers' job requires using their knowledge of the 'sense of place', assessing the impact of a development on the experience of the Swan and Canning river landscape, and balancing these factors with the public's need for more housing, commercial facilities and infrastructure.

These factors, along with any issues raised by other authorities are presented in a planning report to the Trust Board and the Minister for Water Resources to help them make their decision as to whether a development should be approved and, if so, what conditions should be placed on the development.

Community forum - August 2001 -

The Swan-Canning Cleanup Program has now completed its second year of implementing Action Plan recommendations.

We would like you to join us to reflect on the year and to discuss next year's challenges.

The Community Forum is to take place in August 2001 and attendance is free. Invitations will be sent out in due course.

The forum also gives you an opportunity to have your say about issues that are impacting on the health of the Swan and Canning rivers.

For more information please contact:

**Silvana Affolter at the
Swan River Trust on
(08) 9278 0506**

Help keep our rivers healthy

You can help to improve the health of the Swan and Canning rivers by:

- joining a catchment group,
- participate in planting or weeding days,
- supporting your children's involvement in environmental education programs such as Ribbons of Blue,
- encouraging your place of work to hold a corporate care day and clean up the river,
- watching for pollution risks and reporting spills or other environmental problems.



Training the teachers

More than 40 teachers from schools around the Swan-Canning catchment teamed up recently to undergo professional development training coordinated by Ribbons of Blue.

Ribbons of Blue staff demonstrated the importance of water resource management by getting the teachers involved in the practical, innovative activities that make up the Ribbons of Blue program.

The training involved discussions on integrated catchment management, data confidence and algae management and practical sessions on physical, chemical and biological monitoring techniques and procedures.

Environmental education is becoming increasingly important in Australia and this training has inspired many of the teachers involved to integrate Ribbons of Blue into their education programs.

Industry helping to clean up the Swan

Seven small businesses completed training in reducing pollution risks to local waterways and groundwater last month.

Staff from businesses including landscapers and chemical manufacturers took part in the pilot Cleaner Production Program for Small to Medium Sized Businesses.

The pilot, run by Curtin University of Technology's Centre of Excellence in Cleaner Production, was part of the Swan River Trust's Swan-Canning Industry Project which surveyed 550 industries last year.

Its findings showed that 16 per cent of Perth light industrial operations disposed of wastewater using the stormwater system and 19 per cent allowed their wastewater to soak into the ground, potentially affecting groundwater.

Trust Chairman Geoff Totterdell presented certificates to the businesses, and urged all other light industrial business owners interested in improving their business performance and protecting the environment to get involved in the Cleaner Production Program.

Information on future Cleaner Production Programs is available from Michael Allen at the Water and Rivers Commission on telephone 6250 8000.

On 1 April 2001, as part of the 2001 Autumn River Festival sponsored by the Swan-Canning Cleanup Program, the Minister for Water Resources launched the Swan River Action Kit.



Karen Ireland (right) will be implementing the Swan River Action Program and can be contacted at the Swan Catchment Centre on 9220 5300.

Take action

Discovering the values and environmental issues of our special river is the foundation for ensuring that everyone can play their part in protecting it for the future.

For people with a new interest in the river, the Swan River Action Kit may be a pathway that leads to more enjoyment of the waterways and

perhaps getting involved in personal or community action.

For people already active in community groups that are committed to restoring the river or its catchment, it can provide a structured learning experience for the group to gain knowledge, share understanding and experience and enrich their activities.

Support for catchment management and foreshore restoration

The Swan-Canning Cleanup Program recognises the hard work undertaken by community groups in helping to keep our rivers healthy. In this second year of implementing the Cleanup Program's Action Plan \$504 000 was distributed to community groups - up \$200 000 from last year.

This year \$404 000 was allocated to help various catchment groups with operational costs such as employment of coordinators, project officers, education officers and landcare trainees, administrative support and office supplies. The funding primarily targets the priority catchments highlighted in the Cleanup Program's Action Plan.

By providing support for the logistical components of catchment groups' operations, the Cleanup Program aims to give groups security to pursue other funding opportunities and frees officers' time to work directly with community members and local authorities in on-ground activities.

A further \$100 000 was provided to the Swan Catchment Urban Landcare Program (SCULP) to help fund a range of community and local government restoration works. The SCULP program also attracted \$250 000 funding from Alcoa.

Funds provided to the Blackadder-Woodbridge Catchment Group will also contribute toward initiating interest for a catchment group in Susannah Brook, a SCCP priority catchment that is currently without an active catchment group.



Swan-Canning Cleanup Program support for catchment groups and SCULP by sub-catchment 2000-2001.

Furthermore, funds provided to the Mills Street Main Drain will help establish and run this newly formed group.

Swan Catchment Centre training calendar

Next quarter's training (July to September 2001) includes the following local courses, talks and workshops:

- The 2001 Acacia Symposium
- Advanced Design Course
- Future of the Wheatbelt Valleys conference and workshop
- 2001 Australian Stream Management Conference, Brisbane
- 2001 River Symposium, Brisbane
- 1st International Orchid Conservation Congress
- State Landcare Youth Forum 2000 - 'Our Future Together'
- State Landcare Conference 2001 - 'Partnerships & Diversity'

For further information or to advertise your training or educational events, please contact Bronwyn Ryan at the Swan Catchment Centre on (08) 9220 5300

HELP KEEP OUR RIVERS HEALTHY

Find out how you can do the right thing by the river - phone 1800 062 549
or check the advice on our web site www.wrc.wa.gov.au/srt

Swan River Trust Stakeholder River Tour

A river tour was held in April 2001 to brief stakeholders, including Members of Parliament, local government, and representatives from key recreation and sporting groups on issues relating to managing and protecting foreshores and waterways of the Swan-Canning rivers.

The Aboriginal Cultural Materials Committee was invited to brief attendees on Aboriginal culture and the importance of the Swan and Canning rivers. Swan River Trust staff were on hand to discuss how these issues are relevant to Swan River Trust development control processes.



Ken Colbung of the Aboriginal Cultural Materials Committee addresses the group.

Swan River Trust awaits arrival of ugly duckling



The Trust is about to take delivery of its new river work boat.

Looking more like a 1 tonne truck than a Ferrari, the boat has been specifically designed to handle the wide variety of work undertaken by our field crew.

It incorporates innovative design features such as: bow loading ramp; electric hydraulic Hiab crane; 4-stroke motor; shallow hull; buoyancy tanks; large rear deck; and walk through cabin access to the front deck well.

The Trust's existing work boat, the Ken Head - built in 1993, has come to the end of its useful life.

A work in progress

Costing about \$80 000, the new boat is being built in Albany by West Australian-owned Westerberg Marine which won the tender over international competition. The new boat will help the Trust continue to clean and maintain the waterways and foreshores of the Swan-Canning river system for the future.

Air conditioner wastewater policy

Many air conditioners contain water treatment chemicals that are added to reduce the growth of potentially harmful bacteria, algae and fungi and to prevent corrosion in these units.

The wastewater from units in the Perth central business district, including water treatment chemicals, is generally discharged to stormwater drains that flow directly into the Swan River.

The Trust has worked with the Water Corporation, the City of Perth, the Department of Environmental Protection and the Property Council of Australia and has proposed a draft policy and implementation strategy addressing these waste discharges.

The implementation of the policy will ensure that new air conditioning systems do not discharge water treatment chemicals to stormwater drains and that discharge to these drains from existing systems is phased out.

For more information contact the Swan River Trust on 9278 0400.

Hot off the press

- **River Science Issues 1, 2, 5 and 6**
- **The Canning River Oxygenation Project Summary reports of the 1998/1999 and 1999/2000 operation, Dec. 2000**
- **The Swan Barge Oxygenation Project Summary report of the 1999/2000 operation, December 2000**
- **The Catchment of the Swan-Canning River System, February 2001 Estuary (Western Australia) 1987-1998, June 2000**

Level 3 Hyatt Centre
87 Adelaide Terrace
East Perth WA 6004

Phone: (08) 9278 0400
Fax: (08) 9278 0401

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website: <http://www.wrc.wa.gov.au/srt>

Protecting the Swan-Canning river system for the future