

25 March 2013



Claire Cummings
Economic and Deregulation Subdivision
Department of the Premier and Cabinet
Dumas House, 2 Havelock Street, West Perth

Dear Claire

Perth Peel Strategic Assessment – Draft Conservation Outcomes Statement ‘Peel-Yalgorup Ramsar Wetlands’ – PHCC Comment

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Perth Peel Strategic Assessment Conservation Outcomes Statements as presented to the Stakeholder Reference Group. On behalf of the Peel-Harvey Catchment Council comments on the ‘Peel-Yalgorup Ramsar Wetland’ draft conservation outcome are detailed below:

The Objectives need to mention the PYS Ramsar Management Plan in the dot point “Implementing relevant management plans.....” It is far more specific than the Fertiliser Partnership and involved all stakeholders. It includes for example the protection of migratory bird feeding sites from deterioration and disturbance (people, boats, vehicles, dogs and cats).

While the WQIP is noted it is far from a Catchment Plan – this is still needed. The WQIP also is silent on water quality concerns such as nitrogen and sediments. A recent review (PHCC 2013) of implementation of the WQIP 2008-2011 identified that as it stands the WQIP is without prioritisation, timeframes, resources and defined responsibilities and is consequently not being implemented at a scale necessary to improve water quality in the Peel-Harvey even before the projected population explosion anticipated to 2031 and beyond. A revised WQIP is required with commitment to effective implementation.

Developing a Catchment Plan that addresses the protection of wetlands is a precursor to “Effective management of threatening processes”. This needs to be endorsed by the WAPC and linked so that it has the status to ensure that it effectively guides the development of the Catchment, and is not held in disregard such as many other state advice.

There also needs to be mention of acquiring private land into reserves and reviewing reserve boundaries. The private land west of Lake Clifton requires acquisition. A Peel Regional Park is needed to achieve any State Government management of the site. . The EPA’s Section 16e Report 1359 recommends this for protection of Lake Clifton and for its intrinsic values.

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Currently the Conservation Commission has no jurisdiction on anything other than its own estate. Investment in management of this is inadequate and consequently resulting in a deterioration of natural assets (increased weed invasion, feral animals, disease, disturbance), resulting in a decline in species diversity and populations. The site has multiple vestings and ownership and needs to be managed in a more cohesive manner.

They need to also include the establishment of a co-ordinating body to achieve collaboration of agencies and of community with agencies. A long recognised need, government is already committed in this direction. It needs high level representation and is yet to be established.

Currently most coordination and collaboration is achieved by PHCC but this barely impacts on land-use planning decisions at a State level and obviously has no statutory powers. The lack of any overarching Catchment Management and up to date biodiversity legislation is extremely limiting and needs to be resolved.

Outcomes also need to include the proper application of State Planning Policies and a review of their adequacy. As an example there are inadequate buffers around Lake Clifton with subsequent application of Commonwealth funds to try to ameliorate the subsequent effects of development on the lake as buffers given in the Policy were not applied. Requests for a review of the Coastal and Lakelands Planning Policy to bring it in line with the EPA Section 16e, Dawesville to Binningup Strategic Assessment, has not been successful and is unlikely to be undertaken in the foreseeable future.

The Thrombolites at Lake Clifton are now listed as a Threatened Ecological Community, its health and future in dire straits. There is little to no State investment or action via the Interim Recovery Plan even though threats and solutions are identified. The PHCC has secured Commonwealth funds to undertake some actions to increase resilience to the ecosystem through buffer restoration and community engagement but this project finishes in June 2013. There needs to be a more dedicated effort across all levels of government.

Note that with respect to the Outcome relating to monitoring, currently the State does not fund the monitoring of water quality as required for the WQIP. While the 3 main Load Measurement Units were operative with a Commonwealth grant over the last 2 years there is no money for the analysis of the results.

Noting that the wording with respect to Offsets is very precise any application of offsets to a Ramsar site is limited.

If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me on 042 844 5995.

Yours sincerely



Jan Star, AM
Chair

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