

20 March 2017

Hon Mark McGowan MLA
Premier of Western Australia

Dear Premier,

Perth and Peel Green Growth Plan for 3.5 Million

We are writing to you on behalf of the Beeliar Group of Professors for Environmental responsibility. Our group of 35 Professors was formed in January 2017 out of concern over the process used to plan and implement the Perth Freight Link and Roe Highway stage 8.

Over the past few years the Department of Planning has been working on a strategic land use plan called Perth and Peel at 3.5 Million. It is designed to provide for housing, infrastructure and employment for the residents of the Perth and Peel Region out to 2040. An important component of this Plan is the Strategic Assessment of the Perth and Peel Regions, otherwise known as the Perth and Peel Green Growth Plan for 3.5 Million (GGP). This is being prepared by the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC).

The aim of the GGP is to provide a large scale strategic assessment of the conservation and recreation needs of the Perth and Peel Regions out to 2040. We welcome this strategic approach to land use planning as it avoids piecemeal development and enables us to secure important biodiversity and heritage values.

A draft of the GGP was released for public comment by DPC in early 2016. Many professionals and community groups made submissions on it and the GGP is now being revised prior to submission to the Department of Environment and Energy in Canberra. The aim of this exercise is to obtain blanket approval for the proposed developments from the Commonwealth, thus avoiding project by project assessment under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC).

As the Perth and Peel Regions are part of one of the 25 most significant biodiversity hot spots on this planet, this exercise needs to be carried out with great care. The recent listing of the banksia woodlands of the Swan Coastal Plain as endangered under the Commonwealth EPBC Act, underlines the importance of this exercise.

Unfortunately the draft GGP was not carefully constructed. It contained numerous errors and omissions. Some important conservation areas were completely overlooked. Furthermore it purported to increase the conservation estate by 170,000 ha over the next 25 years, while in fact it would have had the effect of reducing the current conservation estate by 90,000 ha. Most of the proposed "new" reserves are already in the conservation estate, having been purchased by the WA Planning Commission with funds from the Metropolitan Region Improvement Fund over the past 50 years. Much of this land is already managed by DPAW as part of Perth's eight regional parks.

We are seriously concerned about the GGP and we request that you direct the DPC to put the revised plan out for another round of public review before it is finalised and sent to Canberra. The first draft was so inadequate that we have no confidence that the revised plan will adequately address the important biodiversity and recreation needs of the Perth and Peel Region.

The members of the Beeliar Group, Professors for Environmental Responsibility, are keen to review the revised GGP and to provide you with constructive, professional comment on its content.

We also request that the final version of the GGP be made public when it is submitted to Canberra so that the public can comment effectively on it to the Department of Environment and Energy.

Yours sincerely,
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Endorsed by Professor Bruce Armstrong and Professor Patricia Harris, co-convenors, The Beeliar Group.

Cc Hon Rita Saffioti MLA, Minister for Planning and Transport