

# Explanatory notes – Draft native vegetation policy for WA

## 1. How was issues paper feedback used?

What did we hear?	
Broad support for initiatives in the issues paper, across sectors	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Native vegetation policy</b> – to drive better coordination, consistency and transparency across State Government in protecting native vegetation.</li> <li>✓ <b>Better information</b> – to support evidence-based policy and practice, and information sharing.</li> <li>✓ <b>Better regulation</b> – to ensure regulatory effort is efficient, effective and complementary.</li> <li>✓ <b>A bioregional approach</b> – to leverage local knowledge and underpin coordinated efforts across sectors.</li> </ul>	
What else did we hear?	How is it addressed in the <a href="#">draft policy</a> ?
<p><b>The need for more clarity on how a bioregional approach will be implemented, including how boundaries will be set.</b></p> <p>⇒</p>	<p>The policy prompts the use of existing mechanisms for strategic environmental planning, and for spatial boundaries to be set through those planning processes. See <a href="#">FAQs: regional planning for native vegetation</a>.</p>
<p><b>The policy could include targets, thresholds, outcome-based objectives and a means for addressing cumulative impacts.</b></p> <p>⇒</p>	<p>The policy sets a framework to establish regionally tailored objectives and priorities, including targets and thresholds where they are warranted (see policy statement and roadmap actions 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3). Improvements in native vegetation mapping and monitoring are crucial as the foundation for evidence-based targets and thresholds, and to understand cumulative impacts.</p> <p>The policy recognises the need for outcome-based objectives for native vegetation and lays the groundwork for future reforms to support this.</p>
<p><b>Broad support for rewarding native vegetation stewardship.</b></p> <p>⇒</p>	<p>The need for support of native vegetation stewardship is reflected in the principles, approaches and roadmap actions 4.1 and 4.2.</p>
<p><b>Calls for State of the Environment reporting.</b></p> <p>⇒</p>	<p>The policy drives the data collection and sharing across government (roadmap action 2.2), and investment in a new tool to map and monitor native vegetation coverage (roadmap action 3.1), which will enable reporting on status and trends.</p>

<p><b>The urgency of reform – there is no time to lose.</b></p>	<p>⇒ Native vegetation reform can be contested, so it must be defensible and based on robust data. The policy's staged approach is designed to gather the information base and build stakeholder readiness to ensure reforms are well-planned and enduring.</p>
<p><b>Opposition to using 'striking the right balance' in the policy (though, supported by some sectors).</b></p>	<p>⇒ The concept of balance had support from some sectors. It is reflected in the context of the policy, but not its outcomes or goals.</p>
<p><b>Reform on exemptions to clearing permits and the management of offsets.</b></p>	<p>⇒ Roadmap actions on regionally tailored objectives and priorities (under Strategy 1) will involve consideration of existing exemptions and the management of offsets in the strategic setting. Recommendations may arise, and any changes to exemptions or offsets would be fully consulted upon. Roadmap actions on pricing, incentives and offsets (under Strategy 4) will provide for statewide, strategic review of offsets.</p>
<p><b>Calls for recognition of the values of native vegetation, by State Government, including its influence on human health.</b></p>	<p>⇒ Throughout, the policy prompts a focus on the broad range of values of native vegetation, and the State Government's consideration of them. Community and human health are reflected in the principles and in approach 1 (vii).</p>
<p><b>Concerns about policy implementation (including funding), governance, monitoring and evaluation.</b></p>	<p>⇒ The roadmap lays out lead agencies for the policy's actions, which will be overseen by a steering committee of Directors General that will meet regularly and report annually on progress. Many of the actions are already funded, or can be achieved through better collaboration and coordination through the usual business of government. The policy's actions, together, establish a framework for a contemporary policy evaluation cycle (see Figure 2 of the draft policy).</p>
<p><b>Calls to acknowledge climate change.</b></p>	<p>⇒ Climate change, including its influence on native vegetation water, fire and temperature regimes, is recognised in the context, principles and approaches. Roadmap actions 1.6, 1.8 and 4.1 address the need to manage native vegetation for carbon mitigation.</p>
<p><b>Calls to acknowledge national and international goals.</b></p>	<p>⇒ The policy aligns with and supports Western Australia's role in implementing Australia's Strategy for Nature, and many other national and international goals, as outlined in the context.</p>

## 2. FAQs: regional planning for native vegetation

### **Is this related to the bioregional approach initiative in the native vegetation issues paper?**

Yes, the policy builds on the bioregional approach proposed in the issues paper and commits government to undertake regional planning for native vegetation.

The [bioregional approach](#) section of the issues paper outlines potential benefits and approaches for regional planning. Reviewing it may help you target your feedback on these roadmap actions.

### **How is this different from the State Planning Framework?**

Regional planning for native vegetation would apply more broadly than the State Planning Framework. It would inform various State Government functions, such as regulation, land management, land planning and funding. Under **Roadmap actions 1.1 and 1.5** we will explore relationships between existing frameworks for strategic land planning such as conservation planning, the State Planning Framework, local government biodiversity strategies and strategic environmental planning under environmental legislation (State and Commonwealth).

### **Will regional planning for native vegetation be done by Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation for Australia (IBRA) bioregions?**

Stakeholders responded that challenges with native vegetation can be complex and span multiple IBRA bioregions, requiring solutions that are not limited to existing regional boundaries such as IBRA, planning or development commission regions. Boundaries for regional planning will be shaped by the native vegetation values, threats and challenges it seeks to manage, under **Roadmap actions 1.1 and 1.2**.

### **What does the policy do – does it set regional boundaries, the approach or the priority regions?**

Regional planning for native vegetation will require focused consideration of local issues, beyond the detail possible for this statewide strategic-level policy. To enable this, the draft policy defers a position on the priority regions, their geographic boundaries, and their policymaking pathway(s). Instead, it lays out the steps government will take to resolve these elements, informed by robust analysis, co-design and local consultation. See **Roadmap actions 1.1 to 1.6** for how regional planning will be delivered through the actions and strategies in the policy.

### Will there be any consultation on regional planning?

Yes. Under **Roadmap action 1.2**, local stakeholders will have an opportunity to provide input to define regional priorities, issues, solutions and geographical planning boundaries.

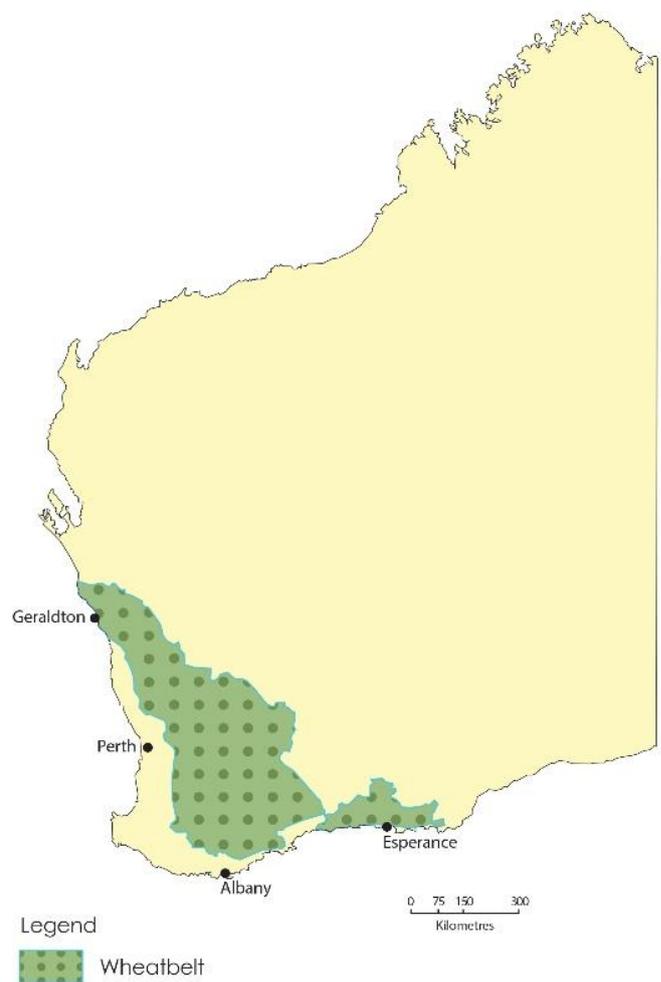
### What could regional planning look like?

**Roadmap action 1.6** establishes planning, collaboration and coordination actions on matters which stakeholders raised as priorities in this part of the state, including needs:

- to address competing priorities in managing roadside vegetation
- for a nett gain in native vegetation extent through better coordination of regulation, restoration (including offsets), roadside and reserve management.

The geographic boundary proposed in the policy covers the broadacre farming parts of the state (see **Figure 1**). Here, historic clearing was so extensive that today, all remnant native vegetation is rare and valuable, raising the environmental, social and economic stakes for clearing proposals.

The boundary will be refined through the collaborative process for regional planning.



**Figure 1:** proposed boundary for Wheatbelt

### 3. Other frequently asked questions

#### **Why is the native vegetation policy needed?**

Western Australia's native vegetation is biodiverse, internationally renowned and worth protecting. However, its management is complex, involving many organisations, individuals and competing priorities. To protect it, the policy builds the systems, processes and stakeholder readiness to support lasting reforms – including through better use of the management frameworks already in place.

#### **What will the policy do?**

The policy prompts:

- better coordination across the public, private and community sectors
- investment in mapping and monitoring
- strategic regional planning for native vegetation.

These will deliver clarity for stakeholders and a stronger evidence base for addressing cumulative impacts.

#### **How will regional planning for native vegetation be done?**

The policy does not define a model for regional planning. State Government will lead **roadmap actions 1.1 to 1.5** to define the model, and develop regionally tailored objectives and priorities. See also [FAQs: regional planning for native vegetation](#).

#### **How was the issues paper consultation feedback used?**

The feedback informed drafting of the Native vegetation policy. See also the:

- [issues paper consultation summary](#) and [submissions](#)
- [summary of how the draft policy reflects the feedback](#).

#### **Why doesn't the policy go further to prevent clearing?**

To be enduring, clearing reforms must be defensible, workable and build stakeholder readiness. Well consulted and regionally tailored objectives and priorities will form the basis for reforms, informed by better data. See also [FAQs: regional planning for native vegetation](#).

**Will this policy make it harder to gain approvals to clear for development?**

The policy will not directly change regulatory arrangements for clearing. Instead, it will progress regional planning for native vegetation, to guide regulatory assessments together with other activities. Clear, well consulted objectives will support business certainty, outcome-based regulation and streamlining. See also [FAQs: regional planning for native vegetation](#).

**Why doesn't the policy contain measurable objectives, like targets and thresholds?**

The policy aims to set up systems and practices to enable targets and thresholds can be developed, implemented and monitored. For example, some stakeholders called for a statewide nett gain in native vegetation cover, but we don't have a system to monitor its achievement. Roadmap action 3.1 proposes to establish one.

**There are a lot of commitments. Will this policy be funded? How?**

Most of the policy's roadmap can be achieved now, through better coordination across government's usual business and existing funded initiatives including Environment Online, Biodiversity Information Office and Open Data. Funding to map and monitor the state's native vegetation extent (**roadmap action 3.1**) will need to be considered through the budget process.

**What happens next?**

The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation will collate and analyse the feedback on behalf of the State Government. Feedback will inform a final policy for consideration by the State Government. The final policy will be released together with a consultation summary of feedback on the draft policy.