GOVERNMENT OF
WESTERN AUSTRALIA

# Summary

# Perth and Peel Green Growth Plan for 3.5 million

December 2015

# Background

## What is it?

The Perth and Peel regions are projected to grow to 3.5 million people by 2050 – an increase of almost 70 per cent on our current population. Supporting this growth and delivering an efficient and liveable city while protecting our unique natural environment is a significant challenge.

The State Government has prepared the draft *Perth and Peel Green Growth Plan for 3.5 million* to meet this challenge.

In this context the draft plan delivers two critical outcomes:

- Cutting red tape by securing upfront Commonwealth environmental approval and streamlining State environmental approvals for the development required to support growth to 3.5 million people; and
- Unprecedented protection of our bushland, rivers, wildlife and wetlands through implementation of a comprehensive plan to protect our environment.

The draft plan is a 21st century approach to integrating environmental protection and land use planning and is based on the largest urban-based environmental assessment ever undertaken in Australia. It has allowed the cumulative environmental impacts of growth to 3.5 million people to be considered and minimised at an early stage and will deliver a long–term and comprehensive program of conservation actions at a landscape scale.

Improving certainty is at the core of the draft plan. It provides certainty in relation to the environmental outcomes that will be delivered, the areas where development can be contemplated and the environmental obligations that will apply in terms of avoidance, mitigation and conservation actions.

## Relationship with Perth and *Peel@3.5million* and the Environmental Protection Authority's related Interim Strategic Advice

The draft *Perth and Peel Green Growth Plan for 3.5 million* is a whole of government initiative and has been developed in collaboration with the Western Australian Planning Commission's (WAPC) draft *Perth and Peel@3.5million* sub-regional planning frameworks, which were released for public comment in May 2015.

This collaboration has involved an unparalleled effort across State Government agencies to optimise development and environmental outcomes, including addressing environmental impacts in the very early stages of land use planning and resolving conflicting future demands for land at a strategic scale. This integrated and long–term planning is critical to delivering a compact, liveable and consolidated city and effective environmental protection.

The Environmental Protection Authority's (EPA) Interim Strategic Advice on *Perth and Peel@3.5 million: Environmental impacts, risks and remedies* was released in August 2015 and contains recommendations that will inform the finalisation of the planning frameworks and address the environmental impacts of growth to 3.5 million people. These recommendations have also informed the conservation and environmental commitments set out in the draft *Perth and Peel Green Growth Plan for 3.5 million's* draft Strategic Conservation Plan and draft Action Plans G and H.

## What is being approved under the *Perth and Peel Green Growth Plan for 3.5 million*?

The draft *Perth and Peel Green Growth Plan for 3.5 million* seeks to secure approval under Part 10 of the Commonwealth *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act)* and deliver streamlined approvals processes under the Western Australian *Environmental Protection Act 1986 (EP Act)* for the following development actions or 'classes of action':

- Urban and industrial development;
- Rural residential development;
- Infrastructure development;
- Basic Raw Materials extraction; and
- Harvesting of pine plantations.

The above 'classes of action' are defined in the draft *Perth and Peel Green Growth Plan for 3.5 million's* Strategic Conservation Plan.

future population of 3.5 million people

# How does it protect the environment

## Avoidance of environmental impacts

Avoidance of environmental impacts has been a key consideration in the development of the draft *Perth and Peel Green Growth Plan for 3.5 million*, with major reductions in potential environmental impacts in comparison with development contemplated through the WAPC's Directions 2031 and Beyond draft Sub-regional strategies (August 2010), the *Economic and Employment Lands Strategy: non-heavy industrial* (April 2012) and the regionally significant Basic Raw Materials mapping (Department of Mines and Petroleum, June 2012 and January 2013).

To further avoid environmental impacts within the areas of the classes of action, the draft plan's Action Plans F and G set out conservation and environmental commitments to avoid environmental impacts on a site by site basis as development occurs over the coming decades. This includes commitments such as the retention of Bush Forever sites and important populations of threatened species and ecological communities.

To date population growth in the Perth and Peel regions to 2.1 million people has resulted in the clearing of 71 per cent of the native vegetation on the Swan Coastal Plain. In contrast, through its emphasis on avoidance of environmental impacts, the draft *Perth and Peel Green Growth Plan for 3.5 million* will support the population growing by almost 70 per cent with clearing of only a further three per cent of the coastal plain and further clearing of less than one per cent east of the Darling scarp.

## Commitment to a long–term conservation program

The draft *Perth and Peel Green Growth Plan for 3.5 million* delivers a comprehensive conservation program to ensure the long–term protection of the regions' unique environment. The Conservation Program is set out in the *draft Strategic Conservation Plan* and *draft Action Plan H* and includes:

- 170,000 hectares of new and expanded conservation reserves in the Perth and Peel regions and surrounds (see map). Once the Strategic Conservation Plan is endorsed, this will deliver an immediate 50 per cent increase in the area of conservation reserves in the Perth and Peel regions;
- Implementation of critical steps to cut nutrient run-off into the Swan Canning and Peel Harvey estuaries and ensure the health of these systems over the long–term; and
- Implementation of a program of on-ground management to improve the protection and management of threatened species, wetlands and threatened ecological communities.

The 170,000 hectares of new conservation reserves includes establishing secure tenure and management arrangements for Bush Forever sites and establishing the Peel Regional Park, as well as major expansions to existing national parks and nature reserves. In addition, a marine management area will be established for the Peel Harvey estuary and its major tributaries, to improve protection of this internationally renowned wetland system and its extensive and diverse birdlife while continuing to support recreational and commercial fishing.

Reducing nutrient inflow into the Swan Canning and Peel Harvey estuaries is essential to improving the long–term health of these systems. The draft plan commits to the introduction of targeted mandatory soil testing for agricultural properties of 40 hectares or greater in size in the Swan Canning and Peel Harvey coastal plain catchments, as well as long-term drainage intervention programs in both systems and a suite of other high priority measures to improve water quality.

On ground management measures form a significant part of the draft plan's Conservation Program. These measures will be implemented in partnership with local governments and community groups and include:

- Revegetation and rehabilitation focused on improving habitat quality for multiple species and restoring and improving habitat connectivity across the landscape; and
- Management actions to address threats such as weeds, disease, uncontrolled access, fire and feral animals for the purpose of improving habitat condition and quality.

Conservation Category Wetlands will continue to be protected and a revised wetland buffer policy will be developed and implemented through the land use planning process.

Protecting Carnaby's cockatoo is also a central focus and commitments include:

- Minimum of 116,000 hectares of the new conservation reserves will contain Carnaby's cockatoo habitat;
- Replanting of 5,000 hectares of pines primarily for the purpose of cockatoo foraging habitat;
- Revegetation and rehabilitation focused on improving feeding and breeding habitat for Carnaby's cockatoo; and
- Research and monitoring measures to improve knowledge about the species and inform adaptation of the Conservation Framework.

# How will it work?

At the centre of the draft *Perth and Peel Green Growth Plan for 3.5 million* is the Strategic Conservation Plan, which sets out the conservation outcomes and objectives that will be achieved over its 30 year lifespan.

These conservation outcomes and objectives will be delivered through the implementation of:

- The avoidance, mitigation and rehabilitation requirements that will be implemented through the processes set out in Action Plans A to E; and
- The Conservation Framework, which includes the specific conservation and environmental commitments set out in Action Plans F and G and the Conservation Program set out in the Strategic Conservation Plan and Action Plan H.

The final Perth and Peel Green Growth Plan for 3.5 million will take effect following endorsement of the Strategic Conservation Plan and approval of the 'classes of action' by the Commonwealth Minister for the Environment.

Following this, where a development proposal falls within the definition of a 'class of action', the streamlined environmental approval processes detailed in Action Plans A to D will apply and referral under Part 9 of the EPBC Act will no longer be required and cannot occur. In order for an environmental approval to be granted, proponents will be required to meet the relevant conservation and environmental commitments set out in Action Plans F and G and contribute towards implementation of the Conservation Program described in the Strategic Conservation Plan and Action Plan H.

Where a development proposal falls within a 'class of action' but does not meet the relevant conservation and environmental commitments set out in Action Plans F and G, environmental approval will not be granted.

Where a development proposal does not fall within one of the 'classes of action', existing environmental approval processes under Part 9 of the EPBC Act and Parts IV and V of the EP Act will apply.

The Assurance Framework set out in Action Plan I details the monitoring, reporting and compliance activities that will be undertaken to ensure the conservation outcomes, objectives and commitments are delivered over the life time of the *Perth and Peel Green Growth Plan for 3.5 million.*

# What is the alternative to the draft Perth and Peel Green Growth Plan for 3.5 million?

Currently, environmental assessment in the Perth and Peel regions occurs on an incremental and fragmented basis. Under the Commonwealth EPBC Act the assessment of environmental impacts and their acceptability occur on a project by project basis. In parallel to this, the environmental impacts of development are also assessed under the Western Australian EP Act through a number of processes, including assessment of clearing permits and assessment of planning scheme amendments.

Continuation of this approach is likely to result in sub-optimal environment and development outcomes, with environmental impacts often being considered late in the process where limited flexibility remains. In the absence of long–term certainty of environmental outcomes as provided for under the draft *Perth and Peel Green Growth Plan for 3.5 million*, environmental assessments will become more complex as cumulative impacts and risks to key environmental values escalate.

In contrast to the draft *Perth and Peel Green Growth Plan for 3.5 million*, current environmental assessment processes do not allow for conservation planning and decision making at a landscape scale and can only address environmental impacts on a project by project basis.

# How to make a submission

The State Government is seeking public comment on the draft *Perth and Peel Green Growth Plan for 3.5 million*. The draft documents are available for feedback for public comment from 17 December 2015 to 8 April 2016.

All submissions received will be considered by the State Government prior to the preparation of the final documents in 2016. When making a submission please make sure you:

- identify which document your comments relate to
- include the section or page number
- clearly state your opinion and the reasons for your opinion
- where relevant or possible, outline alternatives or solutions to you areas of interest
- provide any additional information to support your comments

**Copies of the draft documents are available at:**

https://www.dpc.wa.gov.au/greengrowthplan

Written submissions should be sent via post or email to:

Draft *Perth and Peel Green Growth Plan for 3.5 million*

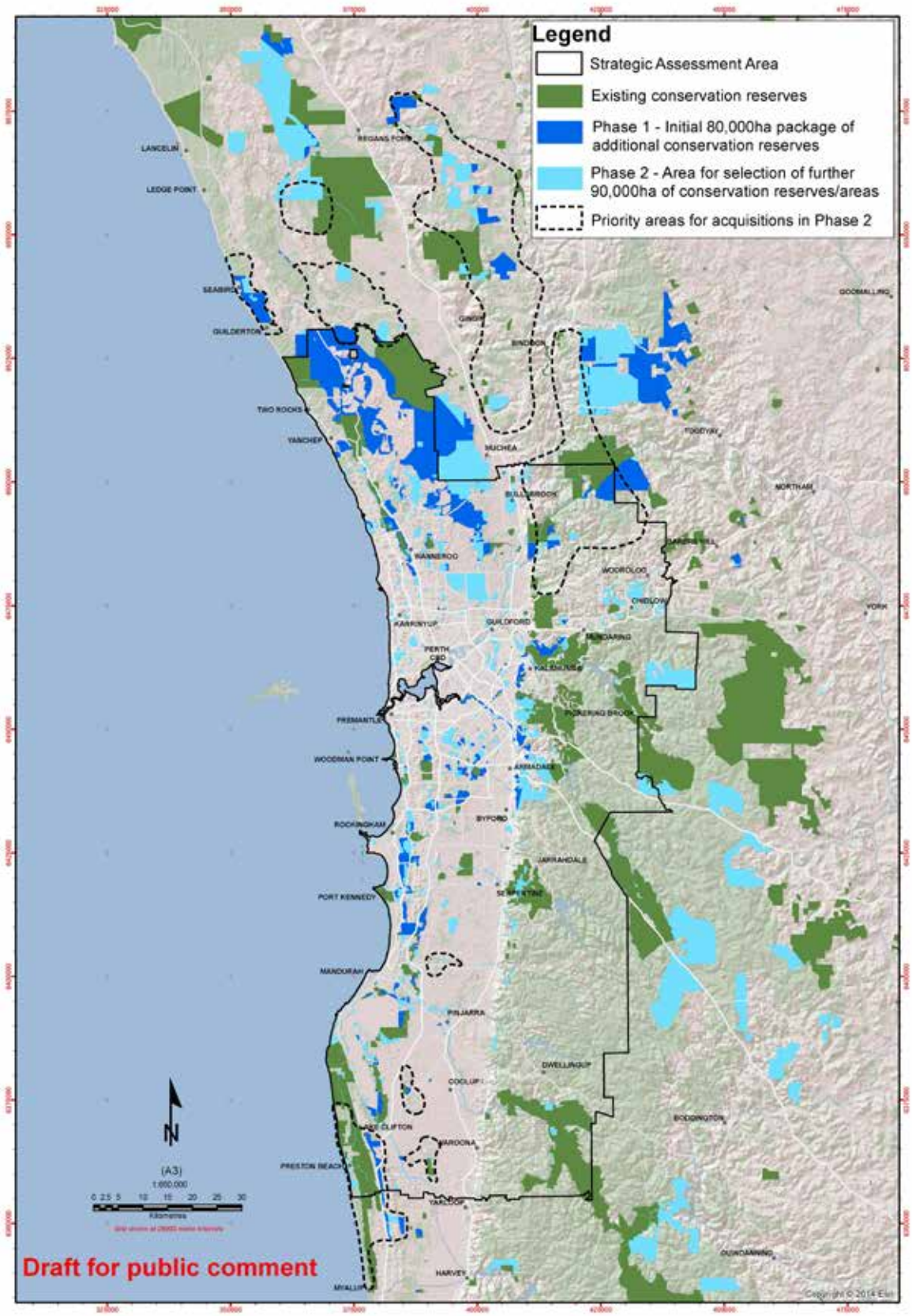
Department of the Premier and Cabinet
Locked Bag 3001
WEST PERTH WA 6872
Email: consultation@dpc.wa.gov.au

For more information on making a submission and all other enquiries, please contact greengrowthplan@dpc.wa.gov.au or (08) 6552 5151.

**All submissions must be received by 5pm on Friday 8 April 2016.**

**Late submissions will not be considered.**

# Map of the Perth and Peel regions

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