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Professor Peter Newman  
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Dear Peter

### **Bunbury's Ocean to Preston River Regional Park (proposed) and Environmental Education**

Here are three matters that the Sustainability Policy Unit may be prepared to get involved in:

- 1) inclusion of more of the available remnant vegetation into Bunbury's Ocean to Preston River Regional Open Space (ROS) to improve its long-term viability
- 2) helping the Bunbury City Council with its claims for compensation so that park boundaries can be decided and management can begin;
- 3) establishing a vegetation link through the Health, ECU and Tafe campuses for the benefit of the community in terms of the environmental education, lifestyle and ecotourism and thus improving the proposed park's sustainability.

#### **1) Improving the ecological viability of the proposed regional park**

The belt of remnant vegetation existing in the southern Bunbury area stretches in an EW direction, interrupted only by three NS running roads, over 7 km from the Ocean to the Preston River.

Because of its continuity and EW alignment it is a perfect ecological and geomorphological transect in the southern Swan Coastal Plain where all major formations are aligned in a NS direction. Transects tend to hold the best clues for unravelling the history and development of an area.

Bronwen and Greg Keighery assessed the regional value of the South Bunbury Bushland Corridor (unpubl. Report, 1999) and concluded that this is the only example in the Swan Coastal Plain where the 4 main formations, the alluvial Pinjarra Plain and the three Aeolian dune formations Bassendean, Spearwood and Quindalup exist in one continuous stretch of remnant vegetation. Elsewhere in the coastal plain including in the metropolitan area EW links over more than 2 formations are rare. If we consider the long-term implication of the isolation of the bush remnants right through the Swan Coastal Plain the significance of Bunbury's Ocean to Preston River vegetation link becomes more obvious.

It also makes possible an ecological link from the ocean to the Jarrah forest. While the total area of the future park may approach 800 ha, the width varies considerably, narrowing to ca 130 m in the section between Parade Road and Bussell Highway.

**The College Grove section of the future park should and could be wider than proposed In the Structure Plan**

Narrow sections of any length marginalise the effectiveness of the ecological link and threaten the ecological sustainability and biodiversity of the whole park.

The College Grove Structure Plan (Woodcrest Rise; Landcorp and City Council), which has not, as yet, been given final approval, did not take seriously its responsibility for the sustainability of the future Ocean to Preston River Regional Park which runs along its southern edge. It seems to have taken the minimal width of about 130 m that exists W of Bussell Highway as a guide to what is an acceptable width for the College Grove section of the transect/corridor. Because there is a considerable amount of good to excellent bushland available the corridor could be widened to 300 m and more.

Between College Grove and the Preston River there are several smaller areas of remnant vegetation that should be included in the future park: at College Grove as mentioned above, N and S of the Airport (Council), along the SW Highway and from there to the Preston River via SE, central and NE vegetation linkages. Because the vegetation there includes elements characteristic for the eastern coastal plain they have a particular significance for the transect.

**2. There is a need to resolve Council requests for some compensation so that the park boundaries can be finalised and management can begin.**

The western half from Bussell Highway to the Ocean is the subject of the just released 'Usher Dalyellup Draft Management Plan'. The extent of the western half of the park is pretty well decided. But because compensation is not resolved, the land set aside as shown in the 'Integrated Open Space Strategy, 2002'<sup>1</sup> and the draft TPS 7 is much smaller. There seems to be an impasse between the City of Bunbury and the State Govt. about compensation. The City of Bunbury gave up freehold land. If I remember rightly some of this land (previously endowment land) was a gift handed over by Minister for Lands June Craig, at the occasion of Bunbury becoming a City in 1979. Bunbury, I would think, deserves some compensation for this land, if in fact it was a 'birthday' gift, irrespective of the fact that it was originally Endowment Land. In any case it is the environment that suffers when such disputes are not resolved. May be the Greater Bunbury Region Scheme, due for completion in about 2 years time, will put an end to the uncertainties.

**3. Encouraging the Health, ECU and Tafe campuses to establish a vegetation link, a northern arm of the park, and to integrate the bush land into their activities.**

A second, parallel, more northerly transect of significant vegetation exists between Hay Park and Manea Park. Based on this vegetation a northern arm from Usher via Hay Park, the Health Campus and the Tertiary Education campuses (ECU and Tafe) to Manea Park should be added to the proposed regional park. The additional

bushland would strengthen the Ocean to Preston River ecological link, it would improve its sustainability and add great value for the community. The potential of the Hay Park, Health Campus, ECU and Tafe bushland brings me to the second subject of my submission.

### **Environmental Education**

It was good to hear the Premier emphasis the potential for environmental education when he officially opened Bunbury MLA Tony Dean's electoral office recently. He praised the efforts and the success of Murdoch University in this field. As already pointed out there is significant vegetation at Hay Park and the Health, ECU and Tafe Campuses which can be linked to form a northern arm of the park. These institutions need to be encouraged to recognise and then to develop the potential inherent in the setting.

I have made approaches to the ECU, and to the College of Advanced Education before, pointing out the unique assets at their door step, without anything to show for it. It obviously needs a higher authority to stimulate more integrated thinking, appreciation and better care for and use of the unique natural resource.

PS. The State Government deserves praise for establishing the Sustainability Policy Unit. While long-term thinking and planning will not become fashionable over night, and tangible results may be years away, the establishment of the unit in itself provides hope and some precious moral support.

Yours sincerely

Bernhard Bischoff, May 21, 2002.