

# Private Property Rights & Resources



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**From the President & Private Property Rights and Resources Committee of the PGA of WA (Inc).**

## **Native Vegetation Clearing Regulations**

The Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) has stated that they have placed Vegetation Conservation Orders (VCO) on properties which they believed may have breached the regulations. This action in fact deems the landholder guilty of a breach of the Act and requires the landholder to prove that the clearing was carried out lawfully.

The removal of the VGO's is exacerbated by the appeals process which does not have a legislated timeframe.

Members should note that grazing by stock and fire incidents in native vegetation are considered to be acts of clearing under the regulations and are liable for prosecution under the regulations.

PGA has highlighted the fact in that there was an inconsistency in the way the Act dealt with the types of offenders and is continuing to lobby to bring minor clearing offences into the civil justice system.

## **State Funding for Natural Resource Management**

Minister Redman has announced the granting of \$14.5 for NRM projects.

It is interesting to note that many of the projects funded are related to activities that would normally be included in Departmental budgets for DEC and DAFWA.

These include funding for starling eradication, culling of camels, preservation of endangered species and Phytophthora dieback. Other targets include the implementation of water quality improvement plans for various locations including Peel-Harvey and Wonnerup/Geographe Bay areas \$500,000 has been allocated for drainage governance for the Wheatbelt waterways and wetlands.

A further \$500,000 has been allocated for a demonstration of best practice fertilizer use for the grazing and horticultural industries.

## **Water Issues**

The Committee is in the process of preparing a submission to the Premier outlining our concerns with the State's non-compliance with some of requirements under the terms of the National Water Initiative. The Commissioner Ken Mathews was very critical of the State's progress in implementing the reforms which included the issuing of perpetual water entitlements. Other issues that we have been pursuing are guarantees on the protection of stock and domestic water allowances and Riparian rights.

## **Western Australia's Environmental Protection Authority (EPA)**

The EPA will be given greater autonomy and management of its own resources.

Environment Minister Donna Faragher said the changes were based on recommendations in a number of reports, including 'The Role and Structure of the Environmental Protection Authority' by the Environment Minister's Environmental Stakeholder Advisory Group, chaired by former EPA Chairman Dr Bernard Bowen, and involving industry and environment groups.

The Minister is suggesting that "these changes will result in increased transparency and independence, leading to greater community and industry confidence in the activities of the EPA," We will continue to monitor the change to see if there is an improvement in the way the Department operates.



## **PGA OF WA**

277 Great Eastern Highway  
Belmont 6104  
Ph: 9479 4599  
Fax: 9277 7311

## **PPR&R Chairman**

Gary Peacock 9962 5030

**Policy Director - Zak 9479 4599**

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