



WILDFLOWER SOCIETY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA (Inc)

13 July 2021

Appeals Convenor
Office of the Appeals Convenor
Level 22 Forrest Centre
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PERTH WA 6000

CPS 9210/1 Leeuwin Road Shire of Augusta Margaret River

The Wildflower Society of WA (WSWA) hereby appeals Clearing Permit CPS 9210/1 granted by the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) to the Shire of Augusta-Margaret River to clear 0.4 hectares of native vegetation for the upgrade of Leeuwin Road between the southern end of Augusta and the lighthouse at Cape Leeuwin..

If the road is reconstructed and widened to meet increased traffic there will be significant impact on the fragile nature of the topography and flora and fauna. Part of the area to be altered is acknowledged as having significant aboriginal history, and is known as Tallinup.

Background Information

A proposal was made to widen the road from the southern outskirts of Augusta township to the end at the Cape Leeuwin Lighthouse, a distance of approximately 4 km. Currently the road is a single lane in both directions.

The rationale is to allow for extra traffic including larger commercial vehicles. There is increasing numbers of people using the area for recreation who will need to be well monitored to limit further damage to the surrounds.

There is concern that the cumulative effect of this road widening in the context of future plans, e.g. discussion of a new walk/cycle dual use path, alongside the same length of Leeuwin Road, will significantly impact the environment in an area immediately adjacent to the coastal shoreline.

Current proposal is 0.4 hectares but the shape extends the interface with the native vegetation and fauna within to be spread over a wider area.

Current Status

Some widening has been completed starting at the caravan park site and stopping at Flinders Lookout adjacent to the Augusta townsite. The next section is waiting approval.

At the entrance to the Lighthouse parking area, where road verge clearing has been done, native plant material has been pushed aside and left to decay. There are weeds growing in the scraped earth and they appear to have been sprayed with pesticide.

There are 2 dedicated car parking areas but vehicles can be seen elsewhere.



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There were some 20 cars present in 3 locations at the time of a recent visit. Rubbish was seen in the surrounding vegetation. Currently there are vehicles parked where they can drive in on rough tracks and people walking down to the water's edge and along the rocky outcrop. Cars park outside the designated parking area and as close to the water's edge as they can drive. There are 2 dedicated car parking areas but vehicles can be seen elsewhere.

Points Against The Proposal.

- The area proposed to be cleared has a long edge exposing a significant interface with native vegetation to the adjacent National park. This allows further exposure to intrusions and other threats. The area also has an interface with the adjacent coast line.
- Disturbance of the fragile vegetation encourages the spread of invasive species and weeds which will compete for space. No weed management plan is included with the proposal.
- Low growing heath woodland with densely wooded areas which are supported by fresh water from the hillside.
- The site is very exposed to the southern and western oceans which bring strong winds salt spray and harsh summer conditions making any rehabilitation success unlikely.
- This area is known to support vulnerable and unique wildlife. (Cf surveys done in 2019) A chuditch was reported to have been seen in the area at the time
- Unique species of water snail has been documented as being restricted to this area as one of only 2 places in Australia, living near the freshwater seepage.
- A grove of *Melaleuca lanceolata* PEC, grow on the seaside of the existing road well adapted to the steep land drop to the water but will be damaged by further construction work over 0.1 ha in the zone of disturbance.
- A rare *Kennedia laterita* is known to that area and is also vulnerable.
- The fringing beaches and rocky outcrop have allowed sea birds, including the vulnerable hooded plover (*Thinornus rubricollis*) to use this site for breeding. This beach is below the lighthouse which is accessible from the carpark.
- Increase in human foot traffic will severely impact on the breeding of these birds.

Summary

This example of the land form is exquisite because of the wilderness and the outlook over southern ocean. Plant forms have been able to exist here despite the conditions and as a result created conditions for birds and other animals for safe breeding and habitat. A recent wildfire burnt through the Melaleuca (2 species) woodland in 2019 after being accidentally lit by tourists. The damage from this fire is still obvious and regrowth has been very slow due to the challenging conditions.

Increased numbers of vehicles will see further incursions into the vegetation.

The cumulative impact of future plans to construct a dual use path, walk/cycle, alongside the widened road will further place the integrity this region at risk.

Human and vehicular traffic should be allowed to enjoy the area but in filtered way so that the environment can go into the future as a unique wilderness.



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Recommendations

Further research into the area to document the unmapped wetland communities is essential. Serious discussions on strategies to provide protection for the flora and fauna to allow people to enjoy this location without overwhelming the rarity of the site are required. The planning for tourism and conservation of the area needs to be strategic and not occur through piecemeal projects such as that for which this clearing permit is sought.



<http://www.wildflowersocietywa.org.au/>

References: Reports by Littoria Ecoservices: Dec 2019, Fauna and Habitat; and Flora and Vegetation, 2021.