



OR.MTG 7/2/2

20 July 2017

## NOTICE OF MEETING

Dear Committee Member

The next Environmental Advisory Committee meeting will be held on Tuesday, 25 July 2017 at 6.00pm in the Committee Room, Shire of Mundaring, 7000 Great Eastern Highway Mundaring.

Light refreshments will be available from 5.45pm.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jonathan Throssell", is written over a faint, light-colored signature line.

**Jonathan Throssell**  
**CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER**

### **Please Note**

If any Councillor has a concern regarding a report item or requires additional information in relation to a report item, please contact the senior officer (noted in the report) prior to the meeting.



## **AGENDA**

### **ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING**

**25 JULY 2017**

The purpose of this Committee Meeting is to discuss and make recommendations to Council about items appearing on the agenda and other matters for which the Committee is responsible. The Committee has no power to make any decisions which are binding on the Council or the Shire of Mundaring unless specific delegation of authority has been granted by Council. No person should rely on or act on the basis of any advice or information provided by a Member or employee, or on the content of any discussion occurring, during the course of the Committee Meeting.

The Shire of Mundaring expressly disclaims liability for any loss or damage suffered by any person as a result of relying on or acting on the basis of any advice or information provided by a Member or employee, or the content of any discussion occurring during the course of the Committee Meeting.

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**ENVIRONMENTAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING  
6.00PM**

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**1.0 OPENING PROCEDURES**

**1.1 Announcements of Visitors**

**1.2 Record of Attendance/Apologies/Approved Leave of Absence**

**Members**

**Staff** Ruth Broz Minute Secretary

**Apologies** Darren Murphy

**Guests**

**2.0 ANNOUNCEMENTS BY PRESIDING MEMBER WITHOUT DISCUSSION**

**3.0 DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

**3.1 Disclosure of Financial Interest and Proximity Interests**

Members must disclose the nature of their interest in matters to be discussed at the meeting (Part 5 Division 6 of the *Local Government Act 1995*).

Employees must disclose the nature of their interest in reports or advice when giving the report or advice to the meeting (Sections 5.70 and 5.71 of the *Local Government Act 1995*).

**3.2 Disclosure of Interest Affecting Impartiality**

Members and staff must disclose their interest in matters to be discussed at the meeting in respect of which the member or employee has given or will give advice. (Shire of Mundaring Code of Conduct, *Local Government (Admin) Reg. 34C*).

**4.0 CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

**RECOMMENDATION**

That the minutes of the meeting of the Environmental Advisory Committee held Tuesday 23 May 2017 be confirmed.

## **5.0 PRESENTATIONS**

Nil

## **6.0 REPORTS OF EMPLOYEES**

## 6.1 Roadside Conservation Policy

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<b>File Code</b>	EV.PRG 14
<b>Author</b>	Briony Moran, Co-ordinator Environment and Sustainability
<b>Senior Employee</b>	Mark Luzi, Director Statutory Services
<b>Disclosure of Any Interest</b>	Nil

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### SUMMARY

The Environmental Advisory Committee is requested to support the updating and renaming of Policy EV-01 'Ratepayer Use of Natural Bush Road Reserves' (**ATTACHMENT 1**).

### BACKGROUND

Policy EV-01 was first adopted in 2000 and deals with appropriate use and maintenance of remnant native vegetation on verges in the Shire of Mundaring.

Council adopted the Roadside Conservation Strategy in August 2016, which lists adoption of a Roadside Conservation Policy as Action 5.3.

The title of the current policy refers to 'ratepayer use' but the policy has also been used to inform decisions on location of utilities and telecommunications services. The title is therefore proposed to change to 'Roadside Conservation' which is both consistent with the intent of the current policy and aligns with the Roadside Conservation Strategy adopted by Council in 2016.

The updated Policy EV-01 (**ATTACHMENT 2**) includes the following changes from the current Policy:

- listing objectives more clearly in a specific section with a heading;
- expanding the background section and describing verges in the same way as the *Activities on Thoroughfares and Trading in Thoroughfares and Public Places Local Law 2004*;
- numbering sections of the policy provisions (eg clearing, firebreaks);
- listing factors to be considered in making decisions involving clearing;
- updating policy provisions to better reflect Shire practices, terms used in the Roadside Conservation Strategy and current local laws; and
- replacing an indemnity section with an 'illegal clearing or burning' section.

Shire decisions about works, clearing or burning of native vegetation on the verge are made within the Planning and Environment, Infrastructure Design, Operations and Community Safety and Emergency Management Services.

## STATUTORY / LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

State legislation relating to native vegetation within road reserves includes:

- *Bush Fires Act 1954*
- *Planning and Development Act 2005*
- *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950 & Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*
- *Environmental Protection Act 1986*
- *Environmental Protection (Clearing of Native Vegetation Regulations) 2004*

Relevant local laws relating to activities within road reserves include:

- *Shire of Mundaring Activities on Thoroughfares and Trading in Thoroughfares and Public Places Local Law 2004*
- *Shire of Mundaring Parking Local Law 2009*

The *Activities on Thoroughfares and Trading in Thoroughfares and Public Places Local Law 2004* contains prohibitions on felling trees, damaging plants, disturbing soil or lighting fires on the verge without a Shire permit.

Under the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*, clearing of native vegetation is an offence unless a clearing permit has been granted or an exemption applies. Exemptions include clearing in accordance with a subdivision approval under the *Planning and Development Act 2005* or clearing a crossover with the prior approval of the local government.

The existing *Wildlife Conservation Act 1950* includes protection for particular plant or animal species listed as rare or threatened. This Act is proposed to be repealed once the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* is fully in effect. The *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* will include protection for threatened ecological communities (TEC's) in addition to rare or threatened species.

Service providers (telecommunications and utilities) are generally exempt or 'immune' from formal approval for installation of infrastructure and underground cables within road reserves. However the majority operate in accordance with the Utilities Code of Practice, which includes consultation with the local government and regard for local policies.

## POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Shire controls on private clearing, burning and development of the verge are established under the planning framework, *Bush Fires Act 1954* and the *Activities on Thoroughfares and Trading in Thoroughfares and Public Places Local Law 2004*. The revised Policy seeks to clarify the way that the Shire will consider proposals and make decisions involving clearing or disturbance of bush verges.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Nil

## **STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS**

Updating Policy EV-01 is consistent with several priorities and strategies of the Strategic Community Plan Mundaring 2026 as noted below.

Governance Objective 2 'Transparent, responsive and engaged processes for Shire decision making' and Strategy 1.2.1 'Values, policies and procedures deliver ethical, transparent and accountable local governance. Policies and procedures are responsive to community and business priorities where possible and encourage economic development, business growth and local job creation.'

Natural Environment Objective 2 'A place where the environment is well managed' and Objective 3 'A great place to immerse yourself in nature' and Strategy 3.2.1 'Identify and mitigate threats to the natural environment.'

## **SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

Remnant native vegetation is a community environmental asset. This vegetation is already protected through state and local laws however the updated policy will clarify the Shire's expectations and overall approach to making decisions involving clearing or disturbance to bush verges.

Socially, the updated policy may help avoid some confusion or misperceptions about what is permitted on bush verges, and retention of bush verges enhances the character and amenity of localities within the Shire.

The economic impacts are minimal.

## **RISK IMPLICATIONS**

Nil.

## **EXTERNAL CONSULTATION**

Nil.

## **COMMENT**

Road reserves are public or 'Crown' land set aside as thoroughfares. The verge is the section of a road reserve between the kerb or road surface and the adjacent lot, excluding footpaths. Appropriate use and development of verges is managed by the Shire (or Main Roads WA near highways).

Bush verges are areas of remnant native vegetation within the road reserve which are community environmental assets and can function as wildlife corridors.

Updating and renaming of Policy EV-01 as proposed meets the general objective of bringing Shire policies up to date, as well as specific objectives and actions identified in the Roadside Conservation Strategy.



The revised policy has been reviewed and adjusted based on comments from the various Shire services involved in decisions affecting verge vegetation, as well as the Governance Co-ordinator and Executive Leadership Team.

Two 'notes' have been included in the Burning and Planting sections to advise of the permit requirements during the restricted burning season, and restrictions on planting on the verge under the *Activities on Thoroughfares and Trading in Thoroughfares and Public Places Local Law 2004*. Should the Shire in future prepare more holistic verge guidelines this Policy would also inform sections relating to native vegetation.

#### **VOTING REQUIREMENT**

Simple majority

<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>
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That Council adopts the revised Policy EV-01 and renames it from 'Ratepayer Use Of Natural Bush Road Reserves' to 'Roadside Conservation.'

# **ATTACHMENT 1**

**Item 6.1**

**2 pages**

## Shire of Mundaring

# POLICY

### RATEPAYER USE OF NATURAL BUSH ROAD RESERVES

**Policy Ref:** EV-01

<b>Committee Rec:</b>	SPC29	<b>Date:</b>	17 July 2000
<b>Adopted by:</b>	R23824	<b>Date:</b>	25 July 2000
<b>Amended by:</b>	C10.08.07	<b>Date:</b>	25 Sept 2007
<b>Reviewed:</b>	Once per Electoral Cycle	<b>Date:</b>	25 Mar 2008
<b>Procedure Ref:</b>		<b>Delegation Ref:</b>	
<b>Statute Ref:</b>			
<b>Local Law Ref:</b>			

#### PURPOSE

To maintain or improve the function and visual appeal of native vegetation on road reserves in the Shire of Mundaring. The policy is also intended to assist landowners in undertaking beautification projects on road reserves adjacent to their premises to improve their streetscapes and property values

#### BACKGROUND

The Shire of Mundaring recognises that road reserves form a significant proportion of public open space available to landowners for improving their streetscape and property value. However, road reserves are Crown land, not private, and are not for private use. Council has therefore, formulated a policy covering natural bush on road reserves to assist landowners in undertaking beautification projects on road reserves adjacent to their premises.

The aim of this policy is to maintain or improve the function and visual appeal of native vegetation on road reserves in the Shire of Mundaring.

#### POLICY

The following are not generally acceptable on road verges:

##### Burning

Where burning of the natural bush road reserve is necessary for the purposes of enhancing the safety of, or assets on the adjoining property, then Council will assess whether burning is the best method of reducing the hazard and if it is, a

formal permit to burn will be required and issued by Council, subject to appropriate conditions.

Installation of fire breaks by any method.

Clearing of native vegetation.

In terms of the above, ratepayers need to recognise that the verges are in fact the property of the Government but are managed by Council on behalf of the community.

## Other Works

The Shire of Mundaring encourages landowners to improve the condition of natural bush road reserves adjacent to their property by the additional planting of local native species.

Where any person for any reason not related to burning firebreaks or the clearing of natural vegetation is required to undertake work on natural bush road reserves, then the following general conditions will apply.

1. The “works” are not to create any undue hazard to any user of the road reserve;
2. Services above and below ground are not to be altered, moved, removed, relocated or tampered with.

## Parking of Vehicles

The parking of vehicles on a natural road reserve is discouraged because the weight of the vehicle and the movement of the vehicle over the native bushland will permanently destroy it.

## Legislative Requirements

Council is unable to restrict parking on natural bush and road reserves under current legislation unless the area is protected by appropriate signage erected under a parking local law. Council does not have any such local law at this time.

Council does have a local law relating to the parking of vehicles on the street verge but this local law deals specifically with the parking of commercial vehicles on a verge and has been designed to complement the town planning scheme, which does not allow the parking of the same vehicle on the adjoining private property. The local law would not cover a situation where a vehicle is parked on a reserve for the reason of effecting repairs or for delivering goods to the particular property, where the parking is for a short period of time.

## Indemnification

The Council is unable to require a landowner to indemnify the Shire against all claims that may arise as a result of work within the road reserve because ultimately a court of law will determine whether the Council was or was not effective in the way it gave approval or supervised the work.

## **ATTACHMENT 2**

**Item 6.1**

**4 pages**

**Shire of Mundaring**

# **Draft POLICY**

<b>Roadside Conservation</b>
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<b>Policy Ref:</b>	<b>EV-01</b>
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<b>Adopted by:</b>	R23824	<b>Date:</b>	25 July 2000
<b>Amended by:</b>	C10.08.07	<b>Date:</b>	25 Sept 2007
<b>Reviewed:</b>	Once per Electoral Cycle	<b>Date:</b>	~ 2017
<b>Procedure Ref:</b>	N/A	<b>Delegation Ref:</b>	N/A
<b>Statute Ref:</b>	<i>Bush Fires Act 1954</i> <i>Planning and Development Act 2005</i> <i>Wildlife Conservation Act 1950</i> <i>Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016</i> <i>Environmental Protection Act 1986</i> <i>Environmental Protection (Clearing of Native Vegetation Regulations) 2004</i>		
<b>Local Law Ref:</b>	<i>Shire of Mundaring Activities on Thoroughfares and Trading in Thoroughfares and Public Places Local Law 2004</i> <i>Shire of Mundaring Parking Local Law 2009</i>		

## **OBJECTIVE**

To maintain native vegetation within road reserves where safe and practical in recognition of its biodiversity conservation values and contribution to local landscape character and amenity.

## **1.0 PRINCIPLES**

Where works within bush verges are planned or proposed, the following general principles will apply:

- a) the location and design should seek to minimise impacts on biodiversity conservation and visual values of native vegetation;
- b) earthworks and disturbance of the soil should be avoided where possible or undertaken with appropriate precautions to minimise the spread of weeds and plant diseases such as dieback;
- c) storage of sand, fill, skip bins, sea containers, building and construction materials on bush verges should be avoided wherever possible; and
- d) removal of native vegetation to improve visibility of intersections, infrastructure or directional signage may be undertaken or approved for safety reasons.

## **2.0 POLICY**

### **2.1 Clearing**

Native vegetation should be retained wherever it is safe and practical. In designing or assessing proposals and issuing approval for works affecting native vegetation within road reserves, the Shire will consider:

- a) the safety of residents, drivers, pedestrian and cyclists;
- b) the condition and conservation value of the native vegetation and the location of any habitat trees, declared rare flora or significant environmental features;
- c) whether the bush verge is, or should be nominated as, a Western Australian Flora Road for its tourism and biodiversity conservation values;
- d) whether alternative locations are available and viable that would result in less disturbance, or less visible disturbance, to native vegetation;
- e) appropriate design features and construction methods to minimise impacts on native vegetation generally and habitat trees in particular; and
- f) whether the development and degree of disturbance requires follow-up weed control or revegetation.

### **2.2 Firebreaks**

Firebreak requirements apply to individual lots and the firebreak must be constructed wholly within the property boundaries. Clearing of firebreaks within the adjoining road reserve is not permitted and will not be recognised as meeting firebreak requirements under the *Bush Fires Act 1954*.

### **2.3 Burning**

Burning of bush verges should not be undertaken frequently or without follow-up weed control. Where permission for burning of a bush verge is requested, the Shire will assess whether burning is warranted and take into account the condition and conservation value of the native vegetation.

Depending on the time of year, a permit to burn may also be required from the local Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade.

### **2.4 Planting**

The Shire encourages landowners to firstly improve the condition of bush verges adjacent to their property by undertaking weed control. Where there are gaps created by authorised works or removing weeds, replacement planting should only use local native species. Australian plants from other states must not be used in bush verges as they can displace the native plants or become weed species in Western Australia.

Planting on bush verges must also be in accordance with the *Shire of Mundaring Activities on Thoroughfares and Trading in Thoroughfares and Public Places Local Law 2004*. This includes restrictions on planting of poisonous, prickly or otherwise hazardous plants, planting within 2m of the road surface, or plant height in areas that may affect vehicle sightlines (such as within 6m of an intersection).

## **2.5 Vehicle Crossovers and Parking**

Parking or driving vehicles on bush verges should be avoided wherever possible because the weight and movement of the vehicle will damage or destroy the native vegetation, compact the soil and can transport weeds or disease. In considering applications for crossovers and other proposals that include clearing of the verge, the Shire shall have regard to the matters for consideration listed in section 2.1.

Damage or destruction of native vegetation with a vehicle will be treated as unauthorised clearing (refer to section 2.7).

## **2.6 Services, Utilities and Telecommunications**

The location and alignment of telecommunications and utilities infrastructure must be designed to minimise disturbance to habitat trees and bush verges where possible. If infrastructure could be installed on either side of the road, protecting the conservation value of native vegetation must be a key consideration in selecting the location.

Non-standard alignments within the verge will generally be supported where deviations can avoid habitat trees or undisturbed areas of native vegetation.

## **2.7 Illegal Clearing or Burning**

The Shire will investigate reports of unauthorised clearing or burning of native vegetation within road reserves. Where a breach of Shire Local Laws, the *Planning and Development Act 2005* or *Bush Fires Act 1954* is confirmed, the Shire may issue a warning or infringement or initiate legal proceedings. In addition the Shire may provide information to state or federal environmental agencies where clearing is considered to have breached the *Environmental Protection Act 1986*, *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* or *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth)*.

## **3.0 CONTEXT NOTES**

The *Activities on Thoroughfares and Trading in Thoroughfares and Public Places Local Law 2004* contains prohibitions on felling trees, damaging plants, disturbing soil or lighting fires on the verge without a Shire permit. Native vegetation on verges is also protected under WA legislation including the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*, *Environmental Protection Act 1986* and *Clearing of Native Vegetation Regulations 2004*. Verges may contain 'habitat trees' which are mature native trees (dead or alive) with an existing hollow or substantial trunk diameter, usually 80cm or more. These individual trees are protected under the federal *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* for hollow-dependent native animals such as black-cockatoos.

The Shire manages local road verges within the limits of its staff and resources, and with a focus on verges adjacent to parks and reserves. Day to day management of road reserves abutting private land is generally undertaken by the adjacent landowner. Landowners or contractors who are undertaking work or conducting burning on verges are responsible for adequate preparation (including obtaining all relevant permits or approvals, locating underground services, and managing the activity). Individuals or companies may be liable for repair costs or damages if their activities cause damage to fencing, road, drainage, utility or telecommunications infrastructure, or create hazardous road conditions causing an accident.



Native vegetation can recover from occasional fires and some plant species actually require occasional fire or smoke to germinate seeds. However too-frequent burning of bush verges will kill many native plants, exhaust the native seed bank and promote the spread and density of grass weeds. Weeds grow, seed and spread faster than native vegetation following fire. Burning without follow-up weed control can actually increase the weed fuel load and bushfire risk the following year.

## 6.2 Environmental Education on Plastic Waste and Recycling

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<b>File Code</b>	EV.PRG 9
<b>Author</b>	Briony Moran, Co-ordinator Environment and Sustainability
<b>Senior Employee</b>	Mark Luzi, Director Statutory Services
<b>Disclosure of Any Interest</b>	Nil

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### SUMMARY

At its June 2017 meeting Council made a decision to advocate for a State-wide ban on single use plastic bags. At its August meeting Council will consider the implications and resources required if it was to pursue a local law banning single use plastic shopping bags.

This report recommends that the EAC support continued Shire advocacy for a State-wide ban and a focus on plastic pollution and recycling in existing environmental education programs.

### BACKGROUND

At its meeting of 13 June 2017 Council (C14.06.17) resolved that:

- “1. Council directs the CEO to prepare a report detailing the implications and resources required to develop a local law on banning the provision or sale of single use plastic shopping bags within the Shire of Mundaring to be provided to the August 2017 ordinary meeting of Council; and
2. The Shire President, on behalf of Council, writes to the following persons/organisations and conveys Council’s preference for the WA State Government to enact a State-wide ban on single use plastic shopping bags:
  - Hon Premier Mark McGowan MLA;
  - Hon David Templeman MLA, Minister for Local Government;
  - Hon Stephen Dawson MLC, Minister for Environment and Disability Services;
  - Western Australian Local Government Association; and
  - Eastern Metropolitan Regional Council.”

Within the last few months the Western Australian Environment Minister has made clear statements regarding the intent of the Government to continue with the 2018 introduction of a container deposit scheme, as well as enacting a State-wide ban on plastic bags. However, there is no detail available yet regarding which types of bags are intended to be permitted or banned.

On 14 July 2017 both Woolworths and Coles made public announcements that lightweight single use plastic bags will be phased out of their supermarkets by mid 2018 and heavier, reusable bags will be sold at low cost. The Woolworths

announcement includes their online shopping, liquor stores and other retail businesses.

## **STATUTORY / LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no legal implications for ongoing environmental educational initiatives.

The legal implications of a local law banning plastic bags will be considered by Council in August. Currently there are no active local laws banning the distribution of plastic bags within Western Australia. City of Fremantle Plastic Bag Reduction Local Laws have twice been gazetted but disallowed by the Legislative Council, in 2013 and 2015.

The Town of East Fremantle and the City of Fremantle have recently passed local laws prohibiting distribution of specified plastic bags, which should be considered by the Joint Standing Committee on Delegated Legislation by the end of the year.

## **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

Nil

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The Shire has existing budgets for the annual Mundaring Environmental Art Program and environment and sustainability education initiatives (including holding free community workshops and producing educational materials).

The additional resources required to develop, advertise and enforce a local law banning single use plastic bags will be considered by Council in August. Should Council resolve to pursue a local law within the current environmental budget and staff, this will impact on the achievement of other environmental and sustainability projects and services.

## **STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS**

It appears that there is substantial community support for reducing plastic waste and increasing environmental education actions on this issue would be consistent with Shire's Strategic Community Plan Mundaring 2026: Governance - Objective Two 'Transparent, responsive and engaged processes for Shire decision making' and Strategy 1.2.1 'Increase transparency and responsiveness of Shire administration processes'.

The allocation of staff time and resources should be considered in accordance with Governance Objective One 'A fiscally responsible Shire that prioritises spending appropriately' and Strategy 1.1.1 'Prudently consider resource allocation.'

Effective measures to reduce litter and landfill are consistent with Natural Environment - Objective Two 'A place where the environment is well managed' and Strategy 3.2.1 'Identify and mitigate threats to the natural environment' as well as Strategy 3.2.2 'Develop greater recycling opportunities'.

## **SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

Socially, it is likely that many Shire of Mundaring residents would share wider community concerns about the effects of plastic waste and pollution, particularly in aquatic environments.

Environmentally, there are multiple impacts from the proliferation of single use plastic items and packaging, including:

- use of non-renewable resources to make plastic items;
- large volumes of single use items are sent to landfill;
- most plastics take hundreds of years to break down; and
- littered plastic can break down into persistent microplastics, accumulate in rivers and oceans, and cause deaths of animals that swallow or become entangled in plastic.

Economically, the costs to businesses and consumers of alternatives to plastic packaging and single use plastic items will vary widely. Environmental education can be particularly effective in encouraging the adoption of alternatives that are cost neutral or may actually be cheaper.

## **RISK IMPLICATIONS**

Provision of environmental education opportunities regarding plastic waste represents an 'insignificant' financial or reputational risk.

The risks of adoption and enforcement of a local law to ban distribution of plastic bags will be considered by Council in August.

## **EXTERNAL CONSULTATION**

A quick survey of Friends Groups was undertaken between 1 and 17 July regarding litter in local conservation areas. The survey was sent to Friends Group Co-ordinators where an email address had been provided, and requested information on the three most common litter items and the one considered most annoying or harmful.

16 responses were received and the most common litter item was drink bottles/cans/containers, followed by fast food wrappers/containers. Although glass bottles and aluminium cans were also mentioned, plastic food and drink containers were a very common item. Other responses included dog excrement and bags, garden waste, tyres, household rubbish and lolly wrappers with plastic bags being listed twice.

Responses to the question about the worst litter item (most annoying or harmful) were mixed, but dumped garden waste was the most common overall due to the longer term weed invasion.

## COMMENT

Community awareness of plastic pollution in marine and aquatic environments has been growing, along with understanding of sustainability impacts of single use items made from non-renewable resources. The current media and community focus on plastic bags provides an opportunity to further improve awareness of the impacts of all plastic waste and promote 'reduce, reuse and recycle' for plastic items.

The recent announcements by Coles and Woolworths to voluntarily phase out lightweight plastic bags by mid 2018 will directly affect the number of plastic bags used within the Shire. In addition their actions will increase the number of customers who own and carry reusable bags and may influence other retailers to follow suit with similar voluntary measures.

However the issue of plastic bags is more complex than it appears and reusable bags can actually have greater overall environmental impacts than lightweight plastic bags if they are not reused enough times. The various alternatives to plastic shopping bags also have environmental impacts:

- paper bags may not be from sustainable (plantation) forests;
- chemical and water requirements to produce cotton bags;
- more energy and resources used to produce thicker woven synthetic 'green bags' of polypropylene or polyethylene terephthalate; and
- 'degradable' plastic bags can break down into persistent microplastics or cause weaknesses in recycled plastic goods (affecting the viability of other plastic recycling).

Based on recent public statements by the Western Australian Environment Minister it appears increasingly likely that there will be a State-wide ban on single use plastic bags. Between the voluntary changes by the major supermarkets within the next year and the likely introduction of a State-wide ban, the actual impact of a local law would be limited in time and scope. However local businesses and customers will soon be faced with a range of options for reusable bags, with low levels of understanding about how many times to reuse them in order to actually decrease the overall environmental impact.

Research from other Australian states has shown that distribution of thicker plastic bags increases, some 'reusable' plastic bags are still only used once, and purchase of plastic bin liners increases following a ban on lightweight plastic bags. Given the changes that will be occurring just through retailer initiatives within the next twelve months there will be a need for environmental education regarding alternative materials or reusable bags so that businesses and residents can make informed decisions.

It is intended that the Shire increase the focus of environmental education initiatives in 2017 and 2018 towards plastic waste and recycling given the current community and media interest. The Shire's existing environmental education budget may be used to provide free workshops for residents on reducing plastic use and waste, distribute some reusable bags with information to local shops and businesses, and develop website and brochure materials using the existing environmental education budget.

The annual Mundaring Environmental Art Project has a new theme each year. A focus on plastic pollution and recycling for the 2018 program would coincide with the voluntary initiatives of the major supermarkets and the likely announcements of State-wide ban on lightweight plastic bags, as well as commencement of the drink container deposit scheme.

## **VOTING REQUIREMENT**

Simple majority

<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>
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That the Environmental Advisory Committee -

1. Endorses plastic pollution and recycling as the theme for the 2018 Mundaring Environmental Art Project;
2. Supports Shire advocacy for a State-wide approach to banning single use plastic bags; and
3. Notes that the Shire will provide additional environmental education opportunities for residents and local businesses on the impacts of plastic pollution and options to reduce plastic waste, including alternatives to single use plastic bags.

**7.0 ELECTED MEMBERS MOTIONS OF WHICH PREVIOUS NOTICE HAS BEEN GIVEN**

**8.0 URGENT BUSINESS (LATE REPORTS)**

**9.0 CONFIDENTIAL REPORTS**

**10.0 CLOSING PROCEDURES**

**10.1 Date, Time and Place of the Next Meeting**

The next Environmental Advisory Committee meeting is to be announced.

**10.2 Closure of the Meeting**

**11.0 ATTACHMENTS**

Nil