

EPA recommends strict possum conditions for Bunbury road proposal

A proposal to construct a dual-carriageway south of Bunbury has been recommended for environmental approval by the Environmental Protection Authority (EPA), subject to conditions to preserve and enhance the habitats of the western ringtail possum and other conservation-significant species.

Main Roads WA proposes to construct and operate the 10.5km Bunbury Outer Ring Road Southern Section through Gelorup within the Shire of Capel.

EPA Chair Professor Matthew Tonts said the examination of impacts to the threatened western ringtail possum was central to the environmental assessment.

Professor Tonts said that the proponent had designed the freeway to minimise clearing and use already disturbed areas as much as possible, but the EPA was recommending a range of strict conditions to further reduce the impacts.

“To counterbalance the loss of 60.5ha of western ringtail possum habitat, the EPA has recommended that the proponent must acquire and protect about 179ha of existing habitat and create 220 ha of new habitat,” he said. “This includes a substantial rehabilitation program in the Ludlow State Forest to enhance habitat and secure long-term benefits for the western ringtail possum and other species.

“The proposal also includes possum rope-bridges and vegetated fauna land-bridges, and the EPA has recommended the proponent be required to monitor the effectiveness of these fauna crossings, in addition to undertaking feral animal control.”

Recommended conditions would also require a licensed fauna spotter to survey for black cockatoos and inspect nesting trees before any ground disturbance. And if any nesting hollows are in use, the proponent will need to avoid a 10-metre radius until after the cockatoos have nested and dispersed.

Noting submissions from members of the public, the EPA included recommendations for an amenity management plan to include community consultation regarding the specifications and locations of infrastructure such as screen and noise walls, vegetative screening, landscaping, pedestrian underpasses, walking trails and foot or cycle paths.

The EPA’s report to the Minister for Environment is now open for a three-week public appeal period, closing 15 November 2021. Appeals can be made at <https://www.appealsconvenor.wa.gov.au/>. The Minister for Environment will make the final decision on the proposal. EPA Report 1714 can be found [HERE](#).

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