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**Minister for Environment; Disability Services; Electoral Affairs  
Deputy Leader of the Legislative Council**

Your Ref: Petition number 140  
Our Ref: 62-19091

Hon Matthew Swinbourn MLC  
Chair  
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs  
env@parliament.wa.gov.au

Dear Mr ~~Swinbourn~~ <sup>Matthew</sup>

Thank you for your correspondence, received in this office on 14 February 2020, regarding Petition No. 140 – Royalties for Regions Environmental Project Allocations.

The petition raises a number of environmental issues including the need for environmental rehabilitation and preservation of biodiversity, and the impact of climate change. It seeks that Government direct Royalties for Regions funding annually for environmental rehabilitation and for the preservation of biodiversity.

The Royalties for Regions funding program is supporting a number of key McGowan Government environment initiatives. These include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Catchment and estuary management through the Regional Estuaries Initiative and the Revitalising Geographe Waterways. These efforts are based on collaboration and partnerships between Government agencies, Natural Resource Management groups, community, industry and farmers. NRM groups have received substantial funding for the more than 70 projects contributing to the direct employment of 14 people in regional landcare groups across six catchments.
- State NRM Program grants overseen by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, which provide funding to local, not-for-profit and volunteer-based NRM groups. The grants are for activities that protect and enhance WA's environment and natural resources.
- An Aboriginal Ranger Program administered by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA), which is creating pathways for Aboriginal people to develop careers in land and sea management. This also provides long-term cultural and conservation outcomes.
- The four-year Enhanced Prescribed Burning Program administered by DBCA that provides direct benefits for environmental conservation.

The protection of, and investment in, the conservation estate is a high priority for the McGowan Government. The Plan for Our Parks initiative seeks to create five million hectares of new and expanded national parks, marine parks and other conservation reserves across Western Australia over five years. This will see the State's conservation estate increased by over 20 per cent and will provide enhanced biodiversity conservation, as well as creating more opportunities for nature-based and cultural tourism and Aboriginal joint management throughout Western Australia

Government agencies work closely with Natural Resource Management groups, partnering on conservation and restoration projects. In the Swan Canning catchment, DBCA provides funding to deliver projects that are improving water quality, habitat for native fauna and river foreshore condition, preventing erosion and building capacity in community-based groups

DBCA manages approximately 31 million hectares of existing and proposed conservation reserves and has responsibility for a further approximately 91 million hectares of unallocated Crown land and unmanaged reserves. DBCA undertakes prioritised weed, disease and pest animal control on these lands and works with neighbours to achieve broader control and management across multiple land tenures. This includes implementing the Western Shield program, which works with industry sponsors and community groups to recover threatened animals through a range of actions, including baiting feral cats and foxes across 3.7 million hectares of WA.

DBCA, in association with other Government agencies and non-Government organisations, continues to work to improve the conservation status of threatened species through recovery actions that are underpinned by world-class science. For example, the Return to 1616 project on Dirk Hartog Island is working to restore the original suite of mammals and birds to WA's largest island

The McGowan Government recently consulted on an issues paper for improving the management of native vegetation in Western Australia. This paper details four initiatives designed to improve the consistency and transparency of State Government decisions affecting native vegetation and build better information which will enable improved management of our State's native vegetation. More information on this paper can be found on DWER's website [dwer.wa.gov.au/consultation/nativeveg](http://dwer.wa.gov.au/consultation/nativeveg)

On 15 November 2019, the McGowan Government launched the Pilbara Environmental Offset Fund with the first grant round open until 20 January 2020. The fund holds offset contributions for proposals assessed under Part IV of the *Environmental Protection Act 1986* and is expected to receive about \$90 million for conservation projects in the Pilbara over the next 40 years. The fund facilitates partnerships with regional land management organisations to deliver offset projects that promote biodiversity conservation outcomes. It will allow for grant rounds to target key issues and improve and restore vegetation and habitat over the longer term

In relation to climate change, in August 2019 the McGowan Government announced its commitment to working across all sectors of the economy to achieve net zero emissions by 2050. To support the state in meeting this target, the Government is currently developing a new climate change policy. The policy will focus on adjusting to

those changes which are inevitable, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and playing our part in contributing to the national emissions reduction target.

The Government is already taking action to position Western Australia for the low carbon transition through a number of initiatives. These include measures to enhance renewable energy and energy storage technologies, develop a renewable hydrogen industry, accelerate uptake of electric vehicles, and unlock the State's carbon abatement and sequestration potential. The Government also has invested \$9 million into the Clean Energy Future Fund, for clean energy projects designed to assist in decarbonising Western Australia's economy.

I hope that this information assists the Committee in its inquiries.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'SD', written in a cursive style.

Hon Stephen Dawson MLC  
**MINISTER FOR ENVIRONMENT**

17 MAR 2020