



Australian Government

Department of the Environment and Water Resources

Western Ringtail Possum

(Pseudocheirus occidentalis)

Where we have come from and where to now?



Image courtesy, Babs and Bert Wells/DEC, WA

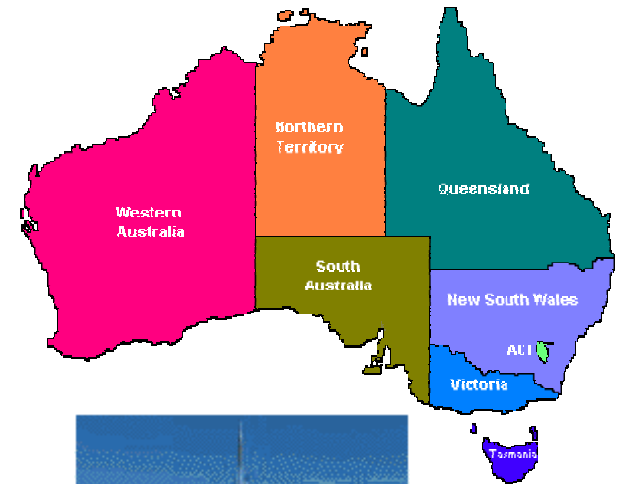
Outline

- *The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act)*
- Amendments to the EPBC Act – Feb 2007
- The Southern Swan Coastal Plain and the Draft Possum Policy
- What next?

The EPBC Act



- Key piece of Commonwealth environmental legislation protecting Australia's biodiversity and heritage
- Commenced July 2000
- Focus is on matters of National Environmental Significance
- Establishes the Commonwealth EIA process
- Amended in February 2007



Matters of “National Environmental Significance”



World heritage properties



Ramsar wetlands

Threatened species and ecological communities



The Commonwealth marine area



Migratory species



Nuclear actions

National Heritage Places



Significant impact



- **Trigger for EPBC approval is significant impact on a matter of national environmental significance**
- **Significant impact:**
an impact that is important, notable or of consequence given regard to its context or intensity



The amendments



- Streamlines assessment and approval processes
- Greater flexibility, including alternative options for referrals
- Strengthened compliance and enforcement
- Strengthening strategic approaches:
listings, recovery actions, bioregional planning and
strategic assessment



The Western Ringtail possum: Why do we care?

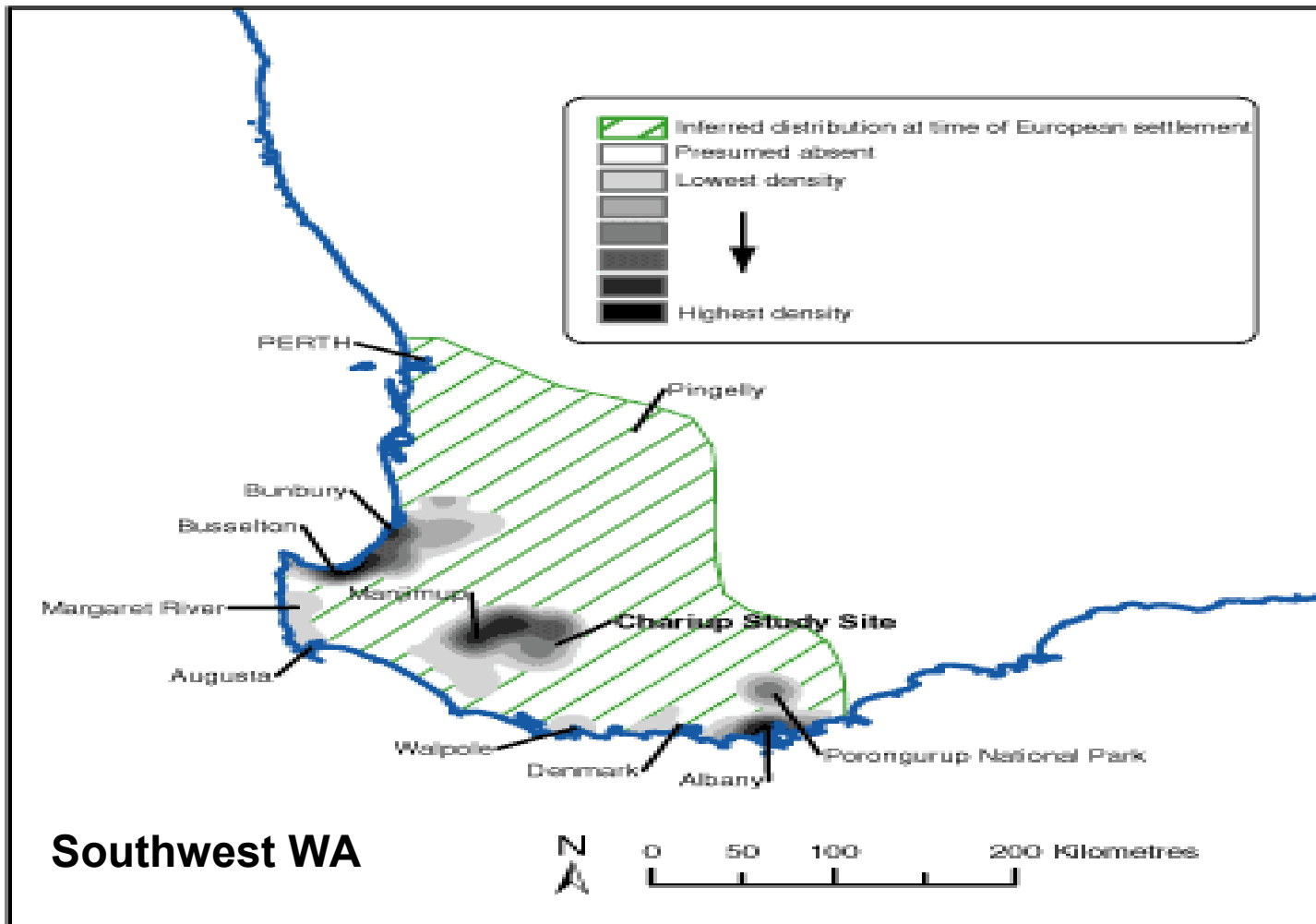
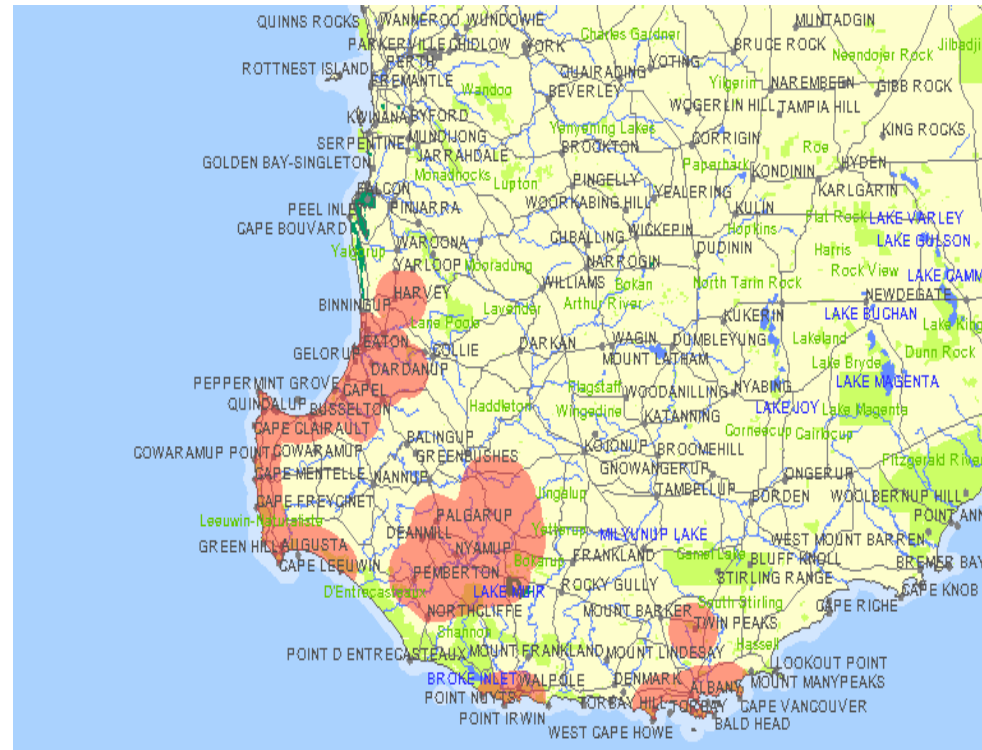


Image Courtesy of Paul de Tores, WA DEC

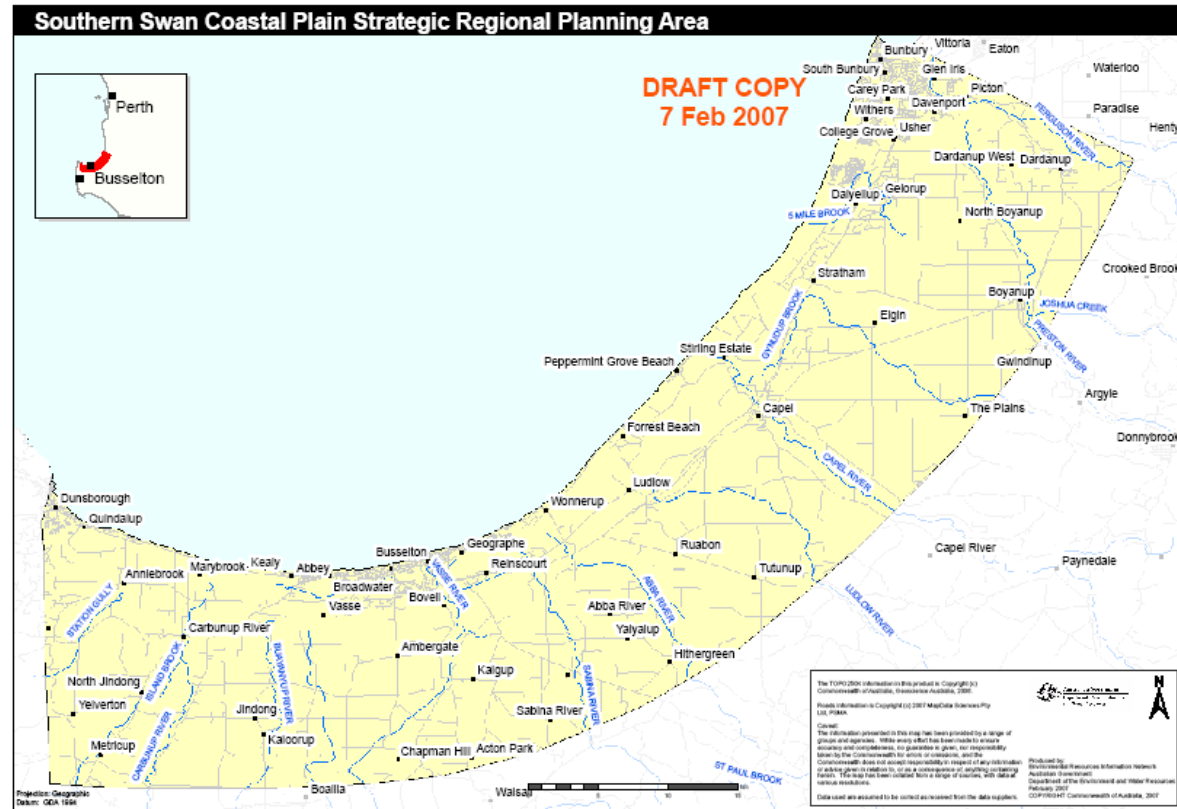
3 Key Regions for Recovery

- Three key areas identified as essential for the persistence and recovery of the possum:
 - the Southern Swan Coastal Plain,
 - the Capes (Leeuwin Naturaliste Ridge and surrounds between Cape Nauraliste and Cape Leeuwin), and the
 - Upper Warren (Perup, state forests and reserves).



Challenges: The Southern Swan Coastal Plain Region

- Meeting point for development pressure and matters of NES
- Fastest developing region in Australia
- Top EPBC customer: 22 referrals and 16 compliance cases in one year
- Important for the conservation of the western ringtail possum



Possum Policy

- Aims to maintain a healthy WRP population across the region
- Takes a landscape approach – focus is on habitat, not just possum numbers
- Recognises habitat management as the key to possum conservation and recovery
- Develops a framework for considering habitat management
- Within this context, gives guidance on what is “significant”

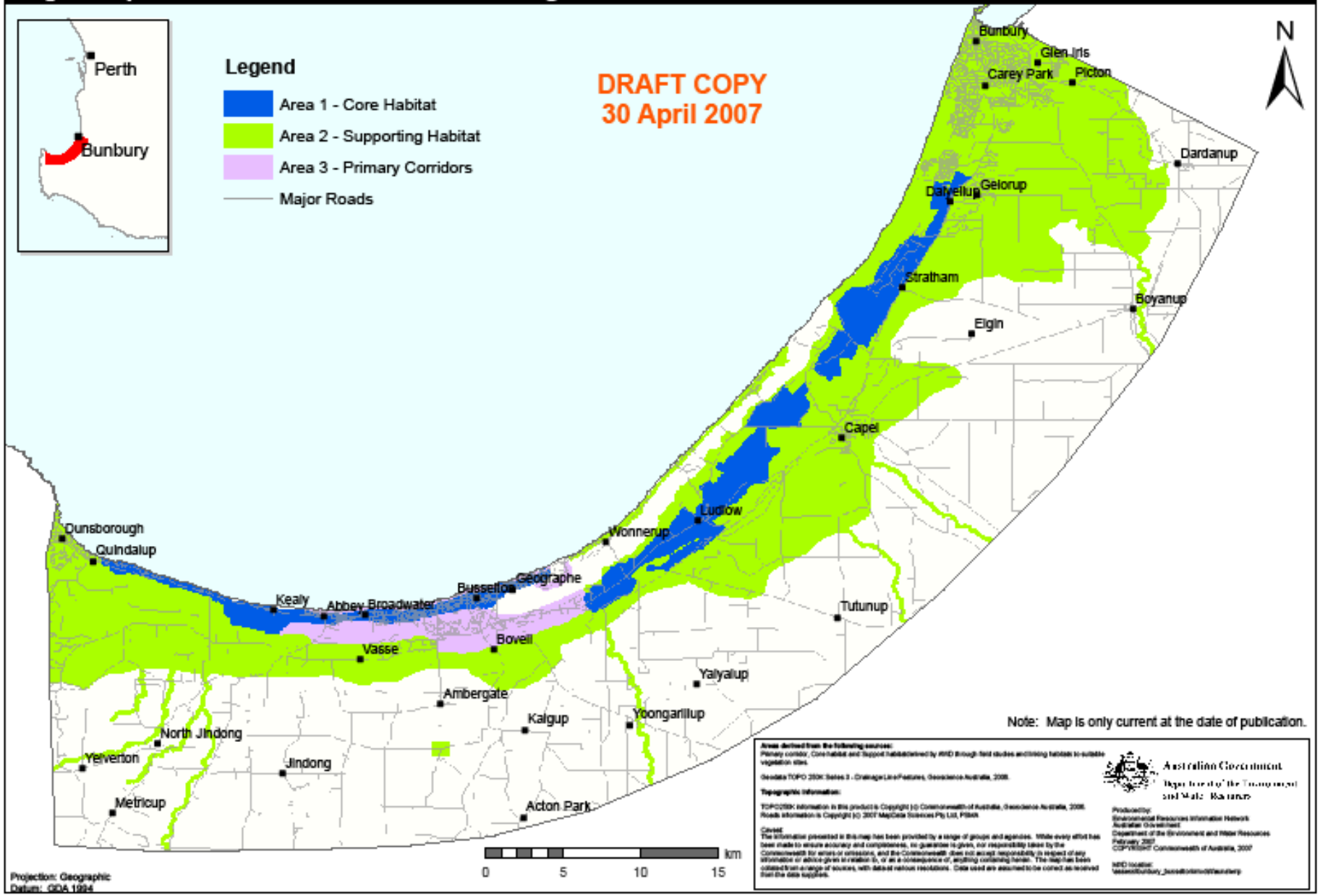


Habitat areas



- The policy recognises three key habitat types in Swan Coastal Plain region
- Core habitat
 - required for breeding and dispersal,
 - typically characterised by high population density
- Supporting habitat
 - buffers core habitat,
 - varying population density
 - important for foraging and dispersal
 - important for connectivity
- Primary corridors
 - provide important corridors and habitat connections
 - variety of habitat and population density

Fig. x Important Areas for the Western Ringtail Possum



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30 April 2007**

- Legend**
- Area 1 - Core Habitat
 - Area 2 - Supporting Habitat
 - Area 3 - Primary Corridors
 - Major Roads

Note: Map is only current at the date of publication.

Areas defined from the following sources:
 Primary Corridor, Core Habitat and Support Habitats defined by MND through field studies and using habitat to suitable vegetation sites.
 Derived from TOPO 200K Series 1 - Drainage Line Features, Geoscience Australia, 2006.
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 MND location: metricup@environment.wa.gov.au

Projection: Geographic
 Datum: GDA 1984

What is significant?

- **Key points: An action is significant if it:**
 - reduces the capacity of the region to support the persistence of the western ringtail possum;
 - modifies, destroys, removes or isolates important remnant habitat patches, or decreases the availability or quality of remnant habitat patches;
 - adversely affects connections between important areas;
 - interferes substantially with the ability of the area to contribute to the recovery of the species.

Thresholds



- **Guidelines set thresholds of significance for the different habitat areas**
- **Guidelines determined after workshops with a range of experts involved in possum recovery**
- **Thresholds based on best available current information**

Future development



- **Consider the application of the Act early in project planning**
- **Where possible, developments should be designed to avoid exceeding these thresholds**
- **Avoid impacts by retaining habitat and linkages as far as possible, and enhance habitat wherever possible**

Possum Management in the SW WA...

A shared responsibility

- **DEW's approach – regional focus for assessment and compliance**
- **Conservation and maintenance of the possum in the region in the long term is the goal**
- **Identifying feasible options for achieving this goal is a shared responsibility**
- **DEW welcomes future collaboration and ideas to achieve the shared vision.**



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For more information

www.dew.gov.au

QUESTIONS?

