

ENVIRONMENT

# Government endorses watering down of environmental regulations

**Safe and Scenic Toodyay Roads**  
Andrew St John, Convenor

WELCOME to the new year from all at Safe and Scenic Toodyay Roads.

Regrettably 2024 has not got off to a good start for all those organisations like SASTR who are dedicated to trying to slow down the continuing and unnecessary destruction of the natural environment including that along Toodyay Road.

Late last year the State Government released the findings of a review it commissioned of WA's environmental approvals system and the WA Environmental Protection Authority (EPA).

The review containing 39 recommendations was not independent, did not include any community consultation and basically reduced the EPA and the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation to a rubber stamp.

According to the Premier the current regulations are holding back development of the State and hence the need for a revamped EPA.

While many in the community already feel that there is an inadequate protection for the



*No wildflowers to grow on this Wheatbelt shire roadside – the sign indicates these are on show in Ravensthorpe only.*

environment, the mining industry sees any objections to its plans to dig and despoil the land, no matter where, as unnecessary and a threat to business.

There is a desire by the government to become a green powerhouse from mining

all those minerals seen as contributing to a decarbonised economy.

But to allow all of this so-called green mining to proceed without impediment and adequate review is to ignore its damaging effects on the environment is unacceptable and decidedly ungreen.

The irony of widespread reductions in biodiversity – and other destructive effects on the environment – as a result of pursuing this so-called green economy seems to have entirely escaped government and industry alike.

There is of course a challenge to be faced about how we decarbonise our economy at sufficient speed in order to limit the degree of global warming.

It requires a balancing act, a part of which must be appropriate environmental safeguards, no matter that they may mean some delays.

The mining industry would have us believe that the WA economy will collapse if mining is not allowed to proceed unabated and without due review and the government has responded in wholesale agreement.

The effective ditching of all such safeguards, has unified environmental organisations of all types into universal condemnation and into planning a campaign to educate the public on the consequences including the highly deleterious effects on biodiversity.

What does this mean locally?

Well it cannot but help Chalice to get the eventual approval for their open cut mine should they decide to go ahead with their plans.

As to the changes to Toodyay Road, Main Roads WA has already exploited the existing regulations to get their generous clearing permit and ignore any objections.

But a further emasculated EPA does not bode well for the preservation of roadside

vegetation throughout the Shire and beyond, on which SASTR continues to campaign.

We have previously drawn attention to the fact that a decade or more ago one of Main Roads goals was to preserve wherever possible, the vegetation along the roadside as a haven for flora and fauna.

No longer unfortunately, and whether it is Main Roads or local shires, we increasingly see scenes like the one portrayed in the photograph above.

This is not in Toodyay Shire but in one not too far away and is emblematic of a situation which is further contributing to reductions in biodiversity.

One wonders if those carrying out this particular example of wasted earth policy noticed the irony of the sign which now stands amidst this resulting desert?

It is advertising the local Wildflower Show. Meanwhile we continue our campaign to seek further changes to the planned improvements along Toodyay Road.

Following a brief encounter with the Assistant Transport Minister at the Toodyay Show he invited us to submit our concerns.

We are about to respond with our changes which would also save the Government and taxpayers some money as well as be less destructive on the environment.

Come and see us at the Farmers Market in February and hear what we are telling them.

Advertorial

## Local voices: diving deeper into community priorities



*Voconiq's Community Engagement Coordinator, Steph Sparks, chatting about Local Voices.*

CHALICE Mining has engaged Voconiq to come back into the local community in February with their Local Voices program - for a short 'Pulse' survey aimed at gathering further community feedback.

The Local Voices program was developed in collaboration with Australia's national science agency CSIRO and is a unique and

paid envelopes will also be available for collection from the Bindoon, Toodyay and Northam Libraries and Toodyay Visitor Centre, once the survey opens.

Participants are reassured that Voconiq understands the sensitivity of the issues at hand and will ensure that confidentiality is maintained, with no personal information shared with Chalice.

Chalice and Voconiq will acknowledge survey participants for their time and insights through the Local Voices Rewards Program.

For every completed 'Pulse' survey, participants have the option to allocate a \$5 donation to local not-for-profit groups registered in the Community Rewards Program.

Whilst there are several groups already registered, invitations are extended for additional community groups such as sporting clubs, school P&C's and community organisations to register and start receiving rewards at [voconiqlocalvoices.com/chalice/#Rewards](http://voconiqlocalvoices.com/chalice/#Rewards).

Your voice matters – have your say on Chalice and the Gonneville Project through the Local Voices survey.

