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22/06/2007 05:00 PM

To land.whitepaper@dse.vic.gov.au

cc

bcc

Subject Submission on Land and Biodiversity White Paper from the  
Ballarat Environment Network

Please find attached submission from the Ballarat  
Environment Network.

Hedley Thomson

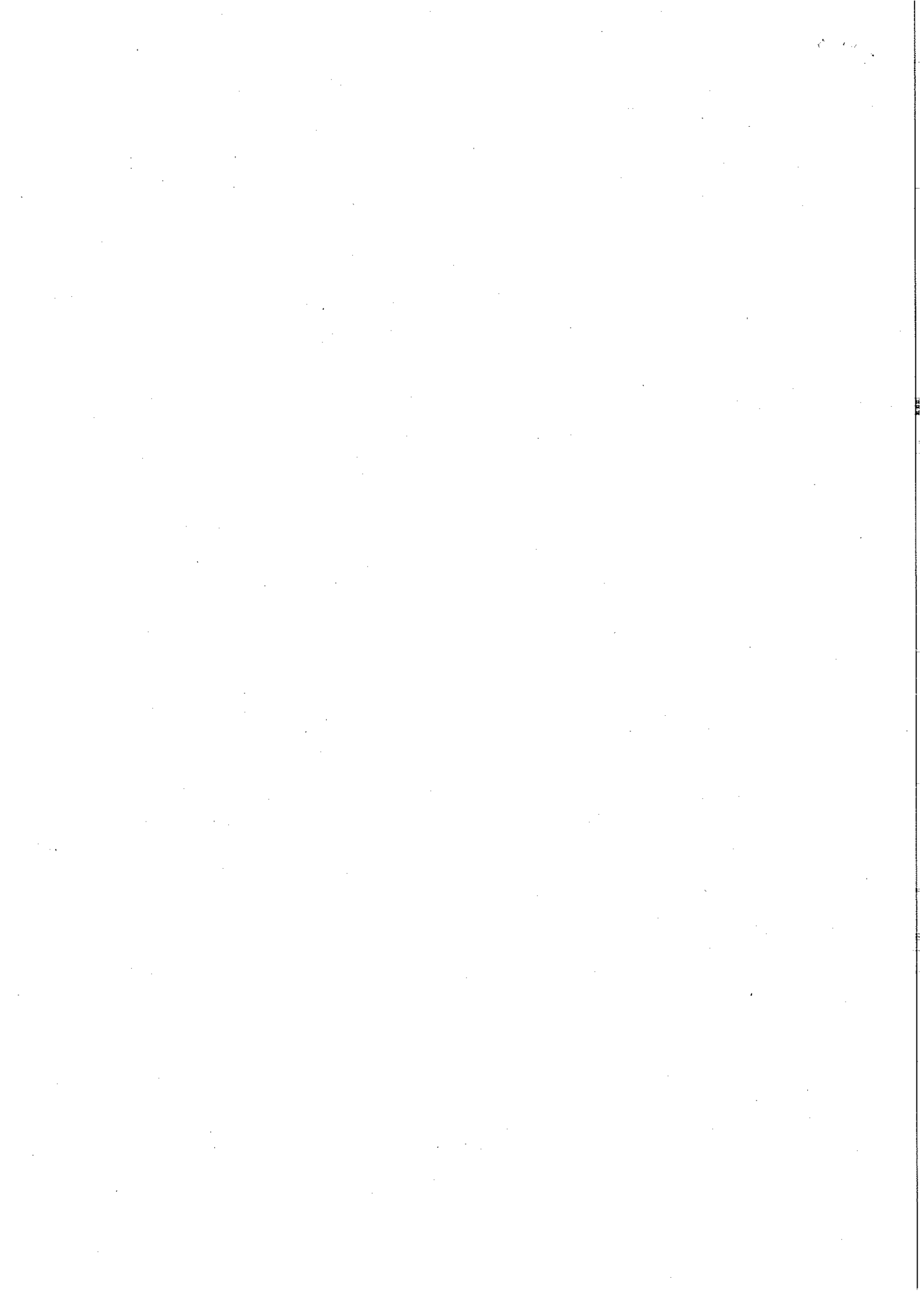
Executive Officer.

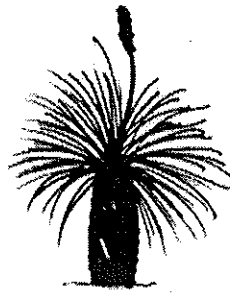
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Submission on proposed Landcare & Biodiversity White Paper - 6-07.doc





# Ballarat Environment Network

## Submission on Issues Affecting the Landcare and Biodiversity Green/White Papers

Hedley Thomson  
Executive Officer, Ballarat Environment Network  
22<sup>nd</sup> June 2007

The matters that the Ballarat Environment Network believes should be considered in the White Paper process are encapsulated in the points made below. The Network does not consider an extensive submission is required at this stage in the process; the points raised in this brief submission have all been made many times before by many expert groups in numerous forums. Action and commitment is what is required to move forward:

- **Resources!** Still seeing a lack of long-term commitment to support of the landcare movement/structure; e.g. short-term project funding and project officer positions and under-funding.
- **Expertise** – reasonable at the ground level (and even there more expertise and experience is needed) but needing huge increase at the strategic and political levels, even with the support of CMAs and the like. In general, at all levels of management, supervision and implementation, right through to contractors and landholders, much better knowledge and skills are required that recognise the nature of the tasks that are required to be done and that can deliver those tasks properly and appropriately on the ground.
- **Standing; i.e. power** – the landcare movement relative to agribusiness – the power and scale of agribusiness and the pressure placed on natural systems and natural resources by its activities far outweighs the environmental improvements carried out through environmental enhancement programs.
- **Scale of Task** – restoration of the natural environment and supporting ecosystems is way beyond the capacity of landcare and the community volunteer movement to deliver. Until the fundamentals of a totally unsustainable economic system, often linked to exploitive land management practises, are changed, landcare can be no more than a salve on some of the worst land management problems. See next point.

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- **Climate Change!** See point above! We have induced climate change and current land use and management practices show no sign of moving away from mega-disruption of natural systems and the utilisation of fossil fuel-based technologies that have contributed to bringing about climate change.
- **Linking Biodiversity and Agriculture** – rural/farming land is often misconstrued (by city dwellers) as quasi public or national park land - nothing could be further from the truth; e.g. use of artificial fertilisers and pesticides, draining of wetlands, wholesale removal of native vegetation, crushing the Stony Rises, huge use of fossil fuels. This is where some of the proposed incentive schemes come in – addressing the real value of natural resources. See next point.
- **A REAL Commitment From Government re. Biodiversity** – no tradeoffs; e.g. Bulokes in the Wimmera and grasslands at Point Cook – gone. COMMITMENT, COMMITMENT, COMMITMENT!
- **How many more times do we need to rehash the policy?** See above point.
- **Duplication** – DPI/DSE/CMAs; local/state/federal governments; sort it out!!
- **Links to regional catchment plans?** Where's the process? Terms of Reference?
- **"Ownership" of Landcare** – political, bureaucracy or community? See point below.
- **Involvement of whole community – engagement.** Huge task – the bulk of the unwashed (taxpayers) have little knowledge of what it takes to manage land in a sustainable way – and one wonders if they really care.....
- **The Value of the Statutory Planning System** is vastly overrated. The statutory planning system – however good its supporting policies are – is severely limited by only being engaged when someone wants to do something and is further limited by the extent and impact of the existing controls. Most of what we have to deal with in natural resource management has to do with either past or current uncontrolled, unsupervised developmental works and land use practices. The biggest problem with the statutory planning system is that it induces a negative rather than a positive motivation. It should be regarded as the tool of last resort. Planning upfront, by all means, yes, but not *statutory* planning, which in any event isn't planning, it's development control and comes after the fact, so to speak. Behavioural change is what we need and that comes from a change in thinking and not through statutory processes.
- **Making the critical link between human health and the health of the environment.** Increasingly health and community development practitioners are recognising the strong link between a healthy ecology and a healthy society; engagement with the environment is critical.

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