

## UWA proposal is bad for the environment and local community

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All levels of government, the City of Nedlands, the State Government and the Federal Government need to take a stand against the University of Western Australia's relentless drive to develop Underwood Avenue Bushland. The City of Nedlands and the State Government must be commended for their efforts to date in recommending preservation of the Bushland. Unfortunately, it would appear that our legal system is such that the University's dogged pursuit to develop the land is still taking its toll on the local community as the saga continues into its eighth year.

Federal, State and Local government commitments to environmental sustainability and climate change initiatives are of paramount importance in 2008. The general public expect leadership from those entrusted to protect the natural environment for future generations. If we consider the fickle nature of both the stock markets and climate we soon realize that one of the few things that we can do with some degree of confidence is to protect our urban trees and bushland from senseless destruction and questionable developments. No politician has a mandate to authorize the destruction of a community's natural assets, and it is difficult to believe that the antiquated *University Endowment Act 1904* could be at the heart of the University's insistence on its ownership of and its right to destroy the Bushland for development purposes when environmental best practice in 2008 would see the Bushland retained for its many environmental and health benefits.

The University's financial concerns and its ownership of the endowment land granted to it by the State Government in 1904 are matters that must be dealt with as a separate issue. Its recent full-page advertisement in the local paper did little to convince the public that the Underwood Avenue Bushland is of less value now in 2008 than it was in 2004 when the then Minister for the Environment, Judy Edwards, rejected the University's proposal for development, stating: "It is important to the general community and to this Government that all efforts are made to maintain biodiversity and conservation outcomes across the State and that includes urban areas."..... "The level of interest in conserving this bushland has been apparent through the wide range of submissions received."

In The University of Western Australia Business News article "*Building a dynamic Western Australia*", professor Robson states: "*Ultimately our University exists to serve our State and our Nation.... We are a vital resource for the economic, social and environmental development of Western Australia.*" The natural environment generally looks after itself if left without human impact so what precisely does Professor Robson mean when he speaks of "environmental development"? In "Achieving International Excellence" and delivering "the best possible education and education facilities to tens of thousands of Western Australians" the University seems to have lost sight of the social and environmental components of its obligations to its students.

- **How much CO2 will be released from the destruction of the Bushland, how much CO2 will no longer be sequestered if the trees are destroyed and how much oxygen will be lost to the locality?**
- **How will the proposed development impact on local air quality?**
- **How will this destruction impact on the biodiversity of the area, the myriad of insects and wildlife that rely on the Underwood Avenue Bushland and the diminishing habitat for Carnaby's Cockatoos?**
- **Can the University justify to its students this level of environmental destruction?**
- **Will the University of Western Australia finally put to rest this plan to develop Underwood Avenue Bushland and reconsider the way it meets its obligations to its students, many of whom recently signed a petition against the development proposal?**
- **Will our three levels of Government recognize that protecting our trees and natural environment is one of the simplest and most cost effective ways of meeting our obligations to fighting global warming and climate change, and that we must put on the brakes when it comes to developments that destroy the natural environment?**

The natural environment must be protected for the health and social benefit of current and future generations, and community expectations in this regard have not altered since the then Environment Minister's rejection of the previous development proposal in 2004.

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