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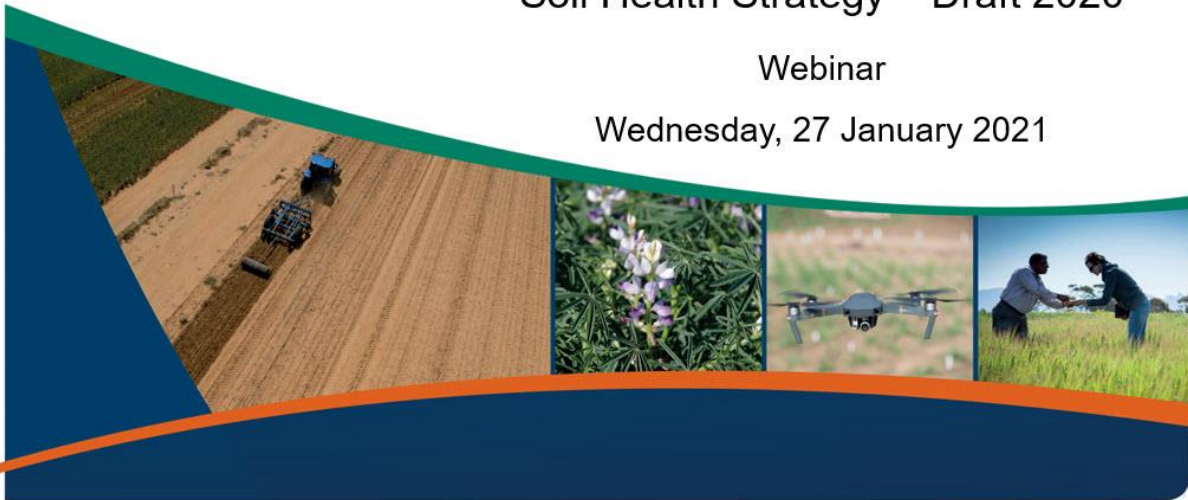
Soil and Land Conservation Council

Western Australian

Soil Health Strategy – Draft 2020

Webinar

Wednesday, 27 January 2021



Part One. Introduction

Andrew Huffer, Independent facilitator and Stakeholder Engagement Consultant

I've been working with the team to design the consultation process. Our main aim today is to provide a deeper understanding of the reasoning behind the draft strategy goals, which is going to enable you to provide some more informed feedback. We'll talk a bit about the input process and how that's informed the development of the strategy so far and about the reasoning behind the goals, and objectives, how they were formed, and the thinking behind that.

I'm going to give a very brief overview of how we got to this point. During last year, we had ran seven focus group workshops across a range of agricultural-focused sectors. There was an online survey as well that people could provide the input into. There's also a detailed submission process. This provided the basis to get people's feedback on the sort of things they wanted to see in a strategy, the changes they wanted to see and how they viewed the future of WA agriculture. And by agriculture I mean the pastoral, horticulture, broadacre, and intensive sectors. This all helped the strategy team to understand people's thinking, and incorporate it into a useful structure.

Kevin Goss, Chair, Soil and Land Conservation Council

Thanks, everybody, and welcome to this webinar. It's pleasing to see so many people join in. I want to reinforce a few points that Andrew has made. But let me start by just introducing the Council. The Soil and Land Conservation Council has been in operation since November 2019. It is a statutory entity and that it's there because of the Soil and Land Conservation Act. Its role is to advise the relevant Minister for Agriculture, and also to support the Commissioner of Soil and Land Conservation. And we interpret that role as an influential role with independent voice to those two entities on the issues that we believe are important on the day, and we are free to choose what we do as well as take direction from the Minister.

In this case, the Minister McTiernan in November 2019 directed the Council to oversee the development and implementation of soil health strategy. The Council took the decision to take a two- step process which Andrew has outlined. The first step was really a discussion phase, unbounded, listening, and then pulling that into a draft strategy. What's important about what you have before you today in the draft strategy is we move from the Council to laying down that two step process to the Council, and DPIRD collaborating closely in the writing of the draft strategy. So now we have a document that's drawn on the discussion, and is now headed towards a government approval, subject to this consultation phase, as a statement by the Council, the advisory body, and also by DPIRD. And we've worked quite cleverly to do that. And the writers of that strategy are with us today.

For those of you who want to just get a sense of what was said back in the discussion phase last year, and how we've brought that into the draft strategy, you can check the stakeholder engagement report which is on the Soil and Land Conservation Council page of the DPIRD website. With the release of the strategy in December prior to Christmas, we quite deliberately left the period open until mid March, acknowledging that people are on holidays, starting the farming season, and so on. We've allowed what we believe is sufficient time to run this. And today's webinar anchors that process from January through to 19 March 2021.

Back to the webinar today, this is an opportunity for the strategy writers who are here to explain the reasoning behind what you'll now see before you by way of goals, objectives, and suggested key actions. And for you to seek clarity on that, and then from that they are able to make a submission if you choose to do that, as well as expect to get your questions answered through the chat box. We've

reached a point, which is quite crucial to start looking at a draft strategy, and then making those submissions from now through to March.

I want to also want to deal with a question that could be on your mind. And that is why have a soil health strategy? We're doing it because we were directed by the Minister, but we've taken the matter further. And we saw real merit in having a soil health strategy to several reasons, and that was reinforced in the discussion phase. An effective strategy can galvanize around a shared purpose. And in this strategy, we've been quite clear that the shared purpose can be management, protection, improvement of soil functions, and associated ecosystem services.

And the ecosystem services is defined and listed in the draft strategy. An effective strategy can also guide and assist in collaborative arrangements. What's important about this is that collaboration was raised repeatedly in the discussion phase as important. And we've and we really worked hard to bring that into this draft strategy. And that applies to policy, research, investment on ground actions. The strategy doesn't specify all the actions that can do that. But it can give a very clear direction in how collaboration will work toward those actions.

The third element of why you'd have a soil health strategy is to bring scientific rigor to this area, which is so diverse, to be open to innovation, adaptation, land use changes, changing the farming systems, but all the time subjecting them to rigorous science and economic assessment. And we think they're very good reasons to have a soil health strategy. The Council and DPIRD have drafted the strategy to do this, it will deliver through the actions that support it, DPIRD's thinking that way, and we hope that other people will start to identify with it, and look at what they can do to bring that strategy to life. It covers a 10 year period from now till 2031.

It outlines principles, goals, objectives, and key actions, largely for illustrative purposes. Its scope is the management of agricultural, pastoral, and horticultural soils dealing with on site and offsite impacts associated with the use. And significantly, as I said earlier, it welcomes innovation, adaptation, and in changes to farming systems and land management. I hope with that, that it's pretty clear the thinking behind this, and our task now is to get these to look at the five goals that we've drafted into that strategy, and to explain the reasoning behind them. Thanks, everybody.

Part Two. Outline of the goals of the draft Soil Health Strategy

Andrew Huffer

Now, I'd like to hand over to Cec McConnell to kick us off in the reasoning behind the goals, with an overview of them and an outline of the first one.

Cec McConnell, Commissioner of Soil and Land Conservation

Hi, everyone. I'm Cec McConnell, I'm the Commissioner of Soil and Land Conservation. And in that role, I sit on the Soil and Land Conservation Council. I've been in the role since September last year, so new to the role, but I have been around this space for a long time. The strategy has five goals, and those goals have emerged from the engagement, and the discussion that we had in that early phase of the development of the strategy. Having considered those, we've sort of settled on these goal areas as the key ways that we think we can achieve soil health over the next 10 years.

The first one's about adoption of farming, and pastoral best practice, so the WA soils are sustainably managed to suit land capability and soil type, and provide economic returns to land holders. Our thinking around this goal is really understanding the risk to our soils, understanding the risks of different practices, and how they impact both positively, and negatively on soil health. And then also saying,

"Well, what is it around those practices that we can do to either prove the practice, or change the practice to make sure that the soil health outcome is achieved, but also to make sure that there are economic returns." If we want to be managing soils profitably, we also want to be managing them from a soil health point of view and they go together, one without the other is not really going to achieve the outcome that we're looking for.

Our three objectives around those area really look at understanding risk. They also look at the collaboration that's required. We know landholders can be very innovative, we know that we have good resources through our various agencies, and grower groups. And we really want that collaboration to develop both the practice understanding and also the impact on soil type, or on soil health. And beyond that we actually want to take that further, not just know that, we want to extend that to land managers so that they have a really good set of information that gives them the ability to assess the risks to their soil, and to make sure that they can choose the best practices to get those outcomes of soil health, and of profitability. Now I'll hand over to Hayley for the second goal.

Hayley Norman, Deputy Chair of the Soil and Land Conservation Council

Thanks, Cec. My name is Hayley Norman. I'm the Deputy Chair of the Council and also a Senior Principal Research Scientist at CSIRO, and I'll be talking about our second goal. The second goal is wide dissemination of rigorous scientific, and economic assessments for new emerging, and innovative farming systems, so land managers can adopt these practices and improve soil health. Based on the principle of what may be noble today could well be conventional practice in the future, the goal was developed to capture innovation, and open mindedness, and bring together land managers, industry, and the community to consider the broader economic and systems contexts.

To investigate emerging practices, we felt we needed, firstly, a cooperative and open partnerships between industry, research organizations, and tertiary institutions across a range of scientific disciplines. We need to establish credible science-based, and economic investigations to evaluate land management practices to support adoption decisions. And finally, we thought that land managers need to have access to a range of decision support tools, and peer supported learning to enable them to objectively decide on investing in practices related to improving soil health.

Cec McConnell

Goal three is about our monitoring and our understanding of our soil health. The goal is that our soil health condition is tracked and monitored with data accessible to land holders, and the wider community. So that on-farm and larger scale land degradation can be addressed. Our thinking here is really about we actually need to know what's happening with our soils, we need to know what their condition is, we need to know if it's changing, is it improving? Is it responding to what we do? So this goal is very much about that understanding, and then being able to use that understanding to impact our decisions.

We had two key objectives around that. And the first is that monitoring, and that tracking. So it was looking at the trends, the indicators and reporting at regular intervals for those key land degradation threats that we have. And the second, which is really picked up on the goal as well, is that comprehensive soil information, and data is available and accessible. That was the important part. We want people to be able to use that data, we want to be able to use that for analysis, we want to be able to use that to inform our decisions. This was very much the underpinning information that gives us a really good idea of we're on track, and if we're not, what we should be looking at, if we are great, we've got some positive feedback in terms of what we're doing.

Cec McConnell

Now, moving on to our fourth goal, this one is widespread understanding of WA government policy that enables landholders, community, and industry to meet their responsibilities, to conserve and manage the soil, and land resources in WA. Really, we have some great legislation and regulation within the state that looks at conserving our soil. Obviously, the Soil and Land Conservation Act that the Council and myself sit under, but a number of other acts as well. It's making sure that those acts are really supporting what we want to achieve in terms of soil health, it's making sure that people understand their responsibilities in terms of legislation, and their management responsibilities for soil.

And it's also looking in terms of the pastoral land, and some of those acts, both the Soil and Land Conservation Act, and the Land Administration Act have significant reference to the soil condition for those parts of the state. So we wanted to pick up the pastoral areas in this goal as well. And the three key objectives that we have is that our public policies and positions have clearly articulated, and show shared responsibilities for that soil and then management. We want to know that people both comply, but also understand our state laws and regulations. But those regulations were actively contributing to our soil health, and conserving our soil resource. Coming back to our pastoral state, is making sure that we've got monitoring systems that really give us good knowledge of the condition of that particular state, and also helps those managing that land resources at WA to make informed decisions.

Kevin Goss

The fifth goal completes the set. And the goal is implementation of agricultural, pastoral, and horticultural developments that sustain soil health served good processes that ensure that sustainability. You might consider this goal a more of a preventative goal. It deals with the pressures on the land resource that may occur from changing land use, or new developments, and the role of land suitability assessments that ongoing, monitoring and reporting of impacts can do. Clearly, there are opportunities all the time to facilitate new development. Or, as we found out in the discussion stages, there can be pressures coming from other developments on existing land use, and that was made very clear in the pastoral areas, for instance.

So we're trying to cover both of those things under this goal that development's facilitated, that is sustainable over the long term, and that generally is more intensive development in different parts of the state, or that some of these things that can impact on land use, at least dealt with good information systems. I would just qualify this by saying we've chosen in this strategy not to get into the area of statutory land use planning. That's under another jurisdiction in the state. But clearly, it speaks to the role of information to informing these developments, and potential impacts. The actions that should reflect that.

I'd also like to make a broad comment across the five goals. I'm hoping that no matter where you sit in this world of soil and land management, that you can find relationship to this strategy. And the five goals are quite deliberately chosen to do that. The first goal, you could look that as really reflecting current arrangements around the diverse services that landholders receive, and how that can be further nurtured, and supported. The role of commercial service providers, as well as a government and so on. The second one is around open mind as to the new, and the innovative, and the emerging and what's the process for dealing with them.

The third goal is very much around the role of soil science, soil data, ongoing monitoring and reporting, serving many needs from land holders right through to public policy. The fourth one, which may not have been expected is to bring in the role of the Soil and Land Conservation Act and the commissioner, and to give clarity to where that sits right alongside everything else we're talking about. And the fifth

goal is very much around facilitating ongoing development. I hope that you can see that in the choice of goals, but clearly, we're open to further contributions.

Part Three. Participant Question and Answer Session

Andrew Huffer

Our first one here, thanks, Glenice, and good have you here, is how does the WA strategy fit into the national one?

Tim Overheu, Principal Research Scientist, DPIRD

The national soil strategy is running independently. But look, we've done our best to endeavor to ensure that there are key links between the two, the state soil health strategy actually stand out, is developed before the national soil strategy was a blip on anyone's brain. And as you probably be very aware that the national soil strategy is running at an exceedingly tight timeline. To provide the link, I sit on the National Soil Strategy Steering Committee for the development of the strategy. So there's quite a lot of synergies that are occurring between that. I'm also a member of the National Soil Monitoring Program Design Reference Group, which really hits goal number three.

From a state perspective, not only are we collecting data to understand our resource information on the ground for our land users, and grower groups, but people may also be unaware that the state has an obligation to be able to report at a national level, as far as state of the environment types of reporting as well. So what we've got in goal number three, will certainly assist some of them outcomes that we're proposing to deliver with the national strategy. Of relevance, also, as the national sales strategy has a number of programs that are developing in the background where they're preparing substantial funding for that. There will be a budget announcement in May of this year, that will outline some of the investments that will be going towards things like on ground data collection, increasing monitoring points across the landscape, carbon is another feature, all of that, through our strategy will be accessible.

The other thing too is very few of the other states and territories around Australia have a strategy. And this is something now that the national group encouraging other states to follow suit, to follow Western Australian. I hope that kind of answers the question that was raised there. I think the links are pretty good, actually.

Andrew Huffer

Thanks, Tim. And next question is from from Kent. He's asking when was the last time anyone was prosecuted, and how many since the Act was proclaimed?

Cec McConnell

We certainly prosecuted last year, on the Soil and Land Conservation Act. And sadly, I need to say that I have actually had a number of soil conservation notices go out just in the last three months since I've been on board. But we are trying to be using the act as we need to, not as the first point of call, but certainly at the last point of call. I would rather have a conversation, and try to negotiate an appropriate outcome without having to utilize the act, but it's there for that purpose, and we'll certainly use it if we need to.

Andrew Huffer:

Glenice, you've asked, "Do we have the benchmarking of soils already in place to ensure we have consistent monitoring, and tracking of the key threats, or will that come from the agreed best practice from goal one?"

Tim Overheu

Back in 2013, the department put out a publication called the WA Soil Report, WA report card. It was a good piece of work that actually has accessed a lot of legacy data, and put much of that together. Subsequent to 2013, the proposal was to put out another report card. And as you would be aware, there was a report card that was put out in 2017-2018, for the pastoral area in Western Australia as well. We admit that we don't have the activity that we've had in the past in collecting base resource information.

But to part A of the question - yes, we do actually have some very good information, something like about over 150,000 data points on the ground that government manages, or government has investigated, that provide us with that benchmarking. What we do going into the future for another report card will be different, it probably won't look quite like the past report card, but what we'll be doing is working cooperatively across private industry, grower groups, and others, and working on some key programs to be able to put together new data. Part A of the question, yes, we do have some very good benchmarking data. Part B of the question is, where do we go from here is collaboration and cooperation - preparing, collecting the information.

Andrew Huffer

Thanks, Tim. Cec, do you want to add anything to that?

Cec McConnell

Yes and I know that Steve, put in a question there about collaboration. I think that is definitely where we will be going in the future. We know that there's some great monitoring that's been happening in private industry, and through growers. Part of our challenge is to bring that data together in an appropriate way that gives us a repeatable, or a set of confidence in the data, and then therefore, we can actually make some good conclusions from that data. But definitely, we'll both as an agency. But also as a soil strategy, we'll be looking to try to continue the work that's been there, whether it's in the same format, or not still to be determined, but collaboration is probably going to be a key part of that for us moving forward.

Andrew Huffer

And just for people's reference, Steve has asked, "How do we plan to access publicly held soil data?" Anything that people would like to add to that?

Cec McConnell

Only that we would certainly be looking... I guess that's the collaboration. But we've got to work our way through that.

Andrew Huffer

Great, thank you. And thanks for that, Steve. Glenice wants to know, where does the statutory area fit if not with the soil commissioner, and DPIRD, or DWER (Department of Water and Environmental Regulation)?

Cec McConnell

I think it definitely fits, the statutory part fits with the Soil and Land Conservation Act being a primary act that we've looked at. But we are also very conscious that there are multiple acts out there, the

Environmental Protection Act, the Land Administration Act, that have a role in terms of land condition. But yes, they sit within the current existing legislative frameworks.

Andrew Huffer

Fantastic. Thank you. And for people's interest, we've got people from right across the state on the webinar. So far with our questions have come from across the Wheatbelt, and now we're heading into the Peel-Harvey. Jane asks, "The actions are not quantifiable or defined responsibilities, how will actions be tracked for implementation, and public reporting?"

Kevin Goss

I made the point very briefly, and I just need to emphasize the point that this is a 10 year strategy. And by its nature, it needs to have a life of 10 years. And so it's fairly high level. And what's expected is good action planning to deliberate, and DPIRD is already working on that. And a good strategy will invite others to do the same. So the fact that it doesn't have a large suite of actions is not a surprise, but we have put in key actions to illustrate and make the point about what you'd expect to see. On this question of quantified, and being tracked. The Council will be doing that, in the back end of the strategy, you will see that there will be a monitoring, and reporting, and tracking regime, annual reporting, and then periodic reviewing. And so that is very much part of the ongoing nature of this 10 year strategy.

Andrew Huffer

Great. Thanks, Kevin. Does anybody want to make comment on the second part of the question about goal one? "Has there been consideration of bringing in a product labeling process similar to what the Marine Stewardship Council does, which clearly defines to consumers a choice of products for those that are managing soil health?"

Kevin Goss

It hasn't come up specifically, but the point I would make with something as specific and possibly prescriptive as this, is that it doesn't have to be included in a strategy of this nature. The Soil and Land Conservation Council, as I said earlier, advises the government, through them to the minister and also with the commissioner on land conservation. So when specific matters, or ideas, or issues come up, the Council can be open to considering those things, and dealing with them on their own terms. And I think this is probably a case in point. The sort of thing that an active counsel would be on the lookout for, and would go through an informed process before taking it forward.

Andrew Huffer

Our next question is from Doug Hall. Thanks, Doug for joining us from the Pastoralists and Graziers Association of Western Australia. Doug mentions importance of monitoring in science, and good management. The key part of Doug's question really asks what consideration has been made of the need to be lean as a Council, and draft strategy, given the vastness of our state? All aspects of the strategies surely need to be lean and driven by a modern risk management approach to ensure limited private, and public resources are prioritized. Can you give some sense or context about this?

Kevin Goss

On the one hand, we've had pretty good feedback that things are too lean in the sense that there aren't the resources that there used to be. And so we're starting this strategy from a position where there will be the need to do new and different things. And in the doing of that, then the role of new technology,

the role of more efficient technologies, these sorts of things come to the fore. While we haven't stayed in the strategy, this is a principle I think you could take as a starting point, from the government side, at least, we're starting with a budget that is probably not quite up to the job. But at least it means that the question of leanness will be front of mind. And I think we'll see that in the rangeland monitoring area.

Cec McConnell

I will pick up on the risk management comment that you've made there, Doug, because certainly, from a pastoral estate point of view we're very much focused on our risk management approach. We've not got the resources to put as many people on the ground as we would like in order to do condition monitoring that's at the level we require. So we really do need to take a risk management approach to say, where are the highest risks going to be? And let's have an understanding of the landscapes in those areas. I think leanness is going to be driven by necessity, but it's also going to drive collaboration, which keeps coming. We've mentioned a number of times in order to achieve those outcomes, which should be mutual outcomes. And that will be the benefit of our collaboration is that we're hopefully getting outcomes of both parties requiring.

Andrew Huffer:

Fantastic, thank you. Back into the Peel-Harvey, great to see you Kim. Kim is asking what role is there within the strategy for our Land Conservation District Committees, LCDCs?

Cec McConnell:

Well, I think Land Conservation District Committees have just as much role as anyone else from a land management point of view, those committees are made up of land managers. So the opportunity is for, as has been, is for a committee to look at particular issues that are in their area, look at practices, the common development of an issue and an understanding of how to approach that issue that comes through that land conservation committee structure is something that works very nicely with soil health and the Soil Conservation Act. I think there's definitely a role within this strategy for them.

Tim Overheu

Can I just add, Cec, that I'm certainly under goal four which talks about governance, and policy from the strategy. Some of the key actions there are about, first of all, undertaking a review of the current Soil and Land Conservation Act, as well as considering policy position statements, and various bodies and groups through the Council, and through your role as Commissioner. So I think LCDCs they still have a prominent role in soil activities on ground at the coalface and is engaged as other groups in this area. Another question coming through on LCDCs is "Can they be reformed?"

Cec McConnell

The mechanism under the act still exists. There's no reason why an LCD can't be reformed.

Andrew Huffer:

Thank you. I've got another question here from Kent, who's saying that there's been no mention made of historical over-clearing. What place does re-vegetation have in the future to slow down, or stop significant wind events?

Cec McConnell

Major, major place. We're very conscious of that, and if you have a look within the last objective of goal one, "land managers and supportive strategies that profitably maintain ground cover to prevent wind and water erosion". So yes, as a strategy, we're very conscious of the need to promote, and encouraged ground cover in a range of forms, but to prevent wind, and water erosion.

Tim Overheu

I'll just quickly add to that as well. And this brings a quite prominent link to the national strategy, and bodies that are involved in this monitoring process of ground cover. There are standardized methodologies that are in place, Geoscience Australia has invested a lot of energy and research into pixel resolution, and your satellite bases, and the like. There's also carbon programs that are undergoing a review of the measurement models for emissions reduction fund methodology and the like. So I think re-vegetation will feature prominently in maintaining that ground cover to prevent landscape erosion by wind or water.

Andrew Huffer

Glenice has asked if there's maybe something missing in there that we need to be looking beyond just grower groups, and that there's still quite a few landholders out there not involved with peak bodies. So we need to be able to reach some of those general audiences with the strategy.

Kevin Goss

I guess there's nothing in the strategy about broader promotion, and education, which is something that we might think about. But clearly, in the strategy, we've tried to be very open to the diversity and range of how farmers get information, and advice, and access to new technologies and practices. And so it can be grower groups, NRM organizations, we've had a little discussion about Land Conservation District Committees, there's a diversity of groups. And this strategy needs to be open to all of those. But also, there are farmers who get their opportunities, their information, their advice from commercial services. And we've tried to be really open to that as well. That in goal number one in particular, and in the goal of outsource data, we've tried to be open to that. I think the strength of the strategy is that openness, and collaboration in the many, and diverse ways that landholders receive information and advice.

Andrew Huffer

And Glenice has a follow up question, "How would individuals and organizations input emerging issues or innovative practices? Will landholders be able to impact future research opportunities? And will that be through the Soil CRC, given this diverse mix of research effort, will the Council and the strategy be able to capture that for WA?"

Cec McConnell

That's our first goal. I don't know the nuts and bolts at this point, Glenice, but certainly that first goal is partnership with government, and industry and for the collaborative research for new and reassessed practices. So the second objective under that goal is very much looking for input around those new practices, or practices that might be modified now. And we're seeing how those impacting our soil health? We're certainly looking for that input, we don't have the... as we work through the implementation plan, the mechanisms for getting that input into that will be developed. But that's certainly the area that we'd be looking for input from any individual or organization.

Andrew Huffer

A question here from Doug, asking about the relationship between the Council, the Soil Commissioner, and the Pastoral Lands Board, and noting the involvement of the PJ in the Pastoral Lands Reform process, and being a member of the industry reference group. And noting here that the process of they're aware of that the PLB, and the DPIRD are developing a pastoral monitoring and compliance framework in partnership with industry. Part of Doug's question is how will Council Commissioner and strategy interact with that development process?

Cec McConnell

From the point of view of the Commissioner obviously, I sit on Council as a member of Council. In terms of the Pastoral Lands Board, I don't sit on the Lands Board, but I certainly interact with the Lands Board on a pretty regular basis. The framework that's been developed and DPIRD, it's obviously very involved with that framework, has been brought to Council for Council's consideration, as well as having been taken to the PLB for input from PLB's point of view. In part it's trying to make sure that the communication between the two bodies and the commissioner occur on a regular basis. But in both instances, both Council and the PLB have had ability to have input to the soil strategy, but also to the pastoral land or the pastoral framework that's under development at the moment. Kevin, you might like to add.

Kevin Goss

Thanks, Cec. Just like Cec has said, we're in a communication relationship with, or communication phase, with the Pastoral Lands Board. We've met with the chair, and the executive. And we've agreed that we need to communicate closely. That's being done. The Soil and Land Conservation Council has informed itself on the land reform process and package. And so we're keeping that front of mind. And we've been briefed on the emerging work from DPIRD on the new range land monitoring process. At this stage, it's communication information, and where that leads, I guess it's something for Council to decide, but we need to see through good communication and make sure that we're well informed before we take any further steps.

Andrew Huffer

Glenice has a final question about how will the Soil and Land Conservation Council, or DPIRD support, the reformation, and reinvigoration of LCDCs?

Cec McConnell

Good question, Glenice. Certainly from my point of view, just taking the commissioner's point of view, the LCDCs are a part of the Soil and Land Conservation Act. And do you have a key role? We don't specifically have a resourcing role for that from the department's point of view. But we know the value that groups on ground have for both investigating, for promoting, and also understanding different practices. Whilst I don't have an answer specifically for reinvigoration, I do know that whether it's an LCDC, whether it's a grower group, whether it's a local group of guys that just that haven't got a formal name, but it came together to look at different practices, that on ground input to learning is really important and really critical to making change on ground.

Part Four: Next Steps

Kevin Goss

As I said earlier, we've tried to be generous in providing the time needed to get to grips with this draft strategy, to learn about it, clarify and then make submissions through to mid-March. And we think that's appropriate. I'd really urge you to do that – both people who have attended today, and those that we're directly communicating to. So if you're involved in an early discussion phase, you will hear about us one way or another, if you haven't heard already, inviting submissions on the draft. And we will turn that around from the deadline in March. Then it becomes a question of revising the draft to be the final strategy to be launched by government.

We will give some further thought about that launch, and the way that we might put information around it, use the launch of the strategy not as simply just, "Here's the strategy" and promote it, but actually start to build some information exchange around the strategy and what it means. And that'll take place by around that mid-year. That's the strategy part of it, as I mentioned earlier, and I got to be very careful, I don't speak for DPIRD, but I do know that DPIRD is looking at action planning, and what it can do to give life to the strategy - and the Council is ready to be a sounding board on that process. And clearly, we've got the right people on the Council to assist in that regard as well.

Kevin Goss

This is going to be a strategy by mid 2021. And we are genuinely committed to it providing new strategic direction in how we collaboratively do the necessary things to support, and sustain soil health.

Thank you all, we really appreciate you making the time be available for the webinar. Thanks for that. And thanks for your questions. We will take them on board, and as you know from the earlier discussion period, we'll hold ourselves accountable for how we handle those questions. Thank you for that. And with that, I think it's for me to wish you well for a good growing season, whatever your relationship is with agricultural, pastoral, and horticultural land use. Thanks, everybody.

Appendix 1. Summary of Goals

Goal 1: Adoption of farming and pastoral best practice so that WA soils are sustainably managed to suit land capability and soil type, and provide economic returns to landholders.

Goal 2: Wide dissemination of rigorous scientific and economic assessments for new, emerging and innovative farming systems for land manager adoption to improve soil health.

Goal 3: Soil health condition tracked and monitored with data accessible to landholders and the wider community so that on-farm and larger scale land degradation can be addressed.

Goal 4: Widespread understanding of WA government policy that enables landholders, community and industry to meet their responsibilities to conserve and manage the soil and land resources in WA.

Goal 5: Implementation of agricultural, pastoral, and horticultural developments that sustain soil health, served by land suitability assessments and landscape monitoring and reporting.