

MEMORANDUM

Attention: MBS Clients From: Kristy Sell
Subject: New Ecological Survey Data Requirements Date: 1 May 2018

The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) has established a database for all biodiversity surveys carried out under the *Environmental Protection Act 1986 (EP Act)* that will be called the Index of Biodiversity Surveys for Assessment (IBSA).

From 30 April 2018, all biodiversity surveys (terrestrial flora and fauna, aquatic flora and fauna, terrestrial invertebrate and subterranean fauna) carried out for reports lodged in relation to applications or obligations under the *EP Act* must be submitted to IBSA. These include surveys undertaken to:

- Support applications under Part IV of the *EP Act* (EPA referrals, environmental review document, environmental review or public environmental review processes).
- Support applications under the Part V of the *EP Act* (Works Approval, Prescribed Premises Licences, and Native Vegetation Clearing Permits, including Clearing Permit applications for mining projects submitted to the Department of Mines, Industry Regulation and Safety (DMIRS)).
- Comply with conditions of Ministerial Statements or Prescribed Premises Licences.

A range of data formats will be accepted during the first year, however shape (.SHP) files will be the mandatory format from there on.

The relevant regulator (DWER (including EPA) or DMIRS) will require a biodiversity survey 'data package' to be submitted in conjunction with survey reports. The data package is to follow the format set out under IBSA and include:

- The survey report.
- Relevant spatial survey data (such as species found, and their locations).
- Relevant metadata (who carried out the survey, the target species, the location and time period of the survey).

The regulator will assess the data package to ensure that it meets the IBSA requirements before including it in the IBSA database. The data package will remain in the IBSA database in 'quarantine' until the associated report has been approved. During the quarantine phase, data and metadata will not be publically available. Once the report is approved, the metadata will be made publicly available through IBSA.

The holder of the intellectual property (IP) for a survey then also has the option of allowing the survey data *itself* to be publically available, under a "Creative Commons" licence. While there is no obligation to make survey data publically available, the intention of IBSA is to make as much data publically available as possible.

Historical survey data can also be submitted to IBSA through the regulator associated with the relevant report. Historical data can be submitted voluntarily and does not have to meet the formatting guidelines associated set out for future IBSA submissions.

Publicly available data in IBSA will be searchable by a range of parameters including target species, survey location and surveying company. Interested parties can download individual aspects of a given data package including the report and all shapefiles. This data will not be re-evaluated over time, meaning if changes to taxonomy or conservation status of species or communities changes, the data will not be updated and the onus for correct use of the data will rest with the person accessing it.

The IBSA data will remain separate from data managed by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) relating to Threatened and Priority flora and ecological communities. The existing NatureMap database will also still be maintained.

The new IBSA database has potential to be a highly useful new tool for project developers, particularly over time as more data is received. It will provide improved access to results of other surveys in adjacent areas, potentially improving understanding of local and regional context.

If you are planning ecological surveys post 30 April 2018, please be aware of the new IBSA information requirements and that such studies could become publically accessible through this service. Things we recommend you think about in scoping such work include:

- Data provision from the specialist consultant to ensure this is consistent with IBSA requirements.
- Who will be responsible for submission of information to IBSA – the proponent or specialist consultant?
- Who will hold the IP for the survey data?
- Do you want the study results to be made publically available, either in whole or in part?

We also recommend you consider whether you wish to submit historic data voluntarily to IBSA. Inclusion of more data will make the database a more useful tool for all. Many reports your organisation has previously commissioned are publically available via formal assessment documents displayed on the EPA website, Mining Proposals available on the DMIRS website and Clearing Permits available on the DWER website. Submission of such data to IBSA will not change publically available knowledge, but will however make this information more useable for others.

More information about IBSA is available on the website <https://dwer.wa.gov.au/programs/ibsa>

If you have any questions about IBSA, including potential submission of historic data, please feel free to call or email us to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely
MBS Environmental



Kristy Sell
Managing Director