

**Moore Catchment Council**  
 P.O Box 337  
 Moora WA 6510  
 Phone (08) 9653 1355  
 Fax (08) 96531366  
 Email: moorecc@bigpond.com  
 www.moorecatchment.org.au

## Why all the sick trees?

In recent months people may have noticed a number of sick looking trees along the railway line reserve from Gillingarra all the way up along the Midlands Road to around Geraldton. This reserve is not only an important ecological corridor for native flora and fauna – including a designated Important Bird Area for the endangered Carnaby’s Black Cockatoo around Moora and Gillingarra, it is also a huge drawcard for tourists who enjoy the area for its native vegetation.

The Moore Catchment Council (MCC) received a number of phone calls from concerned residents at the end of last year and so MCC’s local NRM Officer Rachel Walmsley has been investigating the matter since then. Rachel says “the number of sick trees I’ve noticed is alarming. The first trees noticed were the York Gums with some Salmon and Wandoo but I’m noticing more Salmon and Wandoo becoming sick as time goes by. Particularly sick clusters can be seen adjacent to level crossings and around CBH below Moora”. It was suggested that either a bug or herbicide spraying along the railway line was to blame. Rachel has been gathering evidence and complaints from local residents, and many photos have been taken and all sick trees between Coorow and Koojan have been GPS’ed so that they could be mapped for their locations. The total GPS’ed so far is nearly 1000.



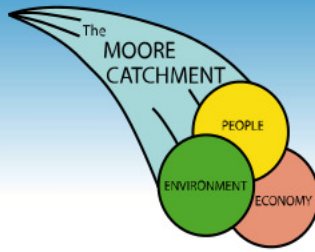
Above: sick York Gum trees in Moora



Above: sick trees at Coomberdale wildflower farm crossing

This evidence was brought to the attention of the Department of Parks and Wildlife (DPaW) who forwarded the information on the Brookfield Rail. As a result, MCC organised a meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> January between Brookfield Rail, rail maintenance contractor John Holland, Shire of Moora, DPaW, Roadside Conservation Committee and local concerned residents to discuss what has happened and what can be done to remedy the situation. Frank discussion were held between the stakeholders about Brookfield Rail’s herbicide spraying practices along the rail line and the huge devastating consequences that will result from the loss of these trees. A residual herbicide chemical is thought to be the blame with the John Holland representative explaining that 2013 was the last year of a three year program using this chemical alongside Glyphosate to help control the weeds - especially the resistant rye grass. York Gums, Salmon Gums and Wandoo have lateral root systems that extend to at least once to twice the height of the tree and so the chemical could have infiltrated the soil to roots

The Moore Catchment Council promotes Natural Resource Management in the Moore River Catchment



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beneath the track even on trees set back from the line. Brookfield Rail is to carry out leaf and soil testing in the affected areas and the group will meet again early March to discuss the results and the way forward.

Rachel concluded "If anyone in the community wishes to discuss this issue or express their concerns about what has happened, please contact me on 9653 1355 or [mcc.nrmo@bigpond.com](mailto:mcc.nrmo@bigpond.com) . I can also pass on your concerns to Brookfield Rail. This incident is going to have huge knock on effects and so the more people that report their concerns, the better."

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Above: sick trees along rail line 12km south of Moora

24<sup>th</sup>  
Jan  
2014