***Comparison of TDWG SPM and SPRAT text profile***

**Background**

SPRAT (Species Profile and Threats) database was developed in 1999 to assist decision-making under the newly introduced Australian government environment protection legislation. The database holds information on the 2300 or so species that are listed under the legislation – there are around 2200 profiles, which range in word count from just the bare minimum information of a few words to comprehensive profiles with over 11,000 words. A profile will typically hold information on the taxonomy of the species, its conservation status, distribution, description, information on threats and biology of the species. The information is gathered manually through a literature review process, the information is put into a template word document, converted to html and then loaded into an oracle database. Editing of the text (both content and formatting) is undertaken manually with a purpose-built editing tool. The profile is held within a departmental database and posted on both the intranet and the internet (profiles which are made publicly available differ slightly in the type and nature of information). The main role of the profile is to assist decisions around approval of activities that may have a significant impact on the species. All profiles holds in-text citations and references can be very extensive. Two examples of publically available profiles are provided:

* Mountain Pygmy-possum <http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/sprat/public/publicspecies.pl?taxon_id=267>
* Dunsborough Spider-orchid <http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/sprat/public/publicspecies.pl?taxon_id=56776>).

Other profiles are available at <http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/sprat/public/sprat.pl>.

A table (Attachment A) outlines the categories used by SPRAT (internet) and SPRAT (intranet) and compares to the categories used in the SPM. An additional word table provides some additional comments on matches between SPRAT and SPM (Attachment B).

**Overview**

At first glance, the SPM looked to fit quite neatly with our SPRAT profile, which has 46 potential categories of descriptors. A closer comparison brought out three types of differences between the two profile structures. The first is where SPM does not appear to call for information that SPRAT requires; the second is where SPM descriptors are ambiguous or may be met by a number of SPRAT categories and; third, where SPM calls for information that SPRAT does not have. The latter is of least concern, and the first of most interest.

SPM≠SPRAT

SPM does not explicitly call for population information, whereas SPRAT has seven different fields for population information. The reason SPRAT has population information relates to the role of the profile in assisting decision making about specific proposed activities that may impact on the species. Important populations need to be identified because geographically specific actions are being assessed for impact. Whether population categories can fall under the broader “distribution” category of SPM should be examined.

SPM does not cover surveys, either those already conducted or advice on how to conduct surveys, matters which SPRAT covers in three categories. It could be expected that survey guidelines or survey results may be popular with some of the other databases dealing with species conservation.

SPM does not appear to have a category for references, though I think it is captured elsewhere in the treatment (GoldenGate for instance captures citations).

SPM does not appear to have a category for major studies/reports.

Ambiguities

There were a number of SPM categories which were ambiguous:

* Biology vs LifeCycle
* Conservation – current, planned or needed?
* Cyclicity – captured within LifeCycle?
* Growth – captured within Description?
* Genetics – what part?
* Behaviour – captured within Description or reproduction?
* PopulationBiology – does this mean same as LifeCycle?
* LookAlikes – for surveying purposes or captured within Description?
* Conservation status – captured in legislation?
* Procedures – for what?

SPRAT≠SPM

In addition, SPRAT does not capture information such as:

* Cytology
* Physiology
* Molecular Biology
* Ecology