

Talking the Same Soil Language - a Simple Guide for Describing WA Soils

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The Western Australian Government is working to conserve and manage the State's natural resources for the benefit of present and future generations. In support of this, the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) have prepared a simple instructional field guide for recording and describing Western Australian unique and challenging soils and landscapes. Suitable for a wide user group (from students to industry consultants and the general community) the soil description guide is an easy-to-use field booklet. It will assist to identify the most important parts of a soil profile to describe and provide an easy way to understand and explain the features found in a soil profile. The main goal for the soil description guide is to help people inexperienced with soils to understand and communicate soil information. The second goal is to guide and support industry and community to capture soil information in a consistent and standardised manner (which if returned to DPIRD on the included standardised field data entry card, will be used to refine existing state data collections). The soil description guide outlines nine key soil descriptors or properties usually examined (also supported by the Australian Land and Soil Survey Field Handbook). These are: depth of profile; depth/thickness of each layer; texture of each layer; coarse fragments; colour; basic chemistry (pH and salinity); calcareous layers (lime); structure; and water regime. Other important soil- and land-related properties such as soil sodicity, soil surface condition, water repellence and landform are also defined to assist with the soil description. The soil description guide presents a basic step-by-step instructional process of which soil properties to describe and how to describe them, along with tools to generate a basic soil classifications and soil names. The guide will support community training and development and can be expanded and updated over time. DPIRD are keen for a broad range of students, researchers, environmental consultants and community groups to use the guide to describe and record the soils they observe, so we can all talk the same soil language!