

# National Conservation Incentives Forum – Crows Nest Shire Council

## Introduction

Crows Nest Shire lies along the Great Dividing Range just to the north of Toowoomba city, approximately 140 km inland from Brisbane. It covers an area of 167,200 ha, of which approximately two thirds lies within the upper Brisbane River catchment flowing east to the Pacific Ocean, and the other third in the Murray-Darling Basin catchment flowing to the Southern Ocean off South Australia.

Although most of land within the Shire is devoted to rural pursuits, over three-quarters of the population within the Shire live in an urban environment.

There is a strong focus on primary production in the Shire with the traditional industries being cattle grazing and dairying. There has been a swing to more intensive horticultural industries such as native cut flower production, avocados, low chill stone fruit and olives. The extensive natural features of the shire are contributing to an increase in nature based tourism. Crows Nest Shire is also experiencing rapid urban development as a result of its location in south east Queensland which is putting pressure on the natural assets of the region.

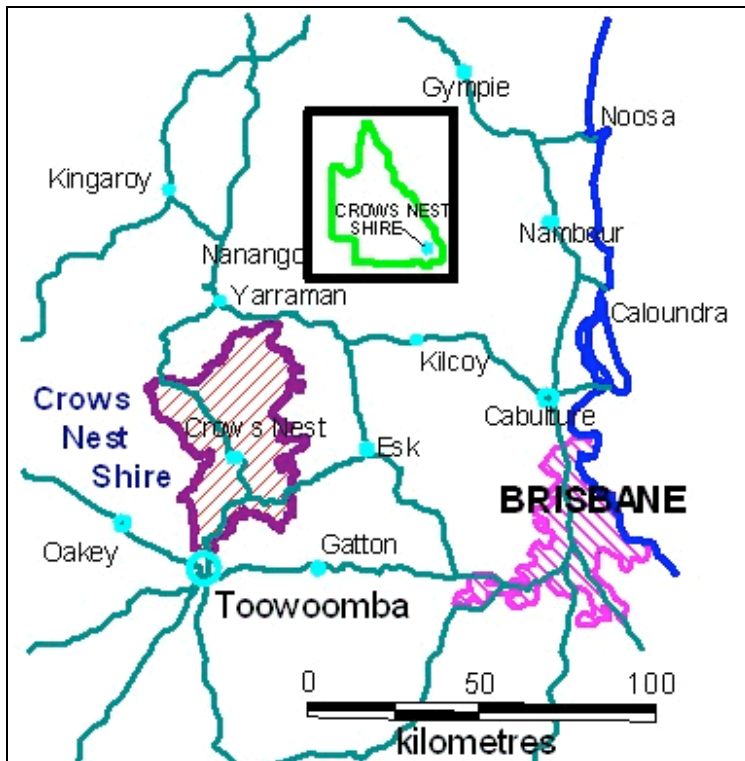


Figure 1: Location map Crows Nest Shire

## Project Green Nest

Crows Nest Shire Council has developed an integrated NRM program that seeks to promote sustainable natural resource management. Initial work identified that some of

the major impediments to land managers adopting more sustainable management practices were the resources of time, finance and information. A two-part program was implemented with funding support from the Natural Heritage Trust to assist landholders:

1. Natural Resource Information (NRI) project.
2. Holistic Natural Resource Management of Crow's Nest Shire.

The NRI project compiled an extensive array of natural resource information that provides a technical foundation for:

- Property management planning,
- the Shires Town Planning Scheme, and
- Economic development.

The information has been made available in a number of formats including publication of land management manual, CD Rom and web based (see [www.cnnnet.com.au/](http://www.cnnnet.com.au/) and follow the links through natural resources and land management)

### **Impediments to sustainable natural resource management**

The project identified impediments that landholders face in implementing more sustainable land management activities. Some of the major constraints identified were the lack of resources of:

- Time
- Finance, and
- Technical information

This project provided the means to address in part identified constraints.

### **Implementation**

#### **NRM Workcrew**

A natural resource management workcrew has been established to work on both private and public lands. This workcrew consists of a full time supervisor and 2 to 5 trainees. The trainees are largely funded through a state government program and are employed for a period of 12 months. During this period of time, the trainees complete a Certificate 2 in Horticulture. On completion of their traineeships, approximately 30% of the trainees obtain employment in other areas of Council operations. The workcrew undertakes a range of activities including bushland regeneration, plant propagation, mapping of pests and assisting landholders. These actions assist landholders to overcome their lack of time to devote to NRM activities.

#### **Funding**

Landholders have been able to access funding through Crows Nest Shire to undertake a range of works with a nature conservation focus. The Shire has introduced an environmental levy that is used to fund the workcrew, and in addition, limited funds have been made available for landholders to access via a devolved grants program. The Shire has also been successful in obtaining funding from a variety of sources and has been able to utilise these funds in conjunction with local Landcare groups and landholders to undertake a variety of onground works.

#### **Information sharing**

Council has accumulated a large body of information that is where possible, made freely available. Where appropriate, this information is made available Landcare Groups,

community organisations and individuals. Much of this information originated from the natural resource inventory program.

### **Partnerships**

The development of partnerships has been fundamental to the success of the Crows Nest program, especially with Landcare groups within the Shire. An example of this is where Council provides funding support to Landcare groups to undertake control of environmental weeds on roadsides. Another area is Council's support for the development, implementation and funding of projects by Landcare groups that achieve outcomes for the Shire, community groups and individuals.

### **Community nursery**

A community nursery is operated by Council to provide local provenance plants for use in bushland regeneration, establishment and maintenance of wildlife corridors and a range of community plantings. The nursery is managed by the NRM workcrew supervisor who is a self trained botanist who has developed a good understanding of local plants and their individual propagation and growing requirements.

### **The Future**

Council has received funding to develop and implement a framework for landholder ecosystem service incentives. This project seeks to develop a framework including a suite of market-based instruments to encourage landholders/stakeholders to retain and enhance on-property assets contributing ecosystem services. This framework will be tested on a pilot group and the success of this project including framework and on-ground works will be evaluated to assess appropriateness for application to the whole of the Shire.

### **Contacts**

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