

National Conservation Incentives Forum – Local Government Workshop

A half workshop was held to identify conservation incentive initiatives that Local Governments were involved in throughout Australia.

Local Government Officers attending the session expressed a number of views. Some of these were:

- Avoid reinventing the wheel – there is a need for Local Governments to work collaboratively to achieve positive conservation outcomes.
- Local Government is in a good position to implement incentives – there is a need for them to be involved in the design of these incentive programs in partnership with other stakeholders.
- Most of the representatives at the workshop came from larger urban councils. It is imperative that incentive mechanisms developed are practical and efficient for rural Local Governments to adopt and implement.

What we wanted from session

- Leading edge programs – what are the new and innovative programs that Local Governments are developing that will move conservation incentives forward.
- Ways to overcome impediments?
- Creative partnerships – what are they and how can they be used to achieve conservation incentive outcomes?
- What hasn't worked and what can we learn from this?
- If we had our time again, what would we do differently?

Recommendations to forum

A number of recommendations were proposed during the Local Government Workshop. These were:

- Look to strengthen linkages between local governments at a regional level and between local government and regional natural resource management organisations.
- Good planning needs quantitative targets.
- Rate rebates aren't the only answer for conservation outcomes - coordinated investment from all levels of government is required.
- Need clarity in roles and responsibilities of local government– what are the range of incentive packages that local government can offer? Offsets, dwelling entitlements etc
- Focus on behavioral change – not awareness or attitude change
- State and Commonwealth need to take responsibility for social science research – not a local government role (Barriers and benefit research)
- Face to face contact is a critical component of behaviour change

Participants of the workshop were invited to submit a summary of programmes that their organisation delivered. Information was submitted by Brisbane City Council, Ipswich City Council, Tweed Shire Council, Dubbo City Council and Jim Allinson from Proland Services which has been included.

Brisbane City Council, Queensland – Conservation Incentives Profile

Brisbane City Council (BCC) adopts various regulatory and non-regulatory measures aimed at conserving significant biodiversity in Brisbane. These include town planning, bushland acquisition, development assessment process as well as Conservation Partnerships with private landowners.

The bushland acquisition program is funded through a bushland levy of \$30 per year per property through the rates. In 2004 Brisbane City Council more than doubled the funding for bushland acquisition – committing over \$10 million per year until 2008.

BCC is committed to continuing its proactive approach to biodiversity conservation and with approximately 25% of the city's remnant bushland classified as 'Rural' or 'Environmental Protection' in our planning scheme, the potential is therefore high for private landowners to help conserve the city's biodiversity. The Conservation Partnerships program is a personalised, targeted and cost-effective way to both secure strategically important bushland and ensure sustainable management of biodiversity values. This contributes to consolidation of current bushland acquisition program sites and Natural Areas in Brisbane.

The Conservation Partnerships program was established in 1996 to support the Bushland Acquisition program in preserving areas of high conservation significance within the City. Currently, the conservation partnerships program consists of Voluntary Conservation Agreements (VCA) and Land for Wildlife (LFW). The first of 48 VCA's were signed in 1997, whilst 202 LFW agreements have been signed since 1998. As of February 2005, the program has secured over 1000 Ha of private lands containing significant habitat. There are two types of VCAs and two types of LFW agreements. All of these agreements address properties with specific biodiversity values. These are described below:

General Voluntary Conservation Agreements are legally binding agreements whereby the landowner commits to relinquishing development rights for the tenure of their ownership. Upon resale of the property, these rights can be renegotiated. Higher Voluntary Conservation Agreements are legally binding agreements (99 years) involving an area reclassification of the property to Conservation. These contracts are legally binding and the area classification persists even if the property is sold. The LFW agreement is an entry level, awareness-raising program whereby landowner's commit (in principle) to managing their property for conservation. The landowner has the right to withdraw from this program at any time. The other type of LFW agreements is "Working towards Land for Wildlife" which is for those partners that want to join the Land for Wildlife program, but do not have the biodiversity values on their property. In these situations, the landowner undertakes rehabilitation to achieve a particular biodiversity status. These agreements are only accepted where the property forms a strategic ecological link or buffer.

In reviewing the current conservation partnerships framework, it has been identified that there is a need for two more types of agreements in the program. This is based on a gap analysis of the biodiversity values being addressed through the program and an analysis of the level of certainty with the agreements. The first agreement identified was the need for a more legally binding agreement (statutory conservation covenants). The second agreement identified would address those landowners having property that did not necessarily support significant biodiversity values, but

were located within our recognised ecological corridors. In this situation, it is considered advantageous to provide extension advice on biodiversity friendly yard management, leading to an increased biodiversity within the ecological corridors. These two other agreements have yet to receive funding and administration support.

Vegetation mapping, coupled with the Brisbane City Plan, has revealed a pool of approximately 4000 properties that are eligible for the Conservation Partnerships Program and a list of about 1000 high priority properties (biodiversity values x risk of clearance). The team does recognise that it is not realistic for all properties to come on board; however they undertook some social research to better understand the motivations and barriers of potential partners, to entering into a partnership with Council.

Based on the feedback received from potential and existing partners (as attached), BCC trialled the delivery of a number of incentives to existing partners, which they believed would assist them in better managing their properties. This included free plants, weed management plan and wildlife surveys. We will be trialling rehabilitation assistance this financial year, based on the recommended actions in the weed management plan.

Based on the outcomes of the trials, we are proposing to provide to partners with a number of incentives, subject to administration endorsement. These incentives are outlined in the table below. This is subject to administration endorsement.

<i>Agreement</i>	Management Visits	Management Plan	Pest Management Planning	Training Days including subsidised training	Technical Notes and Newsletters	Events (eg. annual BBQ)	Sign	Free Technical Advice	Free Plants	Rehabilitation assistance	Literature	Survey Costs	Management Assistance Payment	Environment Levy Payment Rebate
<i>Covenant</i>	Annual	D	P*	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	48	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
VCA Higher	Annual	D	P	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	48	✓	✓		✓	✓
VCA	Annual	D	P	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	48		✓		✓	✓
LFW	Biennial	S	S	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	24					✓
Working towards LFW	Biennial	S	S	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	12					✓
Wildlife Corridor Carers	Once	S			✓**		✓** *					-		-

Reports on the outcomes of the free plants, wildlife surveys and training trials is available upon request. Reports on the potential and existing partners survey

identifying barriers and benefits of the conservation partnerships program is available upon request.

BCC is also investigating ecosystem services and developing a means to incorporate the concept of valuing or in principle accepting the concept into our local government activities. For further information on this matter, please refer to Tina Manners.

Other Brisbane Council Products that may be relevant.

NatureSmart Suburbs – a review of the profitability of green development. Contact Tina Manners – 07 3403 5834.

Conservation Action Statements CD – Species Management Plans for a number of threatened species within Brisbane. These are listed below. Contact Stacey McLean – 07, 3403 4906.

1. Woodland Raptors Conservation Action Statement and Woodland Raptors Species Profile
2. Large Forest Owls Conservation Action Statement and Large Forest Owls Species Profile
3. Coastal Raptors Conservation Action Statement and Coastal Raptors Species Profile
4. Grass Owl Conservation Action Statement and Grass Owl Species Profile
5. Collared Delma Conservation Action Statement and Collared Delma Species Profile
6. Squirrel Glider Conservation Action Statement and Squirrel Glider Species Profile
7. Small Marsupial Carnivores Conservation Action Statement and Small Carnivorous Marsupials Species Profile
8. Platypus Conservation Action Statement and Platypus Species Profile
9. Angle-stemmed Myrtle Conservation Action Statement and Angle-stemmed Myrtle Species Profile
10. Cunningham's Jute Conservation Action Statement and Cunningham's Jute Species Profile

Species Profiles – profiles (brochures) for a number of threatened species within Brisbane. Contact Stacey McLean 073403 4906.

Terrestrial Invertebrate Study – results from a citywide terrestrial invertebrate study – Contact Stacey McLean – 07 3403 4906.

2005 Biodiversity Research Partnerships Newsletter - Filling priority biodiversity information gaps and delivering practical and affordable solutions that offer value for money through collaborative research partnerships – summary of the 2000-2005 partnership projects. Contact Kristy Buchanan 3403 6075.

Partnering Agreements - Ipswich City Council

Ipswich City Council operates a 'Partnering Program' for landowners who own land zoned Rural E or Conservation in the Ipswich City Council Planning Scheme. Over 5500 hectares is covered by the partnership agreement program. This equates to 29.5% of the privately owned Conservation Areas - city wide

What is a Partnering Agreement?

It is a simplified conservation agreement for landowners with land in the Council's Rural E (Special Land Management) Zone or Conservation Zone (Urban). It is a legal agreement between Ipswich City Council and the owner of land, specifically relating to 'Land Management Payments'.

Who can enter into a Partnering Agreement?

It is applicable **only** to owners of freehold land within Ipswich City Council, contained within the Rural E (Special Land Management) Zone or Conservation Zone (Urban Frame), under the Ipswich Planning Scheme.

What am I entitled to?

Land within the Rural E (Special Land Management) Zone or Conservation Zone (Urban) are eligible for a Land Management Partnering Payment from Ipswich City Council equivalent to 66% of the general rate applicable to the zoned area – either part or whole of the property. Support is also extended to access to workshops, field days and other land management events. Upon signing the agreement, the land owner will also receive each quarter a free copy of the Conservation Parks and Sport newsletter 'Conservation Matters'

What area is covered by the Agreement?

As touched upon previously, the agreement covers **only** that area which is contained with-in the property boundary and which is included in either the Rural E (Special Land Management) Zone or Conservation Zone (Urban).

How long will the agreement last?

For an in-definite period unless:

- 🍏 there is a change of ownership of the land;
- 🍏 Council terminates due to a breach of the Ipswich Planning Scheme; or
- 🍏 both parties agree to terminate.

Does the Agreement determine what land use activities are / are not permissible on my Land?

NO. The Ipswich Planning Scheme is the legal document which determines what activities may or may not require approval from Council. Please consult with Council's Planning and Development Department for specific information relating to permissible land use activities.

What will happen if I breach the Ipswich Planning Scheme?

A breach of the Ipswich Planning Scheme or equivalent scheme may be dealt with as an offence under the *Integrated Planning Act*. As well, this breach will be considered a breach of the Agreement and subsequent action taken to recover any previous Land Management Partnering Payment.

Contact

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Fish Unlimited

"Tweed Shire Council have been involved in a project called "Fish Unlimited" which was run by the not for profit NGO, Wetland Care Australia. Another partner to this project was NSW Fisheries, and there was funding from the federal government through the sustainable regions program. The aim of Fish Unlimited was to undertake restoration and protection works on estuarine wetlands with the direct outcome being increased fish recruitment and increases in fish stocks within the Tweed, Richmond and Brunswick River Estuaries. Funding for minor works and stewardship payments in lieu of cropping or grazing certain areas of land were the primary instruments offered. The major (and only) project in Tweed Shire was undertaken with the Tweed Byron Local Aboriginal Land Council, and involved the employment of a team to undertake mangrove and salt marsh restoration works on the Fingal Peninsula.

The project was able to achieve increased protection and management of a total of 130 hectares of wetland habitat over the 14 months that a project officer was employed. If the Project Officer could have kept on working, this would have really started to build. In Tweed Shire, take up was virtually nil, despite support from the cane growers association and a direct written approach to all landholders who would have potentially had suitable sites on their property. One of the best outcomes of the project was an ongoing contribution of \$5000 per year from the Richmond River Mullet Fishing Cooperative which will go into protection and management of fish habitat in that estuary. We still have the institutional arrangements set up for this project and hope to be able to attract more landholders to it in the future, but without a dedicated project officer its very passive right now."

Tom Alletson
Coast and Waterways Coordinator
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Dubbo City Council Conservation Program

Dubbo City Council has an active willow control program on the Macquarie River and is now expanding this to its tributaries. Long stem tubestock are being used very successfully in riparian areas to re-establish native vegetation. The same method (long stem tubestock) is also proving to be a useful technique in dryer upland sites where evidence to date suggests that plants are more able to access stored soil moisture. An added benefit is that maintenance costs are minimal.

Dubbo City Council is a member of Greenfleet and is focused on assisting Landcare groups throughout the City. A challenge is to support Landcare Groups while at the same time being not seen as a new regional Landcare coordinator.

There are significant areas remnant vegetation in Reserves under Council management comprising both riparian and dryland areas. Council does not currently have the resources to acquire additional areas of remnant vegetation.

At the moment there is no Land for Wildlife program operating in the region. Following on from the National Conservation Incentives Forum, discussions have been held with the National Parks and Wildlife Service with a view to commencing the program in the Dubbo region.

DCC has an active stormwater improvement program which is supported by a dedicated levy.

Dubbo City Council is an actively growing city which is putting huge pressures on the Parks and Landcare management within the city. Demand is increasing to support amenity and sporting field requirements while budget allocations have remained static. A Parks and Landcare levy has been introduced, however only a small proportion of the funds raised are allocated to manage Council's conservation estate.

Council is now in the process of converting its Dubbo Environmental Management Plan (a City wide planning document) to the Dubbo Sustainability Strategy. This strategy will be more focused and targeted on a small number of project/programs.

An environmental education committee is now active and is examining calendar options, etc for distribution to ratepayers.

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Information sources

The following may help interested people to access literature which is aimed at helping facilitators better understand groups and individuals in these aspects of our work with communities.

- Vanclay F, "The barriers to adoption often have a rational basis", in 7th ISCO Conf Proceedings, Sydney 27-30 Sept 1992, Vol 2 - Sustainable land management practices, pp 452-458. (F. Vanclay, Centre for Rural Social Res, Chas Sturt Uni, NSW).
- Pfeifer J William & Jones, "Process Observation [of groups] – A Guide", Handbook of Structured Experiences, Vol 1.
- Pfeifer J William & Jones, "The Emotional Cycle of Change", 1979 Annual Handbook for Group Facilitators, University Associates.
- "The Effective Listener", in Training in Interpersonal Skills, Prentice hall International Editions, Stephen P Robbins, 1989.
- "Reflective questioning to assist individuals & groups to learn from reflection on their experience, information available etc" ex Swanson Burton E (Ed), "Agricultural Extension – A reference manual", p211, FAO of UN, 1994, 262 pp, ISBN 92-5-101504-X.
- Global Strategies: Socratic Questioning & Role Playing, A Guide for Designing Instruction (1989), Centre for Critical Thinking & Moral Critique, Sonoma State Uni, Robert park. CA.
- "Destination: Decisions" Decision-making Strategies for [School] Communities, [and any community group] Curriculum Branch, Education Dept, Vic, 1985.
- "How Advisors Advise: Agricultural Extension as a Social Process", Anderson, Anthony M., Hawkesbury Agric College.

Note: "Pfeifer, J William" is a prolific writer and assembler of exercises, case studies - so helpful in working with groups. He, plus associates & writers have assembled manuals and annuals – some of these can be accessed from Knowledge Resource Centre, Dept Primary Industry, Phone via Customer Service centre 136 186 (local call cost) or (03) 9742 8600, email KRC.enquiry@dpi.vic.gov.au. To access library catalogue <http://www.dpi.vic.gov.au> > homepage> Click on Library Services> Knowledge Resource Centre > ELIXIR Library Catalogue. Note the public can borrow items via their institutional or public library. Try universities/colleges with social science courses too.

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