

Bushcare Projects Field Evaluation, 1997-2002:



A program of the Natural Heritage Trust

A brief overview of the Bushcare programs field evaluation results under the first phase of the Natural Heritage Trust.

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Natural Heritage Trust

Helping Communities Helping Australia

An Australian Government Initiative

1.0 Bushcare Program - Introduction

1.1 Background

Bushcare is one of the programs within the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT), a major Government initiative designed to foster a partnership between the community, industry and all levels of government in the pursuit of better environmental and natural resource outcomes.

The Government announced the \$1.25 billion initiative in May 1997 to provide for the protection and rehabilitation of Australia's natural environment and the encouragement of sustainable agricultural production.

Bushcare was the largest of the programs under the first phase of the Trust. In the 5 years 1997/98 to 2001/02, Bushcare invested nationally some \$127 million, in over 1800 projects. About 70 percent of the funds invested went directly into on-ground works to protect, rehabilitate or restore native vegetation. More information on Bushcare under the first phase of the NHT is available at <http://www.nht.gov.au/nht1/programs/bushcare/index.html>

This report deals solely with projects of the original Bushcare program under the first phase of the Natural Heritage Trust. The brand Bushcare continues to exist under the second phase of the Trust and so to avoid confusion, this report will refer the program from this period as Bushcare1.

1.2 Legislation behind Bushcare

The Bushcare Program is the primary vehicle for delivery of the National Vegetation Initiative, one of the major initiatives established by the *Natural Heritage Trust of Australia Act 1997*. Under the Act, the Natural Heritage Trust Ministerial Board must report annually on the effectiveness of the Trust. The Program is delivered in Partnership with the States in accordance with Partnership Agreements between the Commonwealth and each State.

1.3 Objective of Bushcare

The primary objective of Bushcare, as set out in the Act, is to reverse the long-term decline in the extent and quality of Australia's native vegetation cover by:

- conserving remnant native vegetation;
- conserving Australia's biological diversity; and
- restoring, by means of revegetation, the environmental values and productive capacity of Australia's degraded land and water.

1.4 Key Result Areas

Bushcare1 program outcomes are expressed in the Partnership Agreements under the four Key Result Areas for the Trust: Integration and Institutions, Environment, Sustainable Production, and People. The Bushcare Outcomes are:

People

- Land managers with the commitment, skills and knowledge to manage native vegetation sustainably;
- Communities with an understanding and appreciation of the role and value of native vegetation in Australia.

Environment

- Enhanced management of remnant native vegetation;
- Greatly increased revegetation activity;
- Conservation of wildlife habitat.

Sustainable Production

- Integration of native vegetation into mainstream farming systems for productive and sustainable uses.

Integration and Institutions

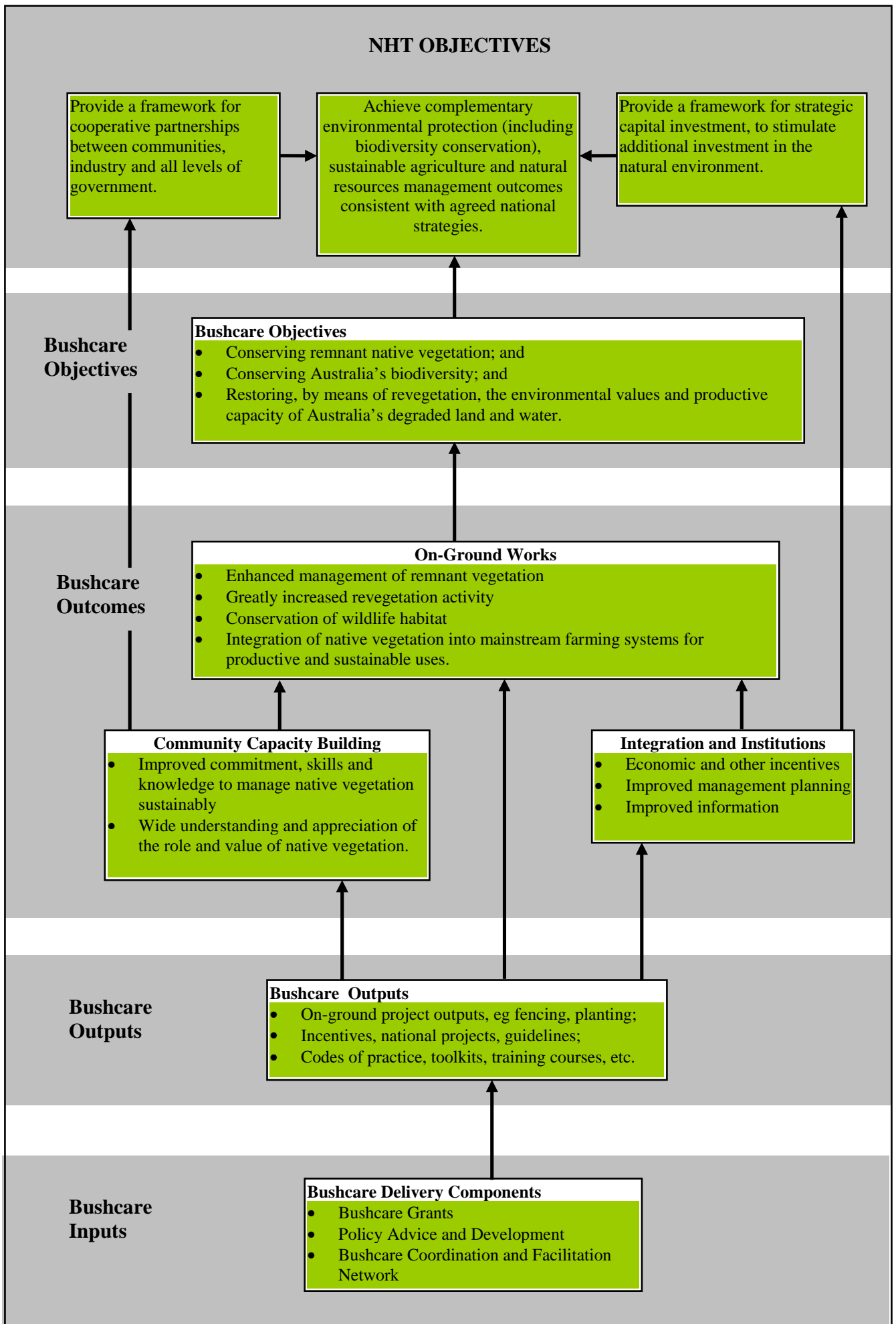
Sustainable native vegetation management is encouraged by:

- the adoption of economic and other incentives;
- improved regional, catchment, and property management planning;
- improved information on the status of native vegetation and threatening processes.

1.5 Program Logic

Figure 1 shows the assumed linkages between the program inputs, outputs, strategies, intended outcomes and program objectives, and the broad Trust objectives.

Figure 1: BUSHCARE PROGRAM LOGIC



2.0 Information Sources and Approach

The emphasis of this evaluation was on the on-ground performance of Bushcare funded revegetation and remnant vegetation protection projects.

2.1 Project Applications and Reports

Some information on the progress of Bushcare1 was collected on an annual basis. Most annual information came from project applications, progress and final project reports. Project applications provided information on expected project outputs, such as area of native vegetation to be protected by category, area of revegetation, proposed length of fencing, etc. Progress and final project reports provide the actual rates of outputs achieved. Final reports also include a proponent self-evaluation of project achievement against objectives.

Final report output information is presented separately through the joint NHT monitoring and evaluation sections activities, see: <http://www.nrm.gov.au/monitoring/index.html>.

The Bushcare support contract with Greening Australia required regular reporting on activity. This information provides a valuable insight into much of the capacity building and technical support activity funded through the program.

2.2 Project Site Inspections

Project site inspections form the major component of the data for this report, 460 Bushcare projects were visited and evaluated (around 25% of the projects funded) along with 204 native vegetation projects of a similar nature from the pre-NHT era. These pre-NHT projects were drawn from the superseded *Save the Bush* and *One Billion Trees* programs. The inclusion of sites from these earlier projects allow for a comparison with Bushcare1. The project site inspections serve a number of purposes including:

- technical performance of funded works;
- validation of project reports;
- evaluation of output quality (eg. condition of remnants, tree planting survival rates, etc.);
- data gathering for indicators of program effectiveness.

2.3 On-ground Works

Indicators which measure on-ground biophysical changes, such as condition and extent of native vegetation by type, area of saline affected land, water quality parameters, etc, provide a direct measure of final Bushcare1 outcomes against program objectives, but they are often the most difficult for which to get good data. It may take many years to observe changes in resource condition resulting from vegetation protection and revegetation activity. Earlier proposals to use national State of Environment indicators were found not to be feasible due to lack of data and inappropriate scale. The DEH and NHT funded Biodiversity Benefits project investigated how on-ground biophysical change brought about by NHT investment could best be measured. See this report on-line at <http://www.deh.gov.au/land/vegetation/benefits/index.html>

The most appropriate use of biophysical indicators is at the regional or catchment scale. Biophysical indicators should be a part of regional NRM strategies and integrated catchment management strategies, and used as a basis for determining the long-term effectiveness of actions to implement those strategies. Different regions or catchments will have varying biophysical issues and priorities for action, and differing strategies for dealing with them. Therefore biophysical indicators cannot be meaningfully aggregated and reported as an overall measure of program outcomes. The new regional planning approach does allow this kind of aggregation. The new monitoring and evaluation arrangements including Matters for Target are explained here: <http://www.nrm.gov.au/monitoring/index.html>

One key approach for achieving on-ground natural resource management outcomes is to ensure that on-ground projects are aligned with best practice regional or catchment integrated natural resource management strategies, developed in accordance with the best knowledge and understanding currently available. Therefore, a reasonable measure of program outcomes, in the short to medium term, is the extent to which Bushcare1 funded on-ground projects are well planned, technically competent, and align with best practice natural resource management strategies.

The outcome indicators for on-ground works are designed to measure the extent that on-ground projects accord with best practice on a number of different parameters, on the basis of current knowledge. They use the principle of Goal Attainment Scaling (GAS), which allows individual projects to be scored against generic criteria, and allows comparison of projects with differing objectives. Scores may be aggregated and averaged in a number of different ways. Projects were scored against these indicators during the on-site evaluation of projects.

2.4 Community Capacity Building

The primary delivery mechanism for this key result area is the Bushcare1 Facilitation and Support Network. The output indicators, which demonstrate the level of activity of the network, are taken from the Bushcare1 Support contract with Greening Australia.

The outcome indicators under this key result area rely on directly measuring the adoption and success of technical advice by on-site evaluation of on-ground projects using GAS indicators.

3.0 Bushcare Projects Field Evaluation

3.1 Overview of projects evaluated

Bushcare through its network of regional facilitators and Greening Australia support staff undertook a major on-site evaluation of Bushcare on ground works through 2002-2003. The evaluation looked at a range of performance indicators on factors such as overall project management, site-specific technical effectiveness and capacity building. A 5-point, (Goal Attainment Scaling, GAS), scoring system was used where a middle score of three represented the expected level of performance.

Number of Projects Evaluated

	Number of projects
Pre-NHT	204
Bushcare 1	460

To provide some comparison, just over 200 pre-NHT 'Bushcare' style projects were evaluated using the same methodology. The older projects investigated in this way were drawn from the *Save The Bush* and *One Billion Trees* programs, both pre-dating the introduction of the Natural Heritage Trust.

Total Value of Projects Evaluated

	AG\$ Received
pre-NHT	\$1,519,877.05
Bushcare 1	\$73,916,931.57

Multiple sites were evaluated for many of the larger devolved projects, hence the greater number of sites than projects. Only Australian Government (AG) funding, either NHT or its predecessors is included.

Totals of Remnant Protection Sites Evaluated

	No. Sites	AG\$ Received	area	Av site	AG\$/ha
pre-NHT	129	\$656,195	15,389 ha	119ha	\$42/ha
Bushcare1	743	\$6,509,622	197,665 ha	266ha	\$32/ha

Pre-NHT remnant vegetation sites sampled included 4 sites greater than 500 ha, one each from Tasmania, South Australia, Northern Territory and Victoria.

Bushcare1 remnant protection sites sampled contained 25 sites bigger than 500ha. 19 of those were over 1000ha, two of which were very big, a 20,000ha site in Queensland and a

90,000 ha project in rangeland South Australia. Without these two, the Bushcare1 remnant protection average site would be 117ha, very close to the pre-NHT average. Removal of these two projects and their funding (a combined \$99,350) also affects the AG dollar per hectare result, raising it from \$32/ha to \$73/ha.

Totals of Revegetation Sites Evaluated

	No. Sites	AG\$ Received	area	Av site	AG\$/ha
pre-NHT	142	\$422,737	714ha	5ha	\$592/ha
Bushcare1	1007	\$3,128,627	4856 ha	5ha	\$644/ha

No site over 500ha was found in the sample of revegetation sites for pre-NHT or Bushcare1. Average site size and cost per hectare both remained similar between the programs.

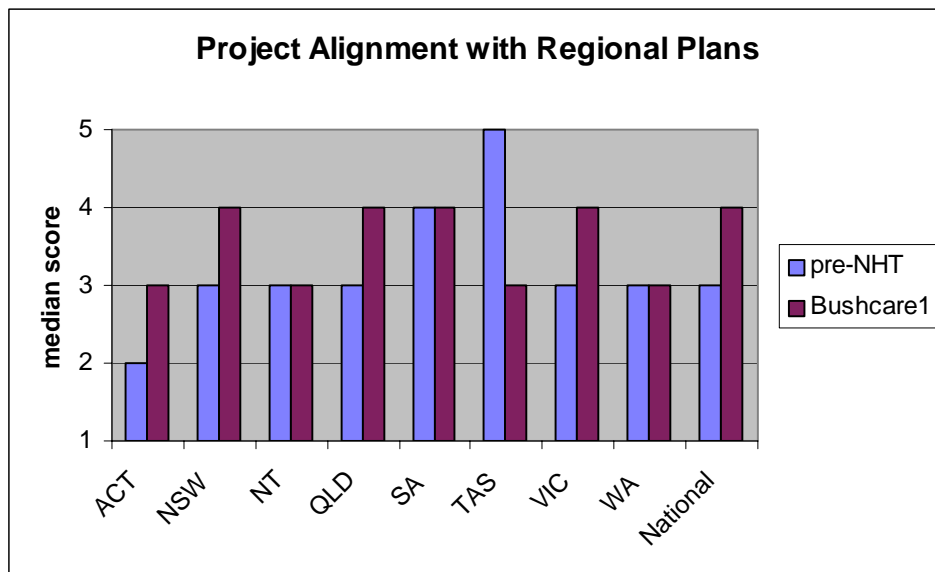
Site costs vary considerably from region to region and for varying vegetation types. This matter is fully investigated in the report, Schirmer & Field, 2000. *The Cost of Revegetation*. ANU Forestry and Greening Australia.

(<http://www.deh.gov.au/land/publications/costrev/pubs/costrevc.pdf>)

3.2 Outcomes - Strategic Effectiveness

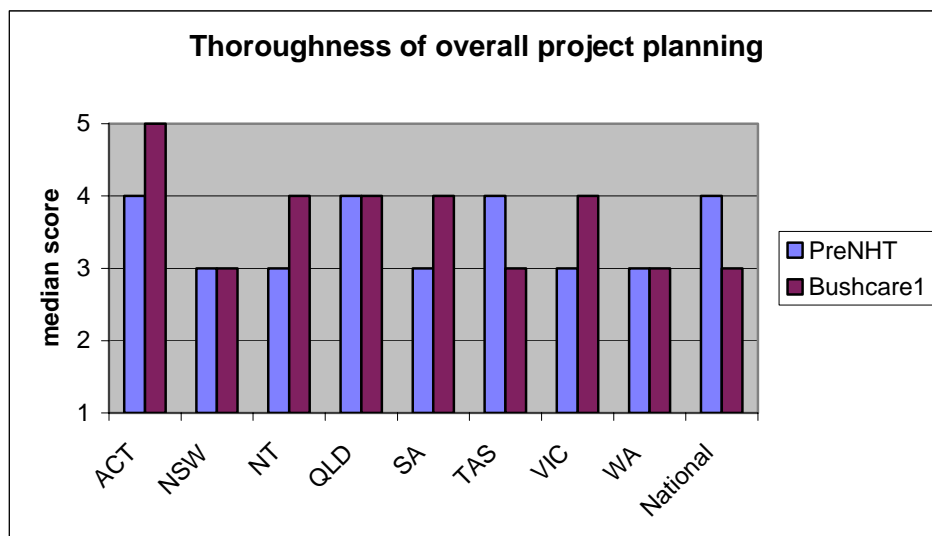
3.2.1 Degree of project alignment with regional strategic plans or catchment plans.

Degree of project alignment with regional strategic plans or catchment plans.	
1	No (or very little) tangible connection with plans (despite references to planning documents in project applications)
2	Indirectly connected with the plans; certainly not in conflict with them. Project falls within a priority area, but does not address it incisively. Alignment may be tokenistic, or the plans may be vague.
3	Aligned with the relevant plans. Addresses at least 1 priority area. However, plans are not very prescriptive. Some key stakeholders associated with those plans are involved with planning the Bushcare project.
4	As for score = 3 but addresses >1 priority area. Close involvement by stakeholders associated with the relevant plans in planning the Bushcare project.
5	Work is very closely aligned with the local and regional plans; it addresses >1 high priority area. The relevant plan stakeholders were closely involved in planning the project. The project meets a priority gap in achieving the plans.

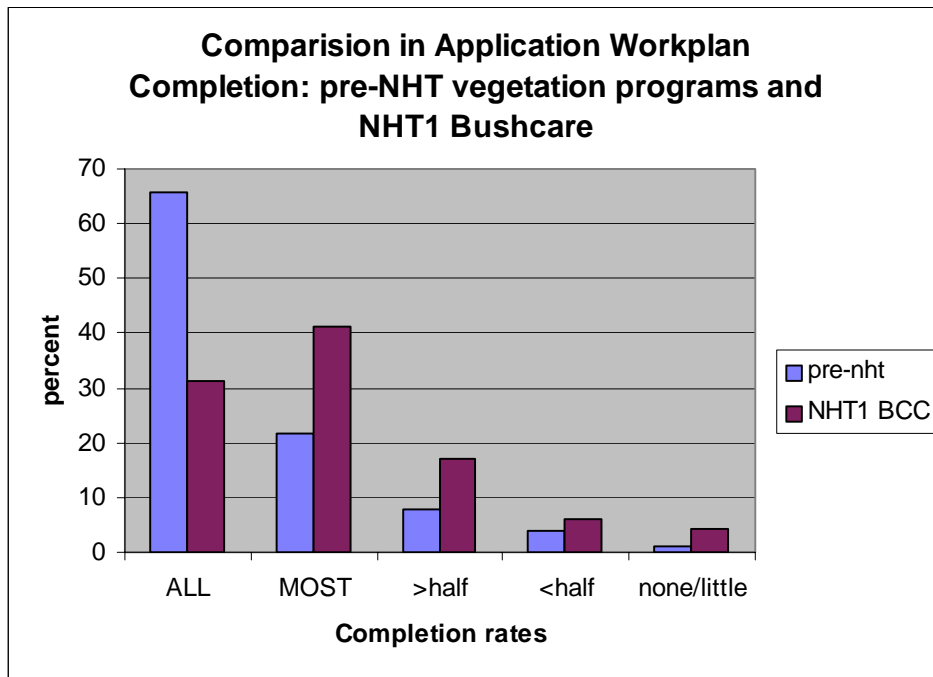


3.2.2 Thoroughness of project planning.

Thoroughness of project planning.	
1	Planning is quite inadequate to support the successful achievement of the project's objectives, indicating a high risk of failure. Assumptions were not stated, and there was no clear link established between the project design and the intended outcomes. Design was badly flawed, or quite incomplete. The key arrangements needed to support the project (people, facilities, and materials) were not in place at the start and there was a high risk they could not be arranged. Follow-up activities required to maintain the integrity of the project were not planned for.
2	Intermediate between 1 & 3.
3	A competent project design. Assumptions clearly stated and justified, and a clearer link established between the project and the intended outcomes. Sufficient planning arrangements were in place to enable the necessary people, facilities and materials to be available (notwithstanding that some details were finalised as the project proceeded). Follow-up activities were planned to ensure the integrity of the outcomes.
4	Intermediate between 3 & 5.
5	Project design is very thorough and sound. The objectives were written "SMART" – Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound. Assumptions clearly stated and justified, and strong and direct link established between the project design and activities and outcomes. Arrangements for people, facilities and materials were put in place at the start to ensure the project's success. Contingency plans were made to allow for extenuating circumstances.

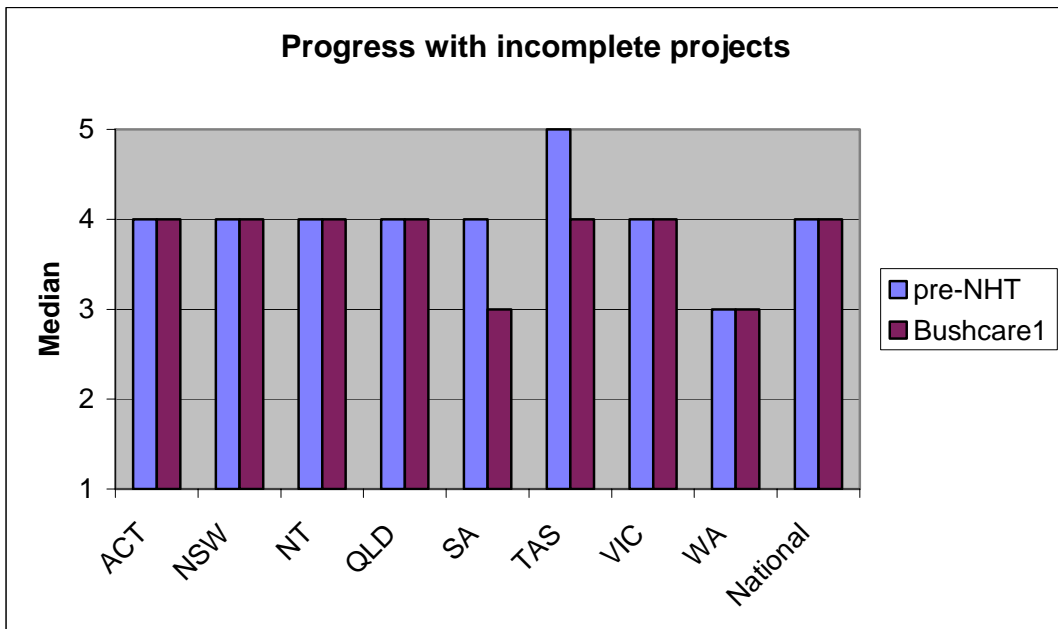


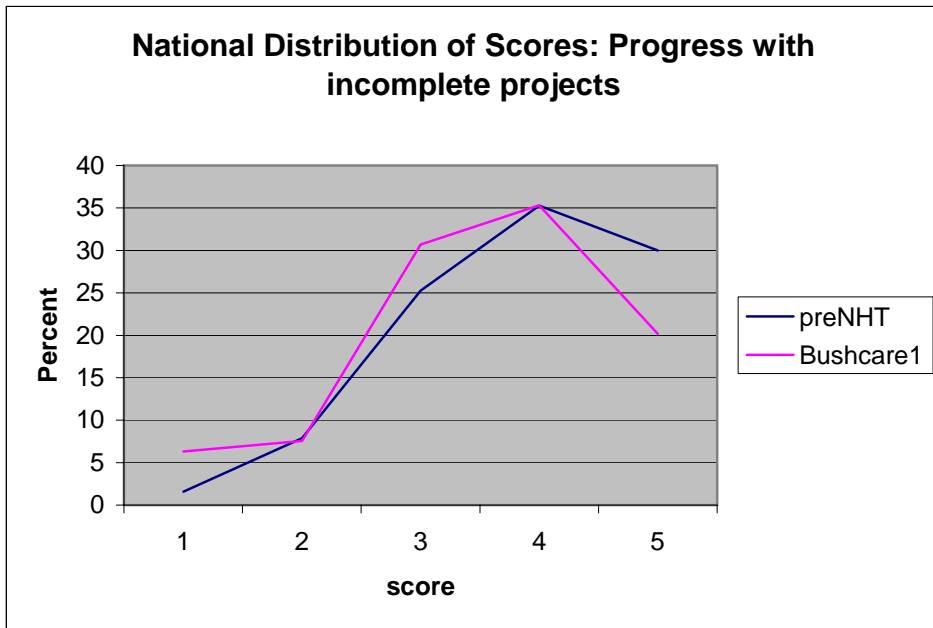
3.2.3 Comparison of current project outputs with original application



3.2.4 Projects in PROGRESS: What achievement has been made against the workplan/objectives?

Progress against workplan for current projects.	
1	Project has made almost no progress against project objectives or workplan (attributable to poor management, problems with group dynamics, etc. Allowances should be made for delays in receiving funding, seasonal or climatic problems).
2	Intermediate between 1 and 3.
3	Project progress is near or close to reasonable expectations, taking account of delays attributable to external factors beyond project manager's control.
4	Intermediate between 3 and 5.
5	Progress significantly exceeds expectations (eg, against workplan if there is one), or significantly exceeds reasonable expectations allowing for delays attributable to external factors.

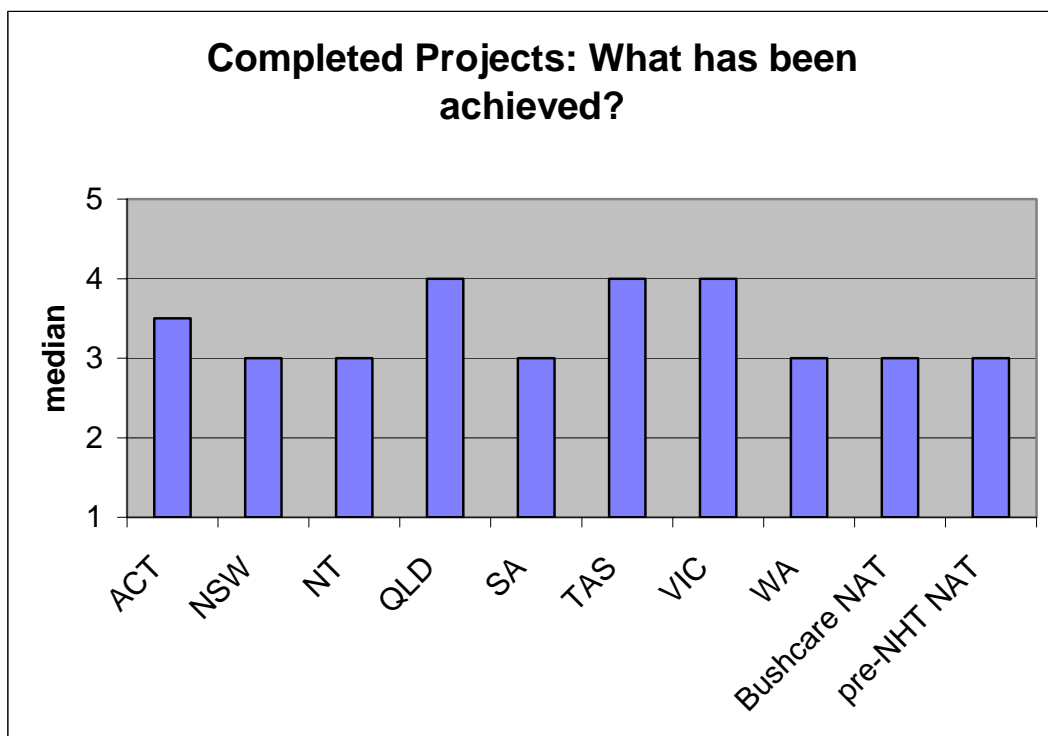




Distribution graphs show the spread of scores around the median values. In this case showing the bulk of incomplete projects are progressing well at the expected score of 3 or higher. Around 13% of Bushcare projects ranked below the expected progress levels. The pre-NHT results seem to indicate a similar pattern. This pattern seems to suggest that some projects (that are still considered to be works in progress) may take much longer than expected to complete their on-ground works.

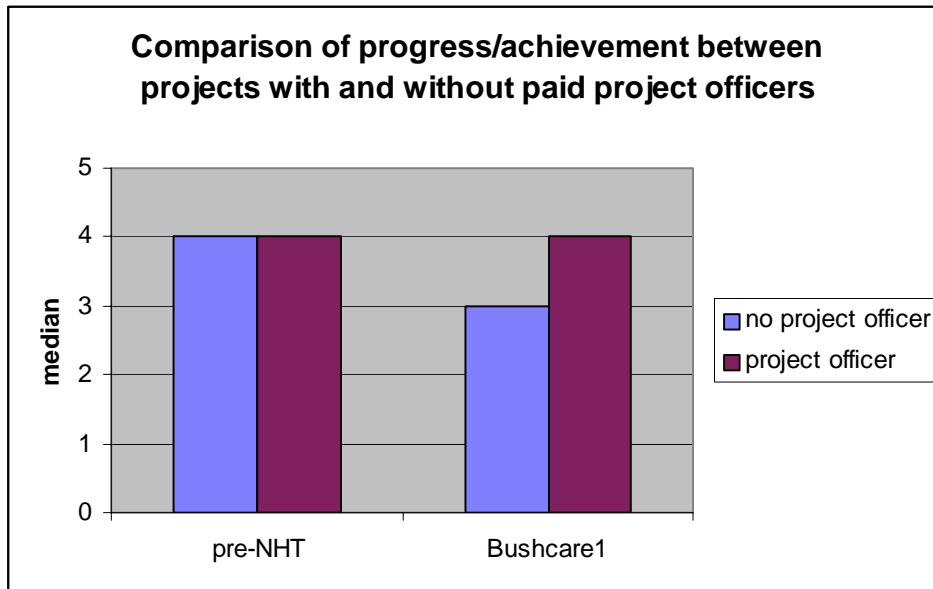
3.2.5 COMPLETED Bushcare projects: What achievement has been made against the workplan/objectives?

Level of satisfactory completion of finished projects.	
1	Project has failed to achieve, or fallen significantly short of achieving, the proposed work.
2	Intermediate between 1 and 2.
3	Project has substantively achieved/completed the work as provided in the project workplan and/or proposal.
4	Intermediate between 3 and 5.
5	Project has substantially exceeded the expected or proposed work/outputs. Eg, hectareage outputs are greater than expected, project is finished well ahead of time, in-kind and other stakeholder contributions significantly exceed those proposed.



Small response from the pre-NHT group made state-by-state comparison invalid. Pre-NHT n=13; Bushcare n=212.

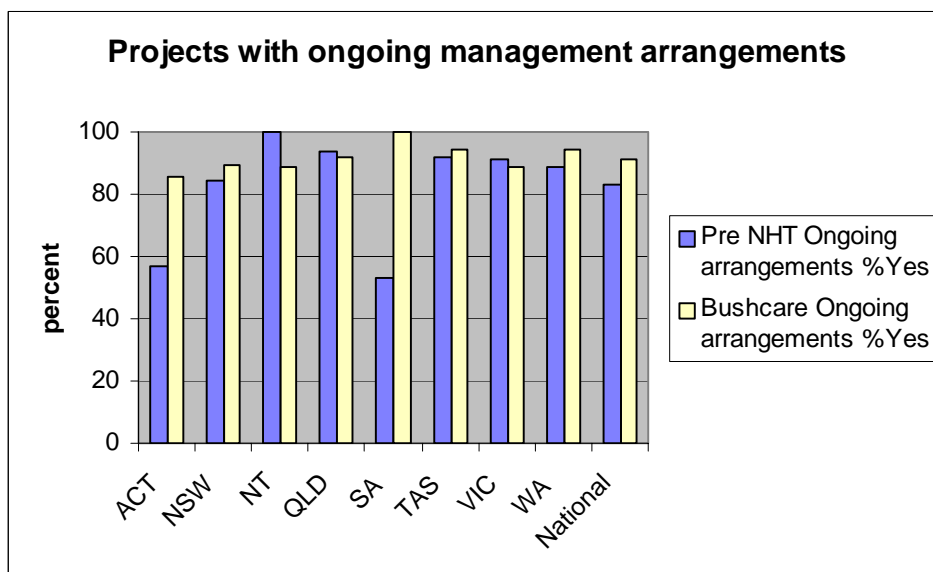
3.2.7 Impact of Paid Project Officers



Impact of paid project officers was not a performance indicator. It does however demonstrate the sort of analysis possible with the information gathered through the Bushcare site visits.

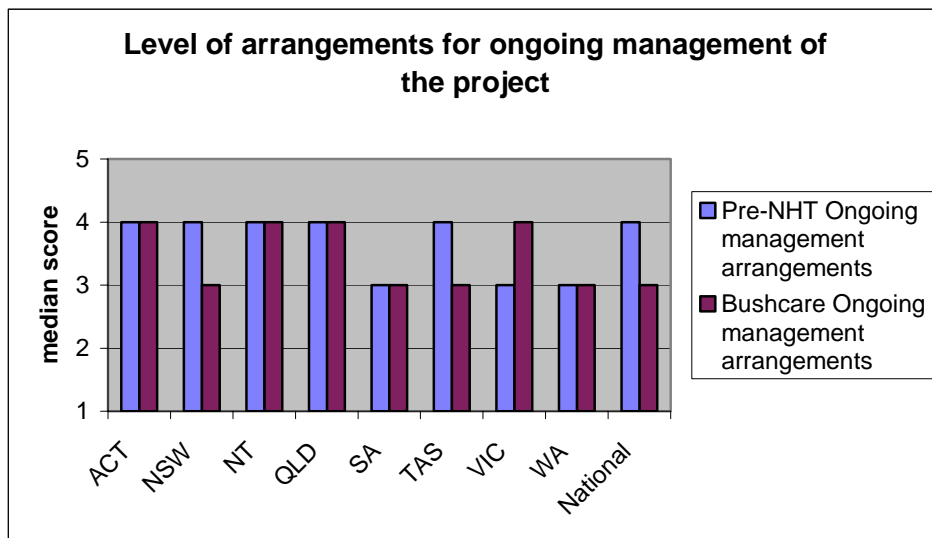
A major difference between pre-NHT and Bushcare is the complexity of project objectives, including the funding of large scale devolved grant projects. Whilst median performance of groups without project officers is at the 'expected' level, project officers appeared to add value to median levels of project performance under the Bushcare1 program.

3.2.8 Ongoing management arrangements for projects.



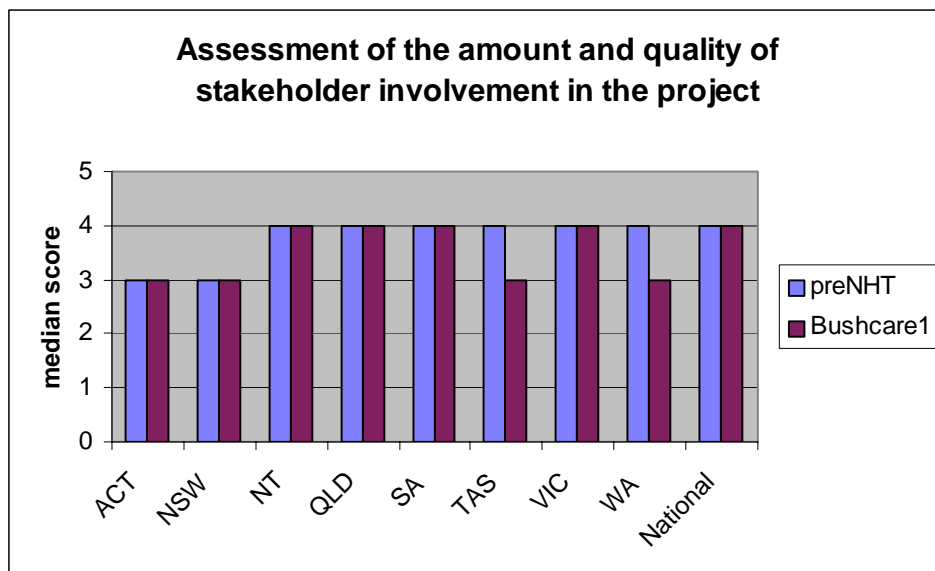
3.2.9 Ongoing management for Finished Projects

Ongoing management arrangements for finished projects.	
1	No useful preparation undertaken for follow-up work. The project did not prepare for activities that should follow, and there is very inadequate documentation to enable others to do this. There is no planning or serious intent by the stakeholders to follow-up the work (where follow-up is appropriate).
2	It is not possible to follow-up or evaluate the work with confidence. For on-ground works, the preparation is intermediate between scores 1 and 3.
3	Proponents/stakeholders have clearly paved the way for follow-up activities and there is good documentation available. The stakeholders genuinely intend to follow-up/maintain the work, and may have formulated plans to do so, but there is a real likelihood that the plans may not be realised (eg, funding unavailable).
4	More than score = 3, but less than score = 5.
5	There is a clearly written complete report on what was done and why which contains all the information and instructions needed to continue, maintain, etc the work. (eg. Clear instructions of what follow-up/maintenance activities are required when, how and why. A clear, unambiguous map of the site produced in a form suitable for field work with complete legend, showing the general location in the region, and the specific locations within the site of the key areas (eg, where treatments were applied, and/or plans for extending the work). This could also include details of site condition prior to the project, eg, permanent photopoints. Ideally, documentation of the site history is also included.



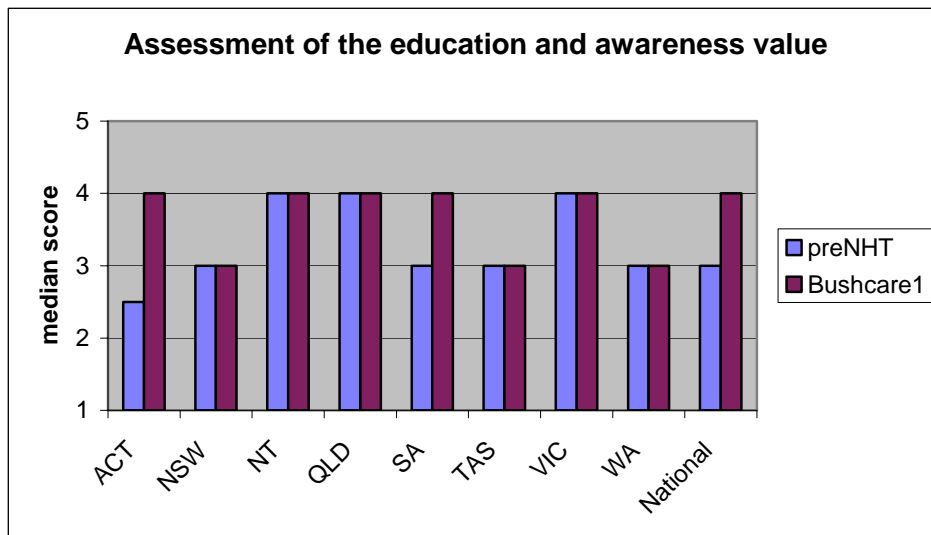
3.2.10 Amount and quality of local stakeholder involvement.

Amount and quality of local stakeholder involvement.	
1	Virtually no local stakeholder involvement or ownership. Bushcare work carried out largely in isolation. For finished projects, no follow-up activities occurred or are likely to; project integrity has not been maintained.
2	Limited stakeholder involvement – much less than planned (eg, lack of interest, lack of time, other pressures). The performance of the project in achieving its aims has suffered as a result. For finished projects; follow-up activities have been or are likely to be insufficient to maintain the viability of the project.
3	Active stakeholder involvement in the project, consistent with the planning; good contact maintained with the project manager; a few key stakeholders involved in project management. Some locals have been or genuinely intend to be involved in follow-up activities sufficient to just maintain the integrity of the project.
4	More than score = 3, but not all of score = 5 achieved in project and follow-up activities.
5	Very close involvement of more than just the key stakeholders. They followed up planning with action, providing equipment, materials, advice, and they maintained close liaison with the project proponents/managers. For finished projects, there have been active and competent follow-up activities to maintain the integrity of the project and ensure the outcomes are achieved, or such activities are planned and virtually certain to occur.



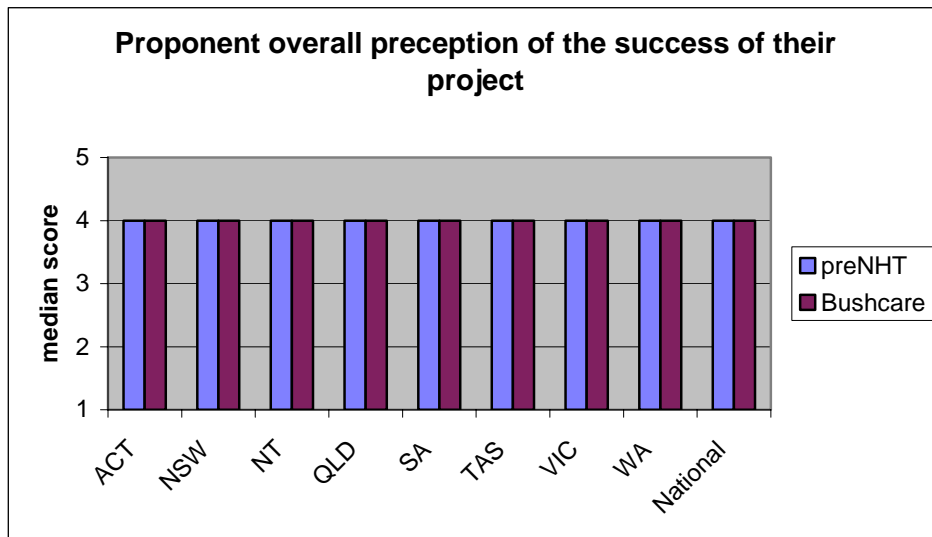
3.2.11 What is the education and awareness value of the project?

Education and awareness value of the project	
1	Except for those directly involved, little or no interest expressed in project from surrounding community. Little or no effort to raise interest or garner support. No demonstration days. No signage.
2	Intermediate between 1 & 2.
3	Some local interest in the project expressed form persons not directly involved. Reasonable effort record and communicate project objectives and lessons learned to the wider community. Occasional demonstration days. Signage acknowledging Commonwealth visible from adjacent road.
4	More than a 3, but not all the features of a 5
5	Strong interest from surrounding community in the project. Clear strategy to communicate lessons learned from project to wider community, including published materials. Regular demonstration days. Signage clearly visible from nearest adjacent road, acknowledging Commonwealth, with additional information on project.



3.2.12 Overall stakeholder/ proponent perception of project success.

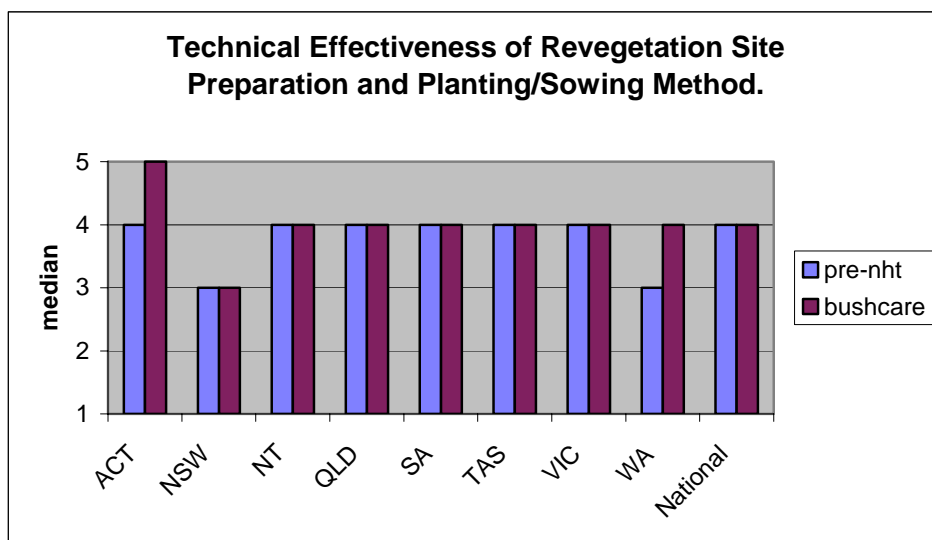
Overall stakeholder/proponent perception of the success/achievements of the project?	
1	Viewed as ineffective; a waste of time and effort; strongly dissatisfied with outcomes and outputs; would not want to be involved with Bushcare project again.
2	Intermediate between 1 & 2.
3	Satisfied with the environmental outputs leading to outcomes, but there were some problems which constrained the environmental effectiveness of the project.
4	More than a 3, but not all the features of a 5
5	Highly supportive of the project for its environmental outcomes. Enthusiastic. Proud to have been involved. Keen to be involved again. Very positive towards Bushcare as an environmental program.



3.3 Outcomes - Technical Effectiveness

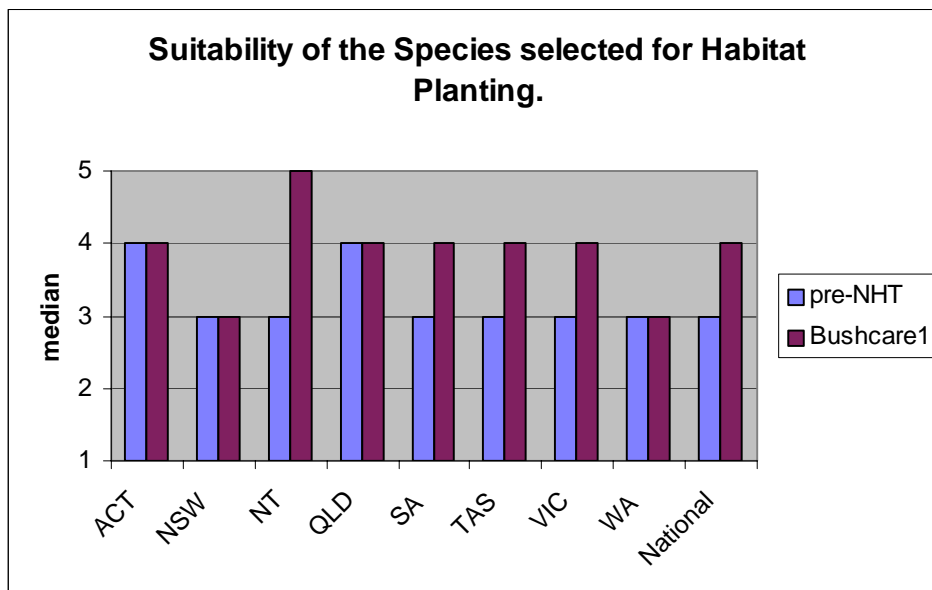
3.3.1 Revegetation site preparation and planting/sowing method.

	<p>Site preparation and planting/sowing method <i>(ie, those factors under <u>management control</u> which affect how well the plants will establish and grow. Factors such as fire, flood and drought can reasonably be regarded as outside of management control). Appropriate site preparation requirements are dependent on location. Not all the treatments suggested below will be required in every case. It should be noted that some sites don't need much preparation dependent for example on the previous land use and the size of the weed seed bed. Assessors may need to make a judgement as to the extent that site preparation is appropriate to the conditions.</i></p>
1	Minimal of any site preparation, eg, no weed or pest control, soil heavily compacted, planting area not ripped, site not fenced or otherwise protected from herbivores). Inadequate planting/sowing method (eg, plants not properly heeled in, planted at wrong depth, no attempt to provide them with the correct micro-environment including, as appropriate, fertiliser, mulch, tree guards, water).
2	Weed control and soil management attempted – has not worked due to poor timing, inappropriate methods (eg, not ripped early enough, spraying concentrations wrong).
3	Basic site preparation and planting conditions were achieved, as appropriate for the context.
4	Intermediate between score = 3 and score = 5.
5	Site preparation is excellent for the context. Eg, soil not compacted – has had treatment to ensure soil aerated and sub-surface pan broken and ready for planting if necessary, grasses and weeds removed prior to planting, site fenced off. Planting method very thorough and great care taken to ensure high quality (eg, training, close supervision, expert revegetation advice sought). Plants fully protected against site threats (eg, mulch, fertiliser, tree guards, and irrigation, as necessary).



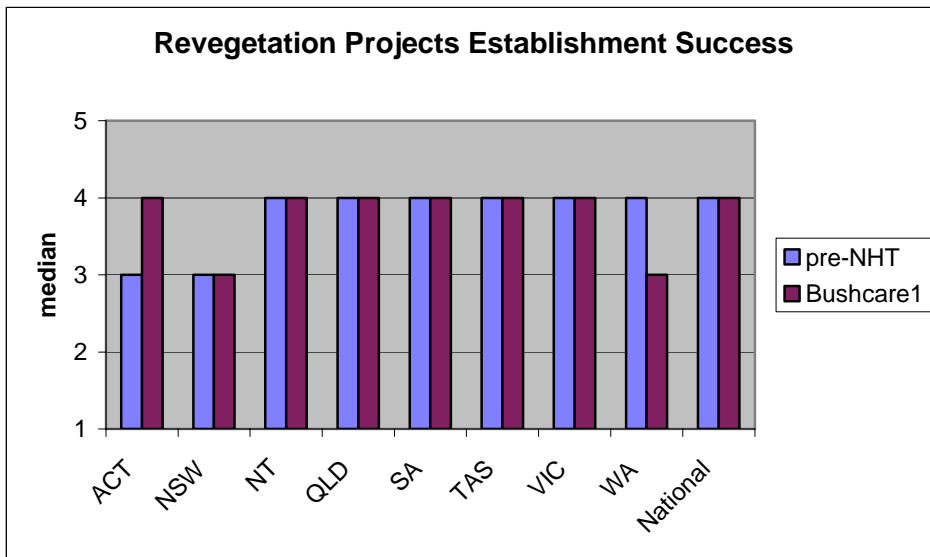
3.3.2 Suitability of revegetation species selection for habitat planting.

Suitability of species selection for habitat planting <i>The focus is on the extent that the composition of the original local native vegetation is duplicated. There are perhaps three key elements - floristics, structure, and function that we can try and restore. Age dependent structure cannot obviously be restored immediately, and in the longer term will depend on the range of species.</i>	
1	Species not locally indigenous, plantings of monocultures (no variation in species or reflective of groundcover, shrubs, overstorey species), ie structural and floristic diversity low. However, planting of monocultures may be okay when this is what the native vegetation might have been ie a red gum forest, or a cypress pine forest - some natural systems do have low diversity naturally.
2	Species from local region but genetic history uncertain, not representative of various vegetation layers; eg. ground cover, shrubs and overstorey.
3	Use of locally indigenous species to suit local physical variations, chosen to simulate the multi-layered natural vegetation of the region. Structurally mimics the natural vegetation but does not have the species diversity of the natural system so structural diversity good but floristic diversity low, function medium
4	Intermediate between scores 3 and 5.
5	Use of locally indigenous species, providing various vegetation layers to provide a food source for the full spectrum of local fauna. Species patterning chosen to reflect natural site variation. Mimics the natural system structurally, floristically and functionally.



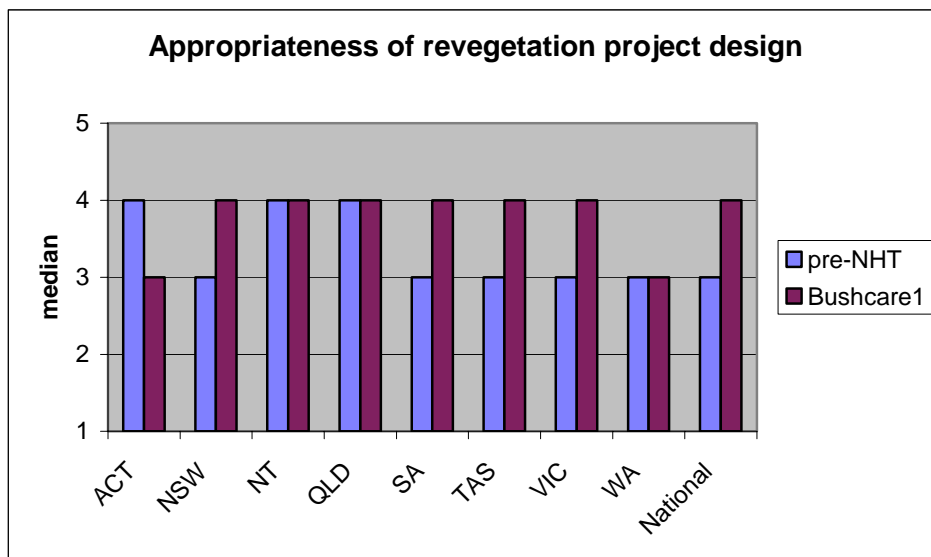
3.3.3 Revegetation establishment success: tubestock and/or direct seeding.

Establishment success: tubestock and/or direct seeding	
	<i>Direct seeding can be rated against germination rates as well as survival. The survival rates for direct seeding can be a bit lower than tubestock to be acceptable as there has been less cost and less effort in the establishment. Also with direct seeding competition for space, light and nutrients will ensure the most competitive get through leading to more robust vegetation in the longer term. Tubestock should have a very high success rate 80-90%.</i>
1	Less than 50% survival rate attributable to poor management (ie, site preparation poor, planting technique poor, stock allowed access; and discounting the effects of extenuating circumstances beyond management control like extreme weather conditions, locusts).
2	Between 50% and 75% survival rate, deaths attributable to poor management.
3	Greater than 75% survival rates for tubestock (direct seeding more difficult to assess > 70% sufficient), deaths attributable to poor management, replanting areas where tubestock have died, reseeding where seeds did not take or seedlings have died.
4	About 80-90% survival rate, replanting or reseeding areas where seedlings/young plants have died.
5	>90 % survival rates.



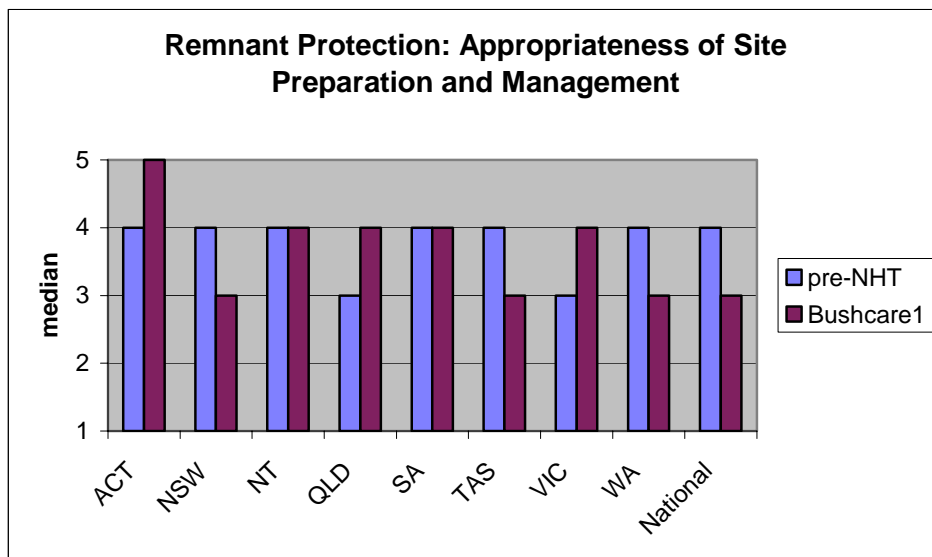
3.3.4 Suitability of revegetation project design.

Suitability of Project Design	
1	Eg: <i>Corridors</i> do not provide appropriate links, or are too narrow; inappropriate species for <i>riparian zones</i> ; <i>erosion control</i> ineffective; <i>fencing</i> incomplete or of poor standard, and does not adequately control threats; etc.
2	Intermediate between scores 1 and 3.
3	Design is effective for the purpose. Eg, <i>corridors</i> link at least two remnants or other habitat vegetation, and corridor width is <u>at least twice the likely edge effect</u> ; <i>Riparian zone</i> : appropriate species used, achieves bank stabilisation function, adequate width of buffer zone for context; <i>erosion measures</i> are effective; <i>fencing</i> : plantings protected by effective fence, appropriate for the local threats (sheep, cattle).
4	Intermediate between scores 3 and 5.
5	Eg, <i>corridor</i> links at least two remnants and is part of an existing or planned regional corridor network; <i>riparian vegetation</i> links other remnant areas; <i>erosion control</i> very effective; entire area protected by an <i>effective fence</i> of high quality which follows natural resource/land capability boundaries.



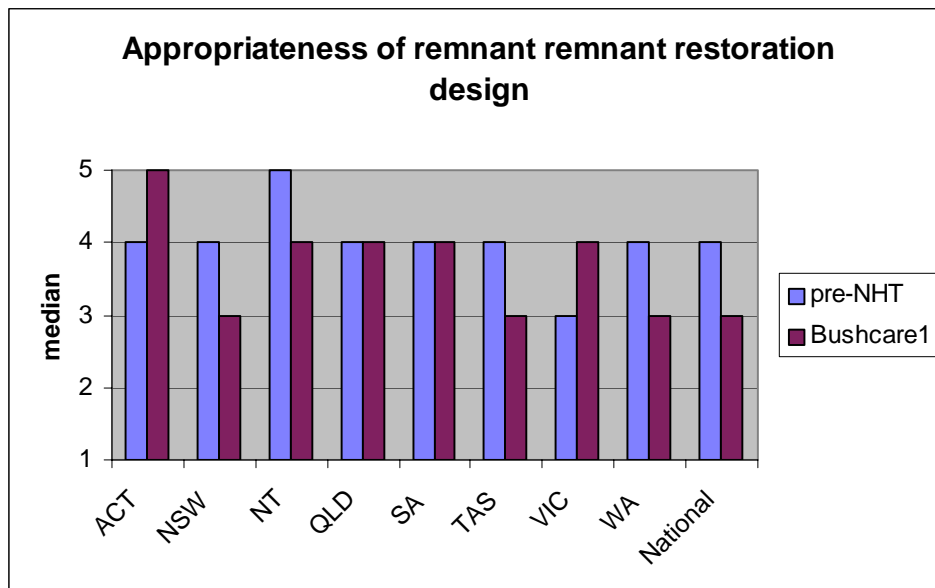
3.3.5 Remnant protection: level of site preparation and management

Site preparation and planting/sowing method within remnant <i>(ie, those factors under <u>management control</u> which affect how well the remnant revegetation is protected and plants will establish and grow. Factors such as fire, flood and drought can reasonably be regarded as outside of management control). Appropriate site preparation requirements are dependent on location. Not all the treatments suggested below will be required in every case. It should be noted that some sites don't need much preparation dependent for example on the previous land use and the size of the weed seed bed. Assessors may need to make a judgement as to the extent that site preparation is appropriate to the conditions.</i>	
1	Minimal of any site preparation, eg, no weed or pest control, soil heavily compacted, planting area not ripped, site not fenced or otherwise protected from herbivores). Inadequate planting/sowing method (eg, plants not properly heeled in, planted at wrong depth, no attempt to provide them with the correct micro-environment including, as appropriate, fertiliser, mulch, tree guards, water).
2	Weed control and soil management attempted – has not worked due to poor timing, inappropriate methods (eg, not ripped early enough, spraying concentrations wrong).
3	Basic site preparation and planting conditions were achieved, as appropriate for the context.
4	Intermediate between score = 3 and score = 5.
5	Site preparation is excellent for the context. Eg, soil not compacted – has had treatment to ensure soil aerated and sub-surface pan broken and ready for planting if necessary, grasses and weeds removed prior to planting, site fenced off. Planting method very thorough and great care taken to ensure high quality (eg, training, close supervision, expert revegetation advice sought). Plants fully protected against site threats (eg, mulch, fertiliser, tree guards, and irrigation, as necessary).



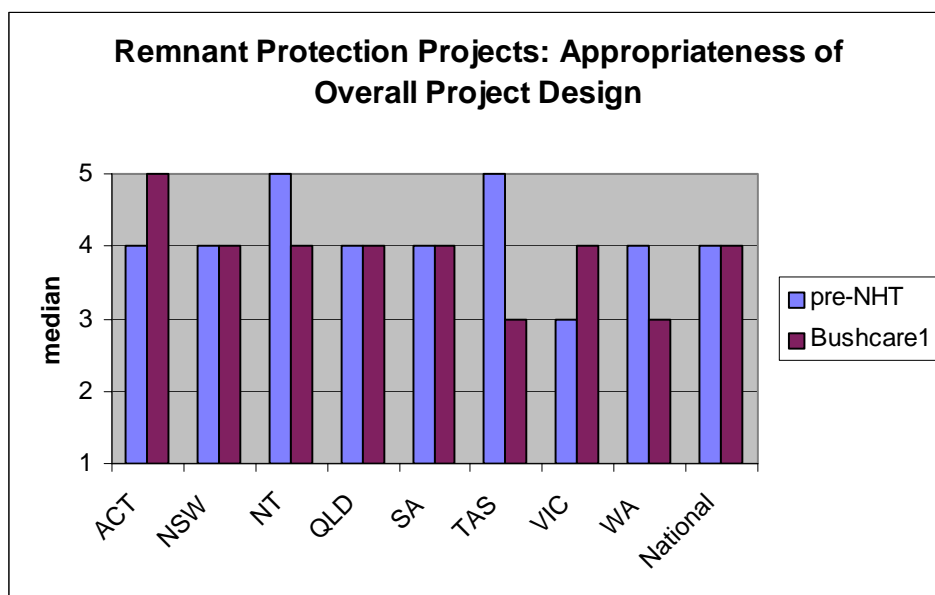
3.3.6 Appropriateness of restoration design for remnants

Score	Design of restoration approach for remnant native vegetation.
1	No thought given to types of species planted (eg, in rainforest situation, may need to use non-rainforest species to first establish a canopy before planting rainforest species). Insufficient use of natural regeneration. Ad hoc approach to weed removal; reinfestation occurring. Inadequate pest and/or stock control.
2	Intermediate between scores 1 and 3.
3	Recognition of selection of appropriate species that will complement existing remnant community (eg, use of pioneer model, modified pioneer model, recognition of potential use of natural regeneration rather than use of tubestock). Strategic weed removal, moderate reinfestation.
4	Intermediate between scores 3 and 5.
5	Design incorporates successional principles in a thorough plan, which is clearly documented, methods and species used are appropriate for the site. Effective use of regeneration. Strategic weed removal allowing regeneration with little reinfestation. Pests (rabbits) well managed.

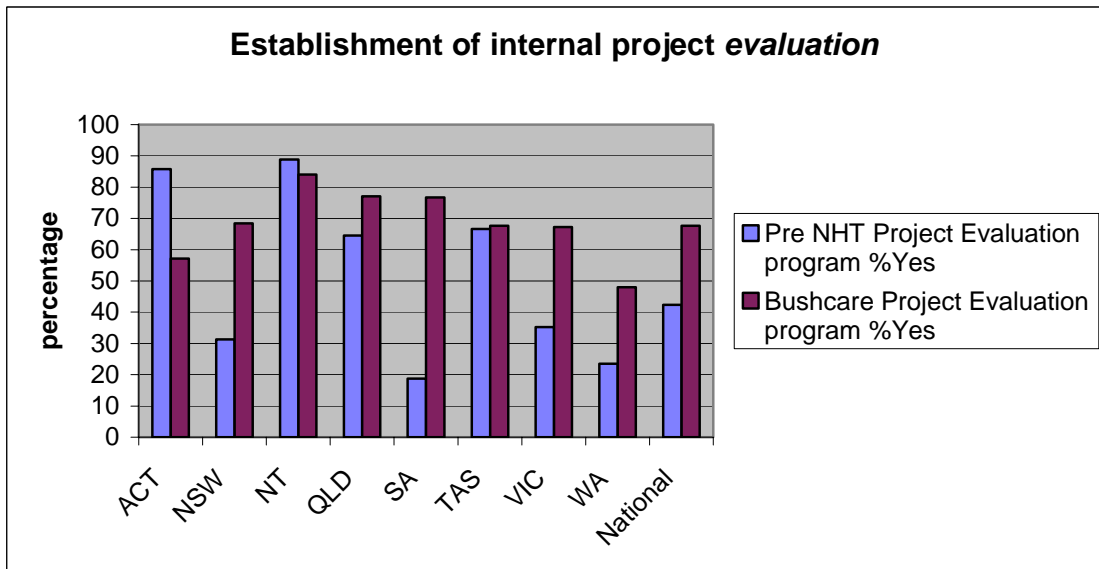
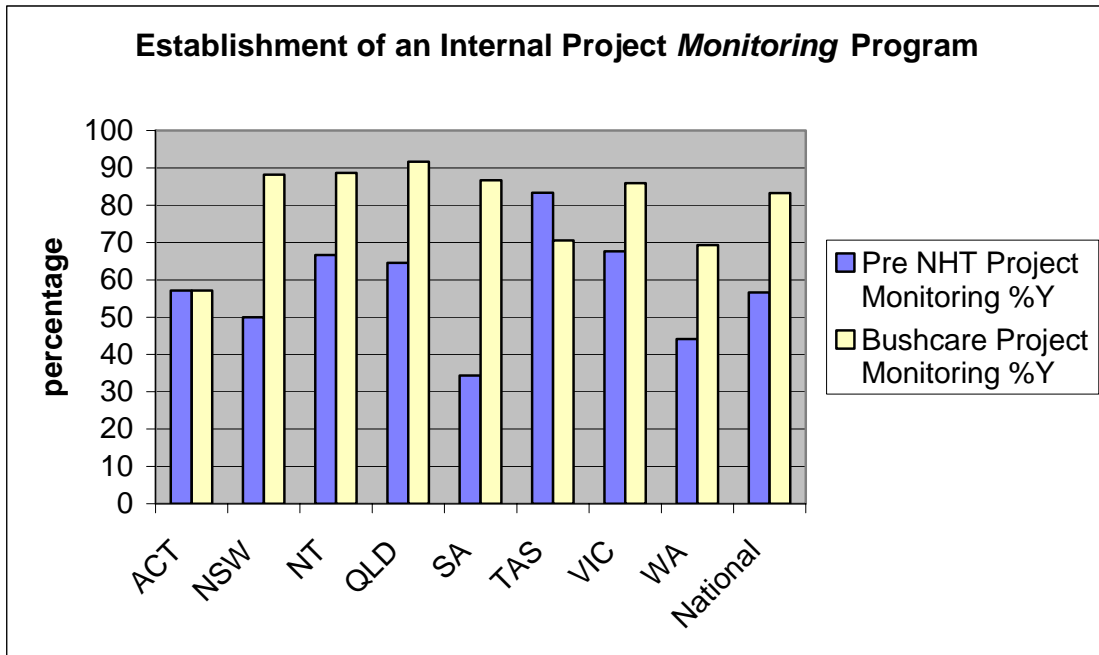


3.3.7 Overall remnant project design

Suitability of Project Design	
1	Remnant selection and protection is inadequate Eg: Remnant is low in landscape and in danger from threatening processes; or scores a 1 in more than 3 of the remnant condition attributes (Q 21); or Fencing incomplete or of poor standard, and does not adequately control threats. No management plans are in place and none are planned.
2	Intermediate between scores 1 and 3.
3	Remnant selection and protection is effective for the purpose. Eg. Remnant is in the “High” condition category or higher and management is appropriate for sustainment at this level or likely to improve remnant condition, <i>fencing</i> : plantings protected by effective fence, appropriate for the local threats (sheep, cattle).
4	Intermediate between scores 3 and 5.
5	Remnant is in the highest two categories of condition (Q21) and management is appropriate for sustainment at this level Eg, entire area protected by an effective fence of high quality which follows natural resource/land capability boundaries, management plan is in place or is being planned or covenant is in place or being planned.

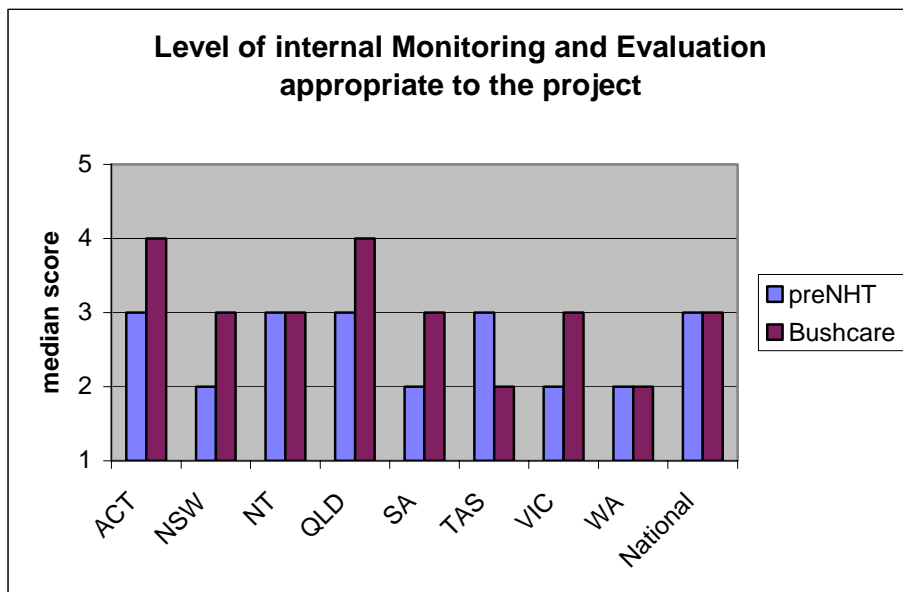


3.3.8 Level/quality of project monitoring and evaluation.



3.3.9 Is the level of Project monitoring or evaluation appropriate to the project?

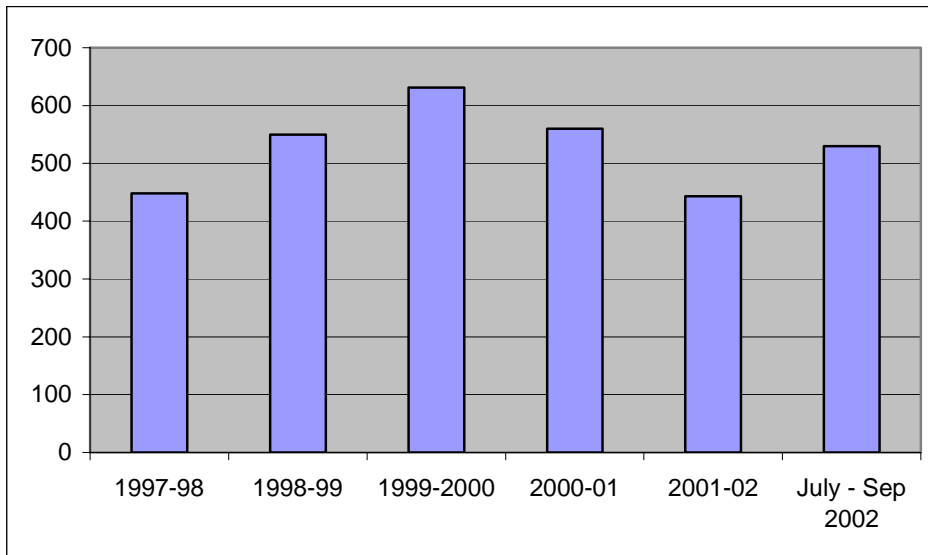
	Level/quality of project monitoring and evaluation?
1	Project has no effective monitoring and evaluation strategy or plan (i.e., appropriate to the size of the project. Bigger projects would need more sophisticated measures than smaller ones). Project design has not included any sensible or effective measures to evaluate progress against objectives, or objectives are poorly defined and/or unmeasurable.
2	Objectives may be well defined and measurable, with useful performance measures built into project design (appropriate to size of project), but no baseline measurements have been taken, and no responsibility assigned for current and ongoing monitoring of project effectiveness.
3	Project has well-defined, outcome-oriented measurable objectives. Performance measures reasonably reflect project objectives (appropriate to size of project). Responsibility for current and ongoing monitoring assigned. Some data collection occurring.
4	Intermediate between 3 and 5.
5	An effective monitoring and evaluation strategy is built into project design. Project objectives are well defined, outcome-oriented and measurable. Performance measures accurately reflect project objectives (and are appropriate to size of project). Responsibility for current and ongoing monitoring assigned. Baseline measurements established, and monitoring program in place.



Tasmanian and Western Australian median scores are both lower than expected. For much of NHT1 Bushcare Tasmania ran a separate M&E section that may have

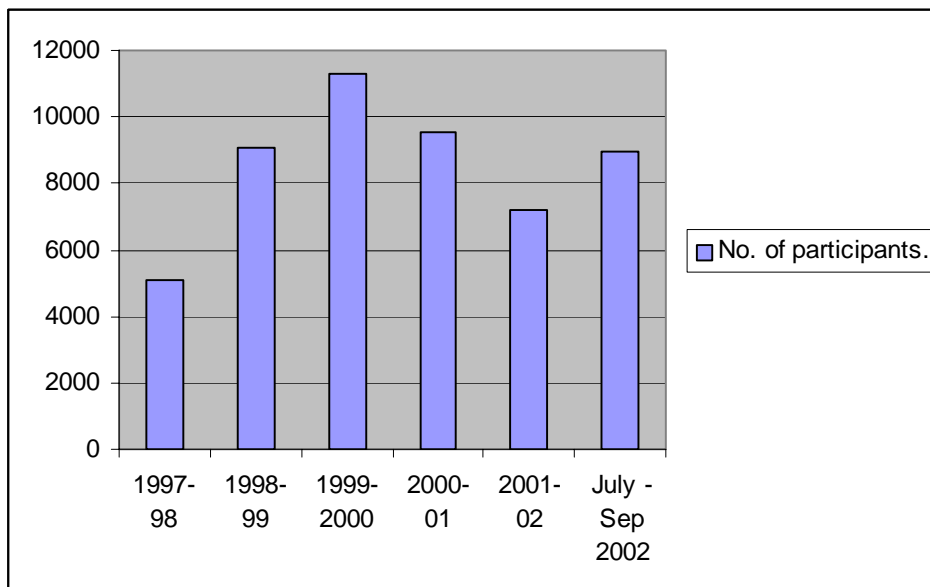
3.4 Education and Awareness Outputs – Bushcare Support Activity

3.4.1 No. of training activities held.



The total number of training activities run under the Bushcare Support contract was 3163, (as reported by Greening Australia). Training conducted by groups, project officers, the provision of on-the-job training, Green Corps, ATCV and other group based activity would have been significantly higher than this figure.

3.4.2 No. of participants



The total number of participants in Bushcare Support training activities throughout the life of Bushcare1 was 51,230 people.

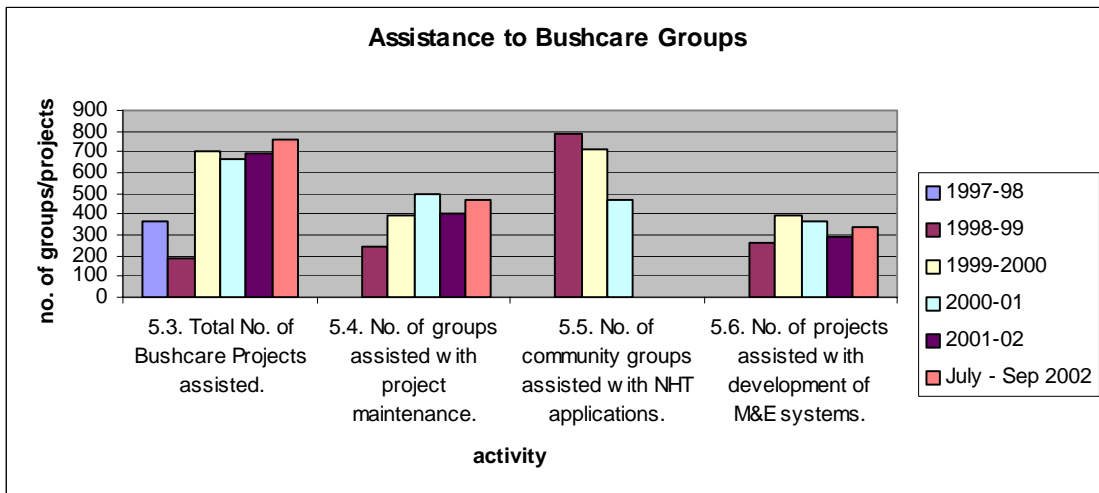
3.4.3 Technical Advice



Taken from the field evaluations, project proponents have over time generally sought more and more technical advice, from levels of around 60% to over 80% of Bushcare1 projects. This increase probably mirrors an increase in the standard of work required, more experienced groups seeking to undertake more sophisticated activity and the submission of more complex proposals as time went on, necessitating additional technical advice and capacity building.

3.4.4 Assistance to Bushcare Groups

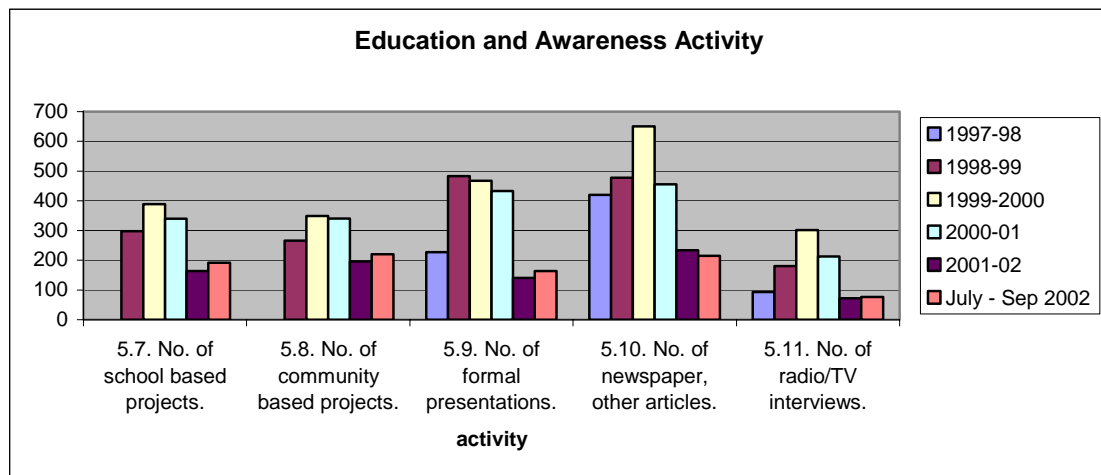
- Total no. of Bushcare projects assisted
- No. of groups assisted with project maintenance
- No. of community groups assisted with NHT applications
- No. of projects assisted with M&E systems.



Category	Output
Total number of groups assisted all years	3,382
Total number assisted with maintenance	2,009
Total number assisted with applications	1,964
Total number assisted with monitoring and evaluation	1,656

3.4.5 Education and Awareness

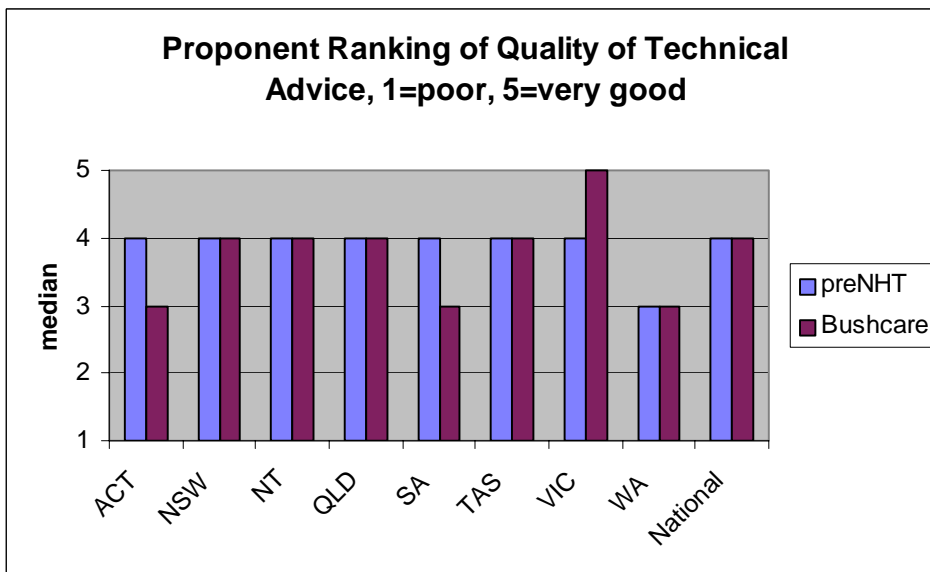
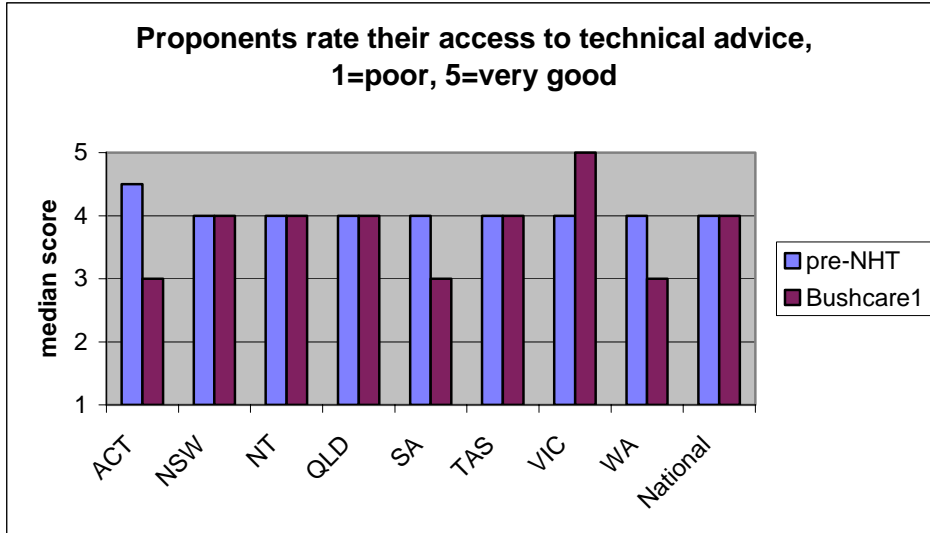
- No. of school based projects.
- No. of community based projects.
- No. of formal presentations.
- No. of newspaper, other articles.
- No. of radio/TV interviews.



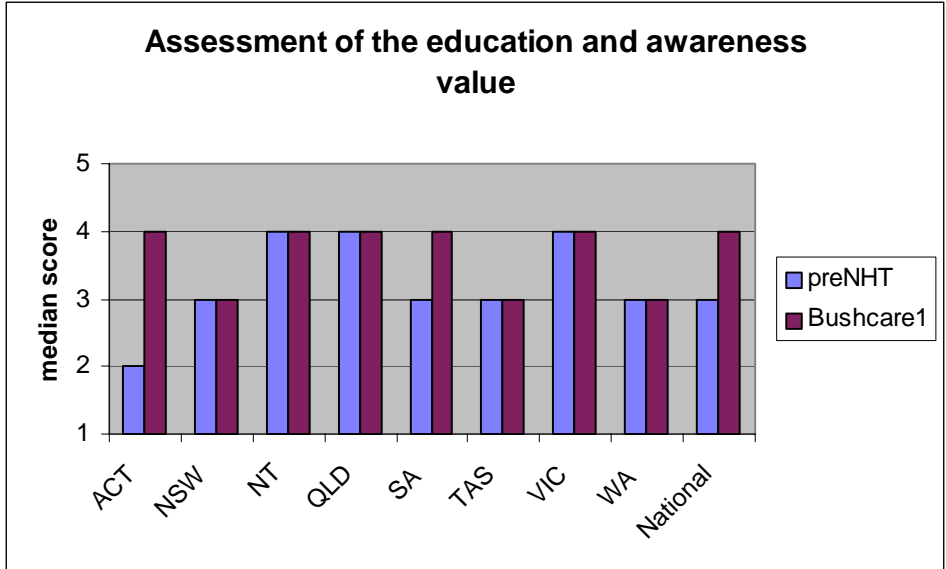
Category	Output
Total number of school based projects	1,382
Total number of community based projects	1,372
Total number of formal presentations	1,913
Total number of print media articles	2,454
Total number radio/TV interviews	937

These figures are based on Bushcare Support contract figures. Independent group activity, in terms of print media articles and presentations at field days and seminars is likely to be far higher.

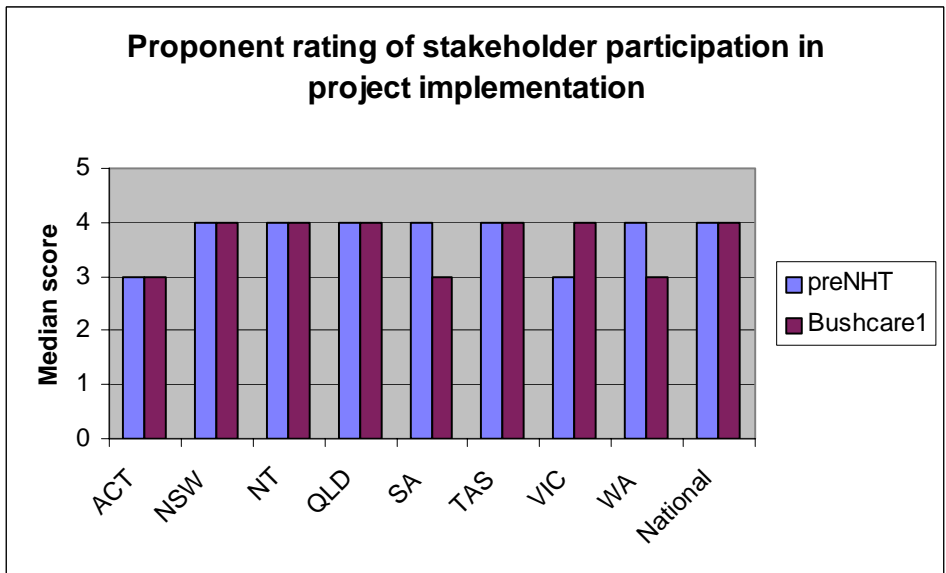
3.4.6 Client/stakeholder perception of adequacy/quality of advice (survey of participants).



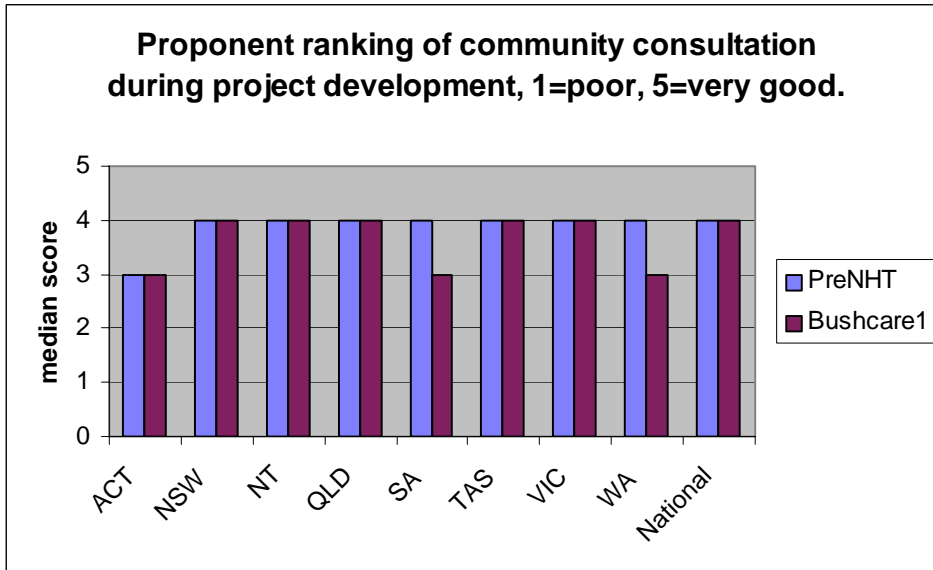
3.4.7 Annual market survey, measuring level of awareness of Bushcare and its objectives amongst stakeholders, including the general public.



3.4.8 Landholder's attitude towards vegetation management



3.4.9 Proponents rank community consultation during their project development



4.0 Community Capacity Building under the Bushcare Support Contract

Initial Bushcare Support reporting focuses on outputs rather than outcomes.¹ During the contract period, a continual process of reviewing and refinement of the reporting framework occurred.

For the period June 1997 to June 1998, Bushcare Support was focused on capacity building in communities, and included projects with a regional focus.² Reporting accuracy was identified as an issue in both the 1998-99 and 1999-2000 reporting cycles.³ In May 2000, a section identifying key terms and providing definitions was included to improve consistency and reporting accuracy.

During 2001-2002 the drought and lower than average rainfalls across Australia have placed pressure on the delivery of on-ground activities in accordance with Natural Heritage Trust deadlines. Monitoring and evaluation systems have also been affected by the drought. In many states, a trend towards less formal monitoring and evaluation was adopted to compensate for the difficult conditions⁴

Community Capacity Building Indicators **Training**

Training refers to targeted activities where people attend specifically to improve their skills or knowledge. Reporting criteria required under the contract includes the total number of training activities held, and the number of participants attending each training session.

Since Bushcare Support's inception in 1997, more than 51,000 people participated in training activities, and had their skills and knowledge improved. This improvement has been delivered through 3162 Bushcare funded training activities.⁵

In the 1997-98 report, a national aggregate of 448 training modules were delivered, 56 less than planned. This training initiative included 5000 participants, 1000 greater than the target set.

During the 1998-99 reporting cycle, most states and territories met or exceeded the training activities and participation targets set. While Queensland and Western Australia did not meet the target for training activities, both states exceeded the target set for participants. Tasmania was the only state to experience lower than planned training activities and participation. The report identified underreporting against some of the key result areas as a possible cause for the lower than expected results.⁶

¹ *Evaluation of Bushcare Support June 1997- June 1998* p 34.

² *Evaluation of Bushcare Support June 1997- June 1998* p5.

³ *Evaluation of Bushcare Support June 1997 – June 1998* p iii.

⁴ *Bushcare Support 2001-2002 Progress Report* 5.

⁵ Cumulative data taken up to September 2002, *Bushcare Support 2001-2002 Progress Report* 5.

⁶ *Annual Report – Bushcare Support 1999-2000* p iii.

The most successful year in meeting training and participation targets occurred during 1999-2000. This period experienced the highest level of activity during the Bushcare Support contract, augmented by a high demand for Workshops. The target of 410 training activities was exceeded, with Bushcare Support facilitating 631 training activities, attended by approximately 11,300 participants. The participation target set for approximately 3,800 was exceeded by more than 7,400 participants.

During 2000-2001, all training activity and participation targets met or exceeded targets set. The Training activity target was set at 442 nationally, with 560 activities held and attended by 9560 participants. This is 5,110 more than the target set of 4,450.

For the period 2001-2002, all states and territories met their training activity targets with the exception of the ACT/SE NSW, Tasmania and Western Australia. While no participation targets were set nationally the level of participation remains high and is consistent with previous years.

Cumulative data for July 2002 to September 2002 demonstrates a continuing commitment to training activities. All states and territories met or exceeded targets, with the exception of Tasmania and Western Australia. Participation targets were not set for this period, however attendance numbers remain strong with over 8,900 attending training activities.

Effectiveness

Effectiveness indicators gauge the extent to which training changed behaviour, and the degree of uptake and application of the course content.

Some states and territories evaluate community training activities for effectiveness. Assessments range from a rudimentary appraisal, where participants complete end of session 'satisfaction' forms, through to formal comprehensive evaluations conducted by consultants external to the training program.⁷

An Australia-wide survey of staff involved in the management and delivery of Bushcare Support forms part of the *Evaluation of Bushcare Support 1997-98* report. The report raises a number of issues identified during the transitional phase, from the discontinued *One Billion Trees to Bushcare*, to the new funding arrangements for Bushcare under the Natural Heritage Trust.

Respondents to the effectiveness survey agreed that training should follow exposure to facilitation and demonstration activities. Lack of prior exposure may have caused a delay in facilitators and coordinators delivering some of the proposed training modules as originally anticipated.⁸

During the 1998-99 reporting cycle, no information was provided on the effectiveness of training.⁹

The 1999-2000 year was the most productive year for training activities. Participant feedback indicated that workshops were effective and exceeded expectations. Material provided to participants at training sessions was identified as particularly relevant and a valuable take-home reference resource.

⁷ *Annual Report – Bushcare 1999-2000* p 51

⁸ *Evaluation of Bushcare Support June 1997 – June 1998* p 19

⁹ *Bushcare Support – Fourth Quarter Progress Report – April – June 1999.*

During this period, Tasmania and Queensland were the only states to detail the effectiveness of training programs in their reports. Greening Australia Tasmania conducted a comprehensive evaluation of the Bushcare Support Community Training Program. Participants strongly endorsed the training courses and material provided and suggested improvements to training packages to ensure ongoing relevance. In Queensland, Greening Australia's training unit evaluated feedback provided by participants. The community training was assessed as effective.

During the 2000-2001 reporting period no information was provided on the effectiveness of training programs.¹⁰

The Bushcare Support contract extension from July 2001 to December 2002 included reporting on an independent client satisfaction survey. Respondents were satisfied with the quality of information provided and services provided. In addition, all states and territories are undertaking an evaluation of training activities.¹¹

Technical Advice

Technical advice refers to assistance given by the Bushcare Support Network, with implementation of community-based Bushcare projects. Four components are considered. These include Bushcare Projects assisted, groups assisted with project maintenance, community groups assisted with NHT applications, and projects assisted with development of monitoring and evaluation.

Technical advice has been provided to 2654 Bushcare Projects, with 1602 groups assisted with project maintenance, and 1964 community groups assisted with NHT applications. Assistance with development of monitoring and evaluation systems was provided to 1364 projects.¹²

Reporting in 1997-1998 is limited to projects assisted by Bushcare. A total of 367 projects were assisted with all states meeting their targets, with the exception of the ACT/SE NSW, SA, NSW and the NT.¹³ No data is provided for project maintenance or community groups assisted with NHT applications or projects assisted with development of monitoring and evaluation. (this early in the contract – unlikely to have any activity under these categories)

During the 1998-1999 reporting cycle, 191 Bushcare Projects were assisted. No target was set for the number of projects to be assisted during this reporting cycle. A total of 246 groups were assisted with project maintenance, with all states and territories meeting or exceeding the target set, with the exception of ACT/SE NSW and Tasmania. While 790 community groups were helped with NHT applications, the ACT/SE NSW, Tasmania, Victoria and WA were unable to meet targets set, and South Australia did not set a target. A total of 261 projects were assisted with development of monitoring and

¹⁰ *Bushcare Support – 36 Month Progress Report – April-June 2001 and Bushcare Support – Annual Report 2000-2001.*

¹¹ *Bushcare Support – July 2001 – December 2002 – Progress Report 4.*

¹² Cumulative data taken up to September 2002, *Bushcare Support 2001-2002 Progress Report 5.*

¹³ Cumulative data taken up to September 2002.

evaluation systems. All states and territories meet or exceeding their target, with the exception of NSW, Tasmania, Victoria and the NT.

For the 1999-2000 period, 669 Bushcare Projects were assisted, with all states exceeding targets set, with the exception of Victoria, who did not provide data or set targets for this period.¹⁴ A total of 390 groups received assistance with project maintenance, with all states and territories meeting or exceeding set targets. During this period, 709 community groups were helped with NHT applications, with all states and territories meeting or exceeding targets, with the exception of WA. Assistance was given to 398 groups enabling the development of monitoring and evaluation systems. All states and territories met or exceeded the targets set, with the exception the NT. South Australia did not set a monitoring and evaluation target for this period.

In 2000-2001 all states and territories exceeded their target, bringing the total Bushcare projects assisted to 669. Assistance with project maintenance was provided to 501 groups, enabling all states and territories to meet or exceed their targets, with the exception of the NT who did not set a target for this period. There were 465 community groups helped with their NHT applications with all states and territories with the exception of ACT/SE NSW, NSW and WA meeting the target set. Development of monitoring and evaluation systems was delivered to 368 projects with all states and territories meeting or exceeding targets, with the exception of the NT.

During the 2001-2002 reporting cycle, 758 Bushcare Projects were assisted. All states and territories met or exceeded the target set, with the exception of Victoria. A total of 465 groups were assisted with project maintenance, with all states and territories meeting or exceeding the target set, with the exception of ACT/SE NSW and Victoria. No data was provided for community groups assisted with NHT applications. A total of 337 projects were assisted with development of monitoring and evaluation systems. All states and territories meet or exceeded their target, with the exception of ACT/SE NSW, Victoria and WA.

Cumulative data for July 2002 to September 2002 period identifies 758 Bushcare projects receiving assistance, with all states meeting or exceeding targets set, with the exception of Victoria. A total of 390 groups received assistance with project maintenance, with all states and territories meeting or exceeding set targets. Some 709 community groups were helped with NHT applications, with all states and territories meeting or exceeding targets, with the exception of WA. Assistance was given to 398 projects to develop monitoring and evaluation systems. All states and territories met or exceeded targets set, with the exception the NT. South Australia did not set a monitoring and evaluation target for this period.

Effectiveness

The effectiveness of technical advice can be gauged by the client or stakeholder perception of the adequacy and perceived quality of the advice given.

¹⁴ *Data from Annual Report - Bushcare Support 1999-2000 pp 97-99*

Each reporting period provided a summary of the technical advice and services provided. No information has been provided on the adequacy of this advice, or an assessment of whether the services given met the recipient's needs. Due to insufficient evaluation provided in Greening Australia's reports, no conclusion can be drawn on the effectiveness of technical advice provided.

Education and Awareness

Education and Awareness are delivered through a number of mechanisms including school based and community based projects. These are delivered as on-going or recurrent programs. A total of 1219 school based projects and 1176 community based projects have been delivered.

Formal presentations provide a useful means of disseminating information to interested groups. A total of 1773 presentations have been delivered as part of Bushcare's community capacity building strategy.

Media exposure through newspaper, radio and television are identified by the use of *Bushcare* in the article. This measure includes publications *Bush* and *Landcare* magazines produced as part of the Australian Government awareness initiative.

The number of newspaper and other articles, and radio and television interviews covering Bushcare issues total 2220 and 865 respectively.

In the 1997-98 report, school based projects and the number of community based projects are not covered. There were 227 formal presentation, 420 newspaper and other articles and 93 radio or television interviews.

During the 1998-99 reporting cycle, a total of 298 school-based projects were delivered, with most states and territories meeting or exceeding their target, with the exception of Queensland, Tasmania and Western Australia. Approximately 266 community-based projects were assisted with all states and territories meeting or exceeding the targets set. There were 483 formal presentations, the Northern Territory the only territory unable to meet the set target. Delivery of 478 newspaper and other articles met or exceeded targets set in all states and territories, with the exception of the ACT/SE NSW and NSW. A total of 180 radio or television interviews occurred during this period, meeting or exceeding targets set by all states and territories with the exception of ACT, SE NSW, NSW and Queensland.

The most successful year in education and awareness targets occurred during 1999-2000. This period experienced the highest level of activity during the Bushcare Support contract. A total of 389 school-based projects were delivered, with all states and territories meeting or exceeding their target. With 349 community-based project delivered, targets were met or exceeded in all states and territories, with the exception of Tasmania.

Bushcare Support facilitated 467 formal presentations, meeting or exceeding targets in all states and territories with the exception of South Australia and the Northern Territory.

During 2000-2001, a total of 340 school and 341 community-based projects were delivered. This is almost double the target set for these criteria, with Tasmania the only state not to meet its targets. All states and territories met the formal presentation activity target, with 433 presentations delivered. Newspaper and other articles totalled 456, with all states and territories meeting set targets, with the exception of Western Australia. A total of 213 radio and television interviews were performed, with only the Northern Territory exceeding targets. All other states and territories were unable to meet the target.

For the period 2001-2002, no targets were set for education and training during this period. Participation is not as high during this period as for previous years, with school and community based projects at 192 and 220 respectively. A total of 163 formal presentations were provided, with 215 newspaper and other articles, and 77 radio and television interviews delivered.

Cumulative data for July 2002 to September 2002 demonstrates a continuing commitment to education and training. No targets were set for any of the key result areas in education and training during this period. A total of 44 school and 54 community based projects were provided. Formal presentations were provided on 28 occasions, with 40 newspaper and other articles, and 7 radio and television interviews undertaken.

Effectiveness

In November 1997, the Department of the Environment and Heritage sought a variation of the Bush Support contract to include assistance to community groups and local authorities in developing and submitting Natural Heritage Trust Applications. This data was incorporated in the final quarter for the 1997-98 financial year report.¹⁵ The late inclusion of this parameter causes some discontinuity in data collection early in the reporting cycle.

The effectiveness of education and training was gauged against the level of awareness of Bushcare and its objectives amongst stakeholders and the general public. In addition landholders attitudes to vegetation have been canvassed.

Effectiveness is also measured by identifying the number of groups active in vegetation management under Bushcare projects.

Difficulty in meeting targets for assisting groups apply for NHT funding was believed to relate to the complexity of the NHT application process when compared to alternative state-based funding sources.¹⁶

The level of endeavour between school-based, community-based and print media activities is evident. Some areas chose to focus their effort on one or two of these outputs, and as a consequence have underperformed on the remainder.

¹⁵ *Evaluation of Bushcare Support June 1997 – June 1998* p 35.

¹⁶ *Evaluation of Bushcare Support June 1997 – June 1998* p iii.

While media coverage has not been consistent for all areas, with many regions having difficulty gaining print and airtime, the national target has been met. There has been an editorial challenge keeping the brand *Bushcare* in the final copy, as required for reporting purposes.¹⁷

5.0 Acknowledgements

An evaluation of 664 projects, with over 2000 individual field sites visited is a complex and lengthy task.

This evaluation would not have been possible without the hard work of the Bushcare State Coordinators and Regional Facilitators, Greening Australia Bushcare Support Staff, State and Territory Agency personnel and all the enthusiastic Bushcare, Save the Bush and One Billion Trees project groups.

Other organizations that contributed in the production of this evaluation include:

Greening Australia
Resource Policy and Management Pty Ltd
SRA Information Technology Pty Ltd
Engineering and Scientific Systems Pty Ltd

This project was funded by the Natural Heritage Trust and managed by the Natural Resource Management Policy Branch, Department of the Environment and Heritage.

¹⁷ *Evaluation of Bushcare Support June 1997 – June 1998* p iii.