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Regional planning for sustainability

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Regional planning for sustainability

Abstract

The concept of ecologically sustainable development has been incorporated into a number of pieces of legislation (Stein, 2000) and environmental planning instruments in New South Wales. There is a significant question, however, as to whether its incorporation is anything more than pure symbolism. This paper begins by exploring the limited role played by ESD principles in decision-making processes under existing legislation, as a prelude to a more detailed analysis of what commitment to ESD principles should mean for such processes. It focuses in particular on the implications of such a commitment at the holistic level of environmental and natural resources planning, as distinct from control of individual projects. In doing so, it draws attention to the particular problems faced by planners in urban and urbanising environments.

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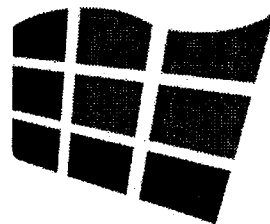


**Urban Bushland and Remnant
Vegetation:
Toolkits for a Sustainable Future
Conference**

19th & 20th of June 2003

Conference Abstracts

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LANDCOM

Creating Better Communities

Giselle Howard
Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources

Role of Catchment Management Blueprints in funding urban bushland & remnant vegetation conservation

Catchment Management Boards established in 2000 under the Catchment Management Act 1989, have resulted in complete coverage of NSW with strategic natural resource plans called Catchment Blueprints. These Blueprints are now Cabinet endorsed and the Boards have commenced their implementation phase of work. Within the Blueprints for urban areas, biodiversity is a very prominent theme, and there is a heavy emphasis on vegetation management.

In the urban context the spectrum of bushland managers is complex, but the Blueprints are a common tool that can be used by all to lever funds. Many funds are expended but few are regionally coordinated to ensure the greatest environmental gain. The Blueprints trigger such linkages and stakeholders are beginning to see an increase in funding opportunities, rather than simply being asked to do more with less. Local government acceptance and use of the Blueprints in urban areas is a strong example of this.

Dr Kylee Wilton
State Wetland Advisory Committee

Incentives for Wetland Conservation

The NSW State Wetland Advisory Committee (SWAC) has identified the need to clarify the opportunities available for financial and non-financial incentives in relation to wetland management. The Minister for Land and Water Conservation established SWAC under the NSW Wetlands Management Policy 1996 to encourage and assist with the implementation of the policy. The committee comprises representatives from government agencies, non-government organisation, the community and research and industry. It now reports to the Minister for Natural Resources, Craig Knowles.

There is no single, simple incentive that can be applied to wetland management, rather a range of incentives is available that can be applied directly to wetland management that already exist as part of taxation rebate schemes, rate relief options, funding opportunities and management agreements. Selecting the best incentive options depends on the issues that face wetland managers. This presentation provides an outline of the incentives and funding options available to landholders that may be used to protect and enhance wetland management in NSW.

through a combination of individual property visits, educational workshops, incentives for on-ground works linked to property management plans and annual payments based on the landholders performance and commitment to conserving biodiversity on their property. The model has built on a similar model utilised by the Surf Coast Shire in Victoria and is being used by NPWS to trial environmental property planning courses. Ninety individual properties have registered in the first year of the program.

Session 2: Toolkits for better Planning and Legislation

Stuart Little

Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources

How can Planning & legislation protect remnant vegetation?

With increased population pressure, urban growth and agricultural development, increasing pressure is placed on removing native vegetation for alternative social and economic needs. This brings into question what planning and legal mechanisms are available to protect native vegetation?

This paper examines the opportunities available to protect native vegetation in NSW through planning and regulation and focusing on the urban, peri-urban and coastal areas of State. It considers the various approaches and legal mechanisms available at the Commonwealth, State, Regional, Local and the Property levels. The operation and interplay of the NSW Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EP&A Act) with other environmental legislation such as the Threatened Species Conservation 1995 Act (TSC Act) and Native Vegetation Conservation Act 1997 (NVC Act) are particularly examined. Consideration is also given to the potentially competing requirements for vegetation control under the recent bushfire protection reforms.

Sustainability objectives can best be met when social, economic and environment concerns are addressed through strategic planning at regional and local scales and at the earliest stages in planning and development decisions. Consideration will be given to case studies to help illustrate points.

- provide a practical guide for preparation of terrestrial flora and fauna surveys for planning and development proposals,
 - establish minimum scientifically accepted standards for the quality, collection and reporting of flora and fauna data,
 - standardise survey methodologies and data collection techniques,
 - standardise references to vegetation types in flora and fauna surveys according to a regional vegetation classification system,
 - promote planning decisions that reflect and incorporate the findings and recommendations of scientifically-based flora and fauna surveys,
 - facilitate consistency and comparability of data between individual sites and regional assessments, enabling the incremental development of a regional biodiversity information system.
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**Philip Jenkyn
Protectors of Public Lands**

Commonwealth & state public lands: a due process to protect natural values

The last twelve months of the public lands debate have highlighted growing community resentment to the sale of public assets, particularly land. However this debate is not new.

For public lands to be effectively managed there needs to be an immediate moratorium on the sale or lease of all significant public lands and the development of a process whereby future Federal and State Governments plan for, consult and consider local communities in decisions related to public lands.

Ultimately responsibility for protection of the environmental and cultural values of significant sites of public land must come from all levels of government. While the introduction of better public lands legislation is not the only answer it would certainly be a huge step in guaranteeing the protection of significant sites of public land

**George Gibbons
National Trust of NSW**

Cemeteries the need for policy

Apart from eucalypt forests there are few areas of eastern NSW that retain the native plant communities as they were in 1788. Many Cemeteries are exceptions to this, at least in part. Due to the fact that they:

- Are large enough to allow ecological sustainability;
- Have been fenced since early settlement;
- Have not been landscaped or had extensive plantings; and
- Are not subjected to scorched earth weed poisoning programs.

To what extent should existing activities, impacting adversely on the environment, be protected from regulation? Should compensation be paid when land is downzoned to reflect new scientific information about conservation impact? Should greater weight be given in decision-making processes to environmental factors as distinct from socio-economic considerations? Should urban landholders have a duty of care for land similar to the duty increasingly accepted by rural landholders, and, if so, what would this involve?

Armineh Mardirossian
Landcom

**Landcom s Sustainability Commitment and Triple Bottom Line (TBL)
Reporting**

Landcom is a State Owned Corporation set up under the Landcom Corporation Act 2001. Its role is to implement key government urban development objectives. Landcom s mission is to demonstrate best practice in social, environmental and economic sustainability for the rest of the development industry and community as a whole. Leading by Example was the recognition that the Banksia Foundation awarded Landcom in 2002.

Having established our commitment to delivering more sustainable products and services to the community, we need a way to ensure the right decision were made at the critical steps of every development project and every corporate process. In addition, we had to be able to measure our performance in this new paradigm. Not only new key performance indicators were required but also a whole new system and framework for capturing, analysing and reporting data had to be developed.

Landcom did not decide to go public with its TBL reporting commitment just overnight. The internal discussions commenced as early as 1999 with the Board and senior management. It took a few months of internal discussion and debate before the organisation achieved enough support at all levels for this new approach.

Kevin Whale
National Parks and Wildlife Service

Pressures & opportunities for threatened species recovery

This talk presents a case Study of recovery planning for the Cumberland Plain. Preparing this plan requires finding ways to achieve conservation of endangered bushland across Western Sydney, an area under pressure from Sydney s urban expansion. It is landscape of widespread, highly fragmented bushland, three-quarters of which is on private land.

PlanningNSW and its predecessors has spent over \$80 million (real dollars) in purchasing land in the corridor for the past 25 years and has now acquired approximately 90% of the designated properties. The 5500 ha of Regional Parklands represent a major physical, social and environmental asset for the NSW Government and the Sydney community and has the potential to be developed and managed as one of Sydney's most significant open space systems for the 21st Century. However there are significant challenges including land clearing and past agricultural activities and managing the impacts of infrastructure, including the Western Sydney Orbital, which are located within the corridor.

As interim land managers, the Department has been working with Greening Australia on the Greening Western Sydney (GWS) project. GWS is one of the largest single urban revegetation projects in Australia. Last year marked the 10 year anniversary of the project and the Department undertook a detailed independent project evaluation. The evaluation assessed the existing outcomes and recommended future directions for the project. The evaluation also examined the progress of GWS to meet the principles and statutory framework within SREP31. This presentation will explore the achievements of GWS and future integration with other specific aims of SREP31.

Jeffrey Bell
Camden City Council

Incorporating offsets into local government policy

The Camden local government area is characterised by one of the oldest agricultural landscapes in Australia. On the Southern Cumberland Plain. The vestiges of the indigenous vegetation are now threatened by the Sydney's voracious appetite for land. The Camden 2025 strategic plan establishes a vision for the Camden landscape that is challenging considering the threats and traditional practice.

The recently adopted Camden Council Natural Assets Policy is designed to realise the strategic vision for the Camden landscape. The policy establishes a zero net loss target of 25% coverage of indigenous vegetation. Countering the fragmentation of natural resource management responsibility the policy seeks to demystify natural resource management for community and council staff.

The policy sets a low threshold for impact on natural assets however provides guidelines for the consideration of ameliorative measures (offsetting) in the application of the significance threshold (eight part) test.

**Dr Judy Lambert
North Head Sanctuary Foundation**

A new model for integrating cultural & ecological diversity

North Head is a place of outstanding natural beauty. Its spectacular cliffs and the ancient wind-blown sand dunes that support one of the largest and most intact areas of Sydney sandstone bushland form a natural gateway to Sydney Harbour. It is home to several endangered species and populations, including the iconic Little Penguins and Long-nosed Bandicoots.

But North Head has more than just its natural values. As a former meeting place of people from different Aboriginal groups, it is also a place of great cultural and spiritual significance to the original Australians.

Layered over that are outstanding built and cultural values associated with 150 years of use as a quarantine station, and almost a century of use as an artillery training area which formed a key element in Sydney's defence.

All of the land on North Head beyond the stone fence that forms a natural boundary to the west is public land. With changes of use currently in progress for two of the major tracts of land on North Head, the North Head Sanctuary Foundation, the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust and others are currently working to ensure that the whole of this spectacular area on the doorstep of Australia's largest city, becomes a Sanctuary with integrated management that provides peace and tranquillity for plants, animals and people into the future.

**Richard Davies
National Parks and Wildlife Service**

Backyard Buddies, a new way of thinking about communicating

Backyard Buddies is a program designed to take conservation behaviours beyond the keen and knowledgeable and into the mainstream. Backyard Buddies is part of the National Parks and Wildlife Service Urban Wildlife Project which has been established to deliver enduring conservation outcomes in urbanised parts of the landscape.

We all need to act or change our behaviour to gain enduring conservation outcomes. But how can we ensure that our programs and policies support the necessary social change in the mainstream community to deliver these outcomes?

Programs and policies are most effective when they engage people on ideas that they themselves give significance. We should avoid generating programs and policies that merely reflect our own enthusiasms that answer our own questions

argue that there is a need for a human ecosystems approach, where the wider systems implications of our decisions are considered and the search for design solutions using an ecological opportunity rather than constraints approach is applied. The talk is illustrated with local examples.