

# FROM SCIENCE TO PRACTICE: IMPLEMENTING NATIVE VEGETATION POLICY IN NSW

## overview of the project

This CSIRO led project brought together eight partner organisations to undertake 12 sub projects operated under the brand 'Better Knowledge, Better Bush', designed to improve the knowledge base underpinning native vegetation management and restoration actions, particularly those implemented through incentive programs. This project has resulted in the production of over 200 publications and numerous changes to the way we undertake vegetation management projects.

This research continues to be used in reviewing and upgrading decision-support tools for native vegetation management and catchment planning and prioritisation processes. The combined approach of high-quality science and targeted stakeholder engagement has ensured significant and lasting impacts are achieved from the project.



Trial plots

## how the project was carried out

A project management team consisting of CSIRO and the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water NSW was set up to manage the overall project. This team provided scientific guidance, financial and administrative support and coordination of major stakeholder engagement and communication activities for the 12 sub projects.

To ensure the research activities of all 12 projects were effectively integrated and met overall project objectives, five two-day workshops were held with the project managers. These provided peer review and feedback on research design and methodologies, updates on project progress and discussion about administration, stakeholder engagement and communication. The workshops provided a forum on how research findings would be translated into practice.

Individual project managers developed methodologies to address particular research questions within the framework of the project, including field-based data collection, glasshouse trials, laboratory work, statistical analyses and desktop studies. Information was collected from land managers about management practices using face-to-face interviews, telephone and web-based surveys.

Following the major research phase, the focus shifted towards communicating key findings to relevant stakeholders. This involved close involvement with policy makers, government agency staff and vegetation practitioners, to integrate key findings into policy and planning processes. To aid this process a Knowledge Broker was employed to understand and translate the issues.

## outcomes now and in the future

The main outcomes from the project were:

- Improved design principles for restoring native vegetation and biodiversity in agricultural landscapes
- Improved understanding of revegetation and vegetation management for biodiversity
- Improved understanding of plant and wildlife genetic diversity in fragmented landscapes

- Improved assessment and monitoring tools for vegetation condition and biodiversity across catchments
- Improved biodiversity incentive schemes for farmers
- Effective communication between policy makers, scientists and managers
- Enhanced capacity in research institutions to respond to policy and management needs.

These outcomes have been incorporated into key processes to support native vegetation management in NSW, including upgrading the Biodiversity Incentive Tool, developing the BioBanking Assessment Methodology and reviewing the BioMetric Tool and Assessment Methodology. These outcomes were also used to develop a Conservation Value Index.

The project has been well communicated through 48 technical publications, 33 refereed papers, 13 technical reports, three theses and seven extension articles. Project staff also contributed 103 conference papers, seminars and workshop presentations. In addition, the program held two major conferences and eight field days, attended by 620 people. Further dissemination via the production of a DVD called 'Better Bush on Farms' and the program's website has occurred.

## benefits, challenges & lessons learned

Key findings and advice to stakeholders was delivered through a substantial program of workshops, presentations, publications, media, and field days. These activities have provided a critical link between the documented science and the end users. Collectively these activities are leading to significant and enduring improvements in the way native vegetation is managed in NSW.

The impact of drought conditions and staff turnover presented challenges at times during the project. Close overseeing by the project management team and an adaptive approach to managing ensured these issues were addressed in an effective manner.