

# Recovering bushland on the Cumberland Plain

Best practice guidelines for the management and restoration of bushland



Department of  
Environment and Conservation (NSW)

  
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# Contents

## Background

## Acknowledgements

<b>1. The Cumberland Plain and its vegetation</b>	1
Introduction	2
The Cumberland Plain and its people	5
Geology, soils and climate	6
Identifying the plain's native vegetation	7
The plant communities	10
Species richness	13
Cumberland Plain Recovery Plan	14
<b>2. Guidelines for managing native vegetation</b>	15
Protecting remnants is the top priority	16
How Cumberland Plain bushland becomes degraded	17
Managing riverside bushland	21
Bringing back native animals	23
Where to protect or plant native vegetation	25
<b>3. Identifying management options through site assessment</b>	27
Framework for ecological restoration	28
Site assessment: determine the most appropriate restoration approach	30
<b>4. Bush regeneration and the use of 'triggers'</b>	35
Restoration through bush regeneration	36
The use of regeneration 'triggers'	44

<b>5. Restoration through revegetation</b>	50
Revegetation versus natural regeneration	50
Species selection	50
Seed collection	51
Site preparation and planning	54
Direct seeding	56
Planting	59
Pattern and sequence of revegetation	61
Care and maintenance after planting	65

<b>6. Monitoring</b>	67
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<b>References</b>	69
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<b>Appendices</b>	75
1. Reference sites	76
2. Demonstration sites	77
3. Cumberland Plain weeds and their treatment	81
4. Weed removal techniques	85
5. Funding opportunities	89
6. Contacts	91
7. Recommended reading	92
8. Legislation	94





Western Sydney Parklands demonstration site, Eastern Creek, Doonside. (Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources)

# Background

The biodiversity of the Cumberland Plain in western Sydney is among the most threatened in New South Wales and has been identified as a priority for conservation. The native vegetation of this region has been extensively cleared since European settlement with only 12 per cent remaining as intact bushland.

The conservation of threatened species, populations and ecological communities is crucial for the maintenance of the state's unique biodiversity. The NSW *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995* provides the framework for the conservation and recovery of threatened species, populations and ecological communities in the state. As of January 2005, 12 vegetation communities on the Cumberland Plain, comprising most of its remaining bushland, had been listed as endangered under the Act.

Given the endangered status of Cumberland Plain bushland, the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC) is coordinating a recovery program for the area. The practice of restoring damaged and degraded ecological communities is a relatively new activity within Australia and internationally. In the context of urban Sydney, the process of assisted natural regeneration only began in urban conservation reserves in the 1970s (Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources 2003b). These reserves were mostly in the Hawkesbury sandstone areas of Sydney.

Restoration work on the vegetation of the shale soils of the Cumberland Plain is more recent, with substantial work commencing in only the last 15 years. Therefore the time spent observing, researching, working on, and understanding the Cumberland Plain vegetation communities has been much shorter than for Sydney's sandstone-based vegetation communities.

As a result of this, DEC has identified the need to provide both theoretical and practical 'best practice' guidance to land managers wishing to conserve bushland on all or part of their properties. The aim of these guidelines is to increase the potential for recovery of these endangered ecological communities.

While this publication acts as a theoretical aid to land managers conserving Cumberland Plain bushland, the development of demonstration sites will provide them with practical on-ground examples of numerous best practice restoration techniques for restoring and establishing native vegetation.

It is important that all restoration projects in western Sydney are managed to current best practice standards, as inappropriate restoration can significantly affect the long-term viability of endangered ecological communities.

As a large proportion of the Cumberland Plain's remaining bushland is situated on privately owned rural land, successful recovery of the bushland needs the support of the community of western Sydney. The NSW Government's vision for the management and recovery of these unique communities is to create a network of protected and restored bushland across the Cumberland Plain on both private and public lands. The development of these guidelines and their associated demonstration sites is just one of the many tools that will be used to assist with this process.

*Pultenaea parviflora*, Shanes Park. (P. Watson)



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The project involved the production of best practice management guidelines and the development of associated demonstration sites. Its aim is to provide guidance to land managers wishing to conserve bushland on all or part of their land. The guidelines will assist agricultural enterprises in relation to management of endangered Cumberland Plain ecological communities on their farmland, as well as guidance to councils and other land managers on restoration of these communities within rural and urban lands. The guidelines have been developed in consultation with state and local council representatives, agricultural landholders, and development and agricultural peak bodies.

These guidelines make use of, and expand on, many of the essential elements discussed in the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources 2003 document, *Bringing the Bush Back to Western Sydney* and the *Bush Regenerators' Handbook* published by the National Trust of Australia (NSW) in 1991.

The production of this publication would also not have been possible without assistance from Greening Australia (NSW), through their knowledge and understanding of the ecological restoration processes that occur on the Cumberland Plain.

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