



Casacding preferences for investment of funds

1. Priority areas within the Cumberland Plain
2. Priority areas within the Hawkesbury-Nepean Catchment
3. Grassy woodlands anywhere in the Hawkesbury-Nepean Catchment
4. Grassy woodlands anywhere in the Sydney Basin Bioregion



Growth Centres Biodiversity Offset Program

The Growth Centres Biodiversity Offset Program is set up to permanently protect some of the best remaining bushland in western Sydney and surrounding areas. The program will acquire land for new reserves and fund agreements with landowners to permanently conserve their land.

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Areas of operation – Growth Centres Biodiversity Offset Program

What is the Growth Centres Biodiversity Offset Program?

The Growth Centres Biodiversity Offset Program was established in 2008 as part of the biodiversity certification of the Sydney Region Growth Centres State Environmental Planning Policy (SEPP). The Sydney Region Growth Centres SEPP establishes a broad framework for the release of land to cater for an estimated 181,000 new homes in western Sydney over the next 30 to 40 years.

The program is part of a package of conservation measures being delivered by the NSW Government to offset the impacts on biodiversity from the development of the North West and South West Growth Centres in Sydney.

The program is seeking to permanently protect bushland outside these Growth Centres through the voluntary acquisition of land for new reserves, and by establishing in-perpetuity conservation agreements, such as biobanking agreements, directly with landowners.

Funding for the program is allocated annually, in line with the rate of development of the Growth Centres. Total funding will be \$397.5 million in 2005–06 dollar values over the next 30 to 40 years.

Where does the program operate?

The focus areas for the program are specified in the biodiversity certification for the Sydney Region Growth Centres SEPP. The certification requires that, in the first instance, program funds are invested in the priority areas on the Cumberland Plain identified in the Hawkesbury–Nepean Catchment Action Plan.

If in any given year no lands are available within these priority areas, funds can then be spent in priority areas in the broader Hawkesbury–Nepean Catchment. Finally, as third and fourth preferences, funding can go to conserve grassy woodlands anywhere in the Hawkesbury–Nepean Catchment and then to the Sydney Basin.

What biodiversity values is the program protecting?

The following criteria are provided to guide the selection of sites for protection:

- large remnants of intact native vegetation with the greatest potential for retaining biodiversity values over time
- vegetation communities that are under-represented in the protected area network

- areas of equivalent or better conservation value than those being cleared in the Growth Centres
- areas that contain habitat for threatened species, including – but not limited to – species that will be affected by development of the Growth Centres
- areas where the expenditure of program funds will be the most cost-effective
- areas which meet conservation reserve design principles such as size, boundary configuration and landscape context
- the impact of previous land use on the ability of an area to retain its biodiversity values over time
- any possible threats to an area such as existing or future adjoining land uses, and how these would be managed
- availability of land for reservation, including the willingness of landowners to either sell it or place it under a conservation agreement.

How is the program protecting biodiversity values?

The program permanently protects biodiversity values through:

- the voluntary acquisition of land for reservation under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*
- the establishment of in-perpetuity conservation agreements, such as biobanking agreements, with existing landowners.

How is the program progressing?

A project team has been established to implement the program. This team is working with landowners in the program's investment areas who may be interested in caring for the bushland on their property and maintaining it for the long term.

Annual reports and details of the properties that have been protected will be available on the Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water website as they become available.

What is a biobanking agreement?

A biobanking agreement is a binding, in-perpetuity covenant on the title of a land parcel which requires the land to be protected and managed for its biodiversity values. The agreement can be made over a portion of the land, allowing the remainder of the property to be used or developed.

Program funds are used to establish biobanking agreements for selected properties in the program's investment areas and to purchase the biodiversity credits created by these agreements. Willing landowners will benefit by:

- an upfront payment for entering into a biobanking agreement
- annual funding for the management of the bushland on the property.

Annual payments may be structured so that the landowner derives a small income from managing the land, or allows it to be managed for them by a contractor.

www.environment.nsw.gov.au/biobanking/

What is biodiversity certification?

Biodiversity certification of environmental planning instruments is a new tool for conserving biodiversity and protecting threatened species, populations and communities listed under the NSW *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*. The Minister for Climate Change and the Environment may confer biodiversity certification on an environmental planning instrument (EPI) if satisfied that the EPI, in addition to any other relevant measures to be taken, will lead to an overall improvement or maintenance of biodiversity values.

www.environment.nsw.gov.au/biocertification/index.htm

