Central West Orana Conservation Investment Strategy

Biodiversity Stewardship and Credits Supply

NSW GOVERNMENT

Acknowledgement of Country

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we work and live.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

This resource may contain images, or names of deceased persons in photographs or historical content.

Artist and designer Nikita Ridgeway from Aboriginal design agency Boss Lady Creative Designs created the People and Community symbol.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this strategy

This strategy identifies the key strategic conservation priorities in the Central West Orana (CWO) region. Conservation priorities include areas in the region where protection and restoration will improve connectivity, resilience and biodiversity values.

By identifying conservation priorities, the strategy seeks to guide investment being made into conservation. Significant and ongoing investment is expected in the region, including as part of biodiversity offsetting associated with the development of renewable energy zones (REZs) and associated NSW Electricity Infrastructure Roadmap projects. Investment in conservation outcomes is one of the ways in which the region will benefit from the renewable energy transition. Conservation investment may also occur through other NSW programs, and partnerships with other government and non-government organisations. Coordinating this investment, particularly at an ecosystem level, is an opportunity to improve conservation outcomes.

The strategy is intended to be refined over time through a continuous improvement process to strengthen supporting analysis, improve prioritisation of investment across programs, and seek and incorporate knowledge and feedback from Aboriginal people, the community and delivery partners in the CWO region.

1.2 Relationship to other Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water strategies and programs

This strategy has drawn on, and sits alongside, other Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (the department) strategies relevant to the CWO region, including the Biodiversity Conservation Investment Strategy, NSW National Parks Establishment Plan and the NSW Koala Strategy. It also draws on program-level investment in threatened species and ecological communities through the Saving our Species program and private land conservation.

Section 3 of the strategy outlines planned implementation, including from existing department programs, opportunities through other Commonwealth and NSW government agency programs, and new ways to improve conservation outcomes.

The strategy may inform and complement strategic conservation planning at a more localised level. The strategy will be reviewed when the NSW Government releases the Nature Strategy for alignment.

1.3 About the Central West Orana region

For the purposes of this strategy, the CWO region is defined by the CWO REZ. It spans approximately 20,000 km² and includes the regional centres of Dubbo, Dunedoo and Wellington, on the lands of the Wiradjuri, Wailwan and Kamilaroi peoples. Lands within

the CWO region are administered by Dubbo and Mid-Western Regional councils and Upper Hunter, Warrumbungle, Narromine and Gilgandra Shire councils.

The region has a temperate climate with hot, dry summers and cold winters. Periods of low rainfall are common, and there are differences in climate within the region. The north-east experiences higher annual rainfall and lower evaporation compared to the western parts of the region. Climate projections suggest temperatures will continue to rise, with a higher likelihood of hot weather including heatwaves. The region also experiences flooding and wetter periods from La Nina events.

Primary natural ecosystems in the CWO region include dry sclerophyll forests and grassy woodlands, grading into semi-arid woodlands in the west. The region is rich in biodiversity with at least 5 threatened ecological communities and more than 100 threatened species, with significant conservation assets including Goonoo National Park and State Conservation Area. These values are impacted by key threatening processes such as land clearing, feral animals, weeds and increases in extreme weather events due to climate change.

Historical and ongoing human activities have significantly shaped ecosystems, particularly through grazing and intensive forms of agriculture. CWO is on the eastern edge of the New South Wales sheep-wheat belt where land use has included extensive clearing of between 60% and 85% of the native vegetation. Grazing is the dominant land use (50%) followed by irrigated and broadacre cropping (29%).

Part of the CWO region is within the Murray–Darling Basin. The Macquarie and Castlereagh rivers are the 2 main watercourses, supporting important aquatic habitats, primary production, and industrial and town water supply. The region is adjacent to the Ramsar-listed Macquarie Marshes.

Development in the Central West Orana region

The CWO region is undergoing rapid development with the transition to renewable energy. There are currently 41 approved or proposed renewable energy projects comprising battery energy storage systems, wind and solar farms, and linear projects such as transmission lines. Other state significant developments occurring within the CWO REZ include the Inland Rail project and 3 new critical minerals mines.

Some of these projects are in parts of the region which have conservation priority. These projects will be required to avoid, minimise and offset their impacts as part of the assessment process. The project footprints shown in Figure 1 may be refined as part of seeking approval. Highlighting conservation priorities allows additional focus on avoiding impacts on these areas and guiding the location of offsets for these projects.

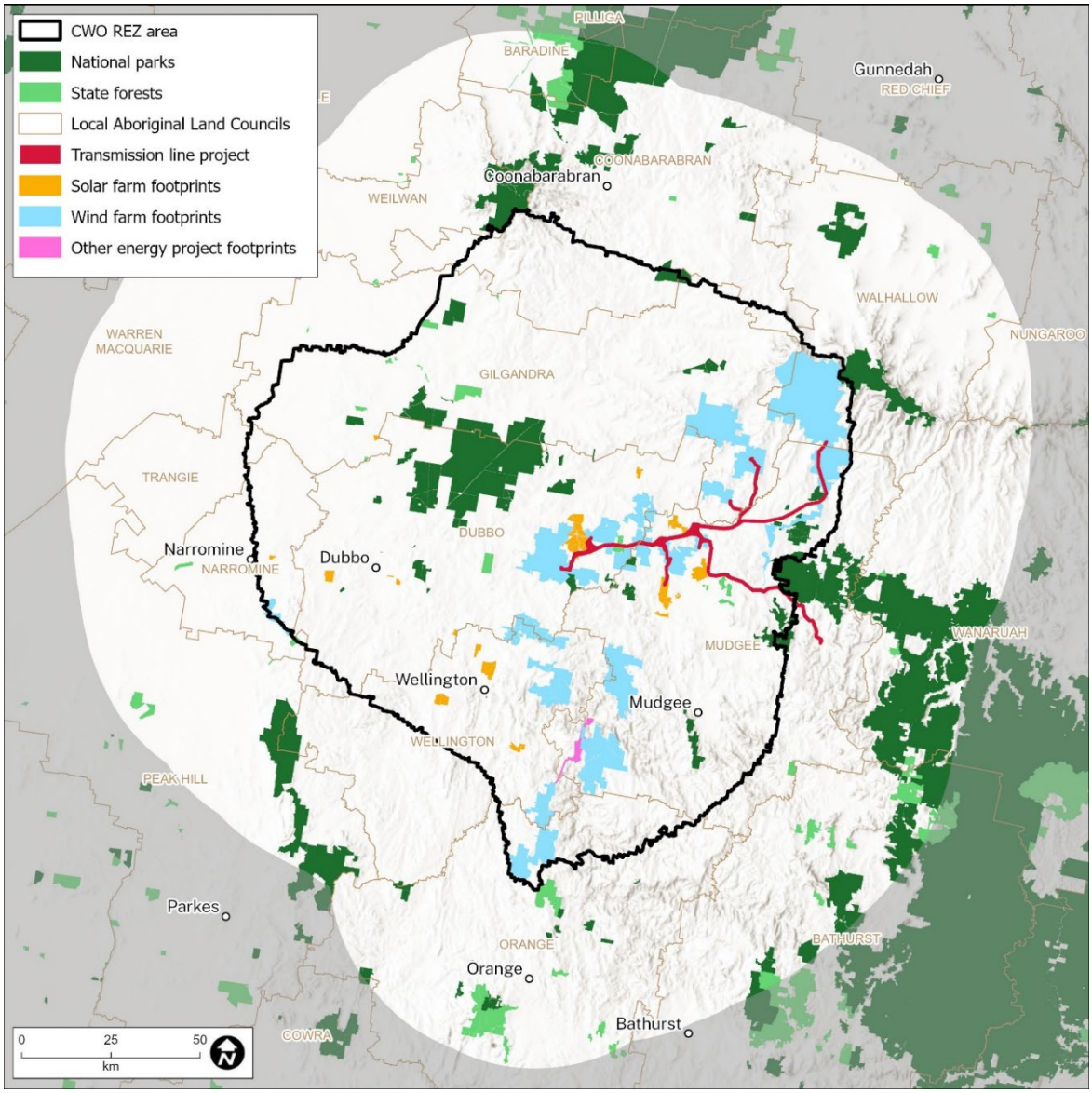

Figure 1 **The Central West Orana Renewable Energy Zone and key renewable energy projects in the region**

2. Conservation objectives and priorities

2.1 Strategy objectives

The Central West Orana (CWO) conservation investment strategy has been developed to:

- integrate conservation programs and priorities to optimise delivery of regional conservation outcomes
- protect regionally significant conservation values
- improve ecological connectivity and resilience to climate change
- restore degraded ecosystems and habitats
- contribute to a comprehensive, adequate and representative protected area system through enduring conservation arrangements
- deliver benefits for landholders and the community through improved ecosystem function, increased access to recreational opportunities and opportunities to get paid to protect and manage biodiversity on private land.

To identify areas in the CWO region that will be most important to achieving the strategy objectives, key conservation assets were selected for analysis. The conservation assets align with the priority conservation values identified in other strategies and programs. Ecosystem restoration has been included as an additional focus to build on existing programs that target land in moderate to good condition. Restoration to improve integrity and build connections is critical in this region to address degradation and increase ecological resilience.

2.2 Conservation assets

In the CWO region, the key conservation assets analysed were:

- threatened ecological communities
- threatened species habitats
- important watercourses and wetlands
- wildlife corridors
- areas of climate resilience
- large intact areas of native vegetation
- areas with restoration potential
- comprehensiveness, adequateness and representativeness of the protected area system.

The key conservation assets in the CWO region inform focus areas and conservation priorities for investment under the strategy.

Threatened species and ecological communities

A total of 102 threatened species and 5 threatened ecological communities have been recorded in the CWO region. Habitat suitability modelling for a suite of 26 threatened species has been used to identify habitat with the potential to support multiple threatened species (see Figure 2). The potential for threatened ecological communities has been mapped using vegetation type associations and predicted distribution of plant community types for 5 threatened ecological communities.

Several threatened species and ecological communities are not well conserved in the region, including 7 species not recorded in the region's national parks. Modelling is currently underway to identify plant community types that are high priority for protection, and this may further inform key conservation assets in the future. The Saving our Species program identifies 3 iconic species in the CWO region – koalas, brush-tailed rock-wallabies and malleefowl. The NSW Koala Strategy has not identified areas of regional koala significance in the CWO region, but records of koalas have been recently identified. Significant koala populations and projects occur near the region.

Species included in habitat suitability modelling include:

- fauna: Australasian bittern, barking owl, Booroolong frog, koala, little eagle, pink-tailed worm-lizard, regent honeyeater, striped legless lizard, yellow-spotted tree frog
- flora: *Androcalva procumbens*, Ausfeld's wattle, Belson's Panic, *Bertya opponens*, bluegrass, creeping tick-trefoil, *Eucalyptus conica,* fairy bells, finger panic grass, Keith's zieria, large-leafed Monotaxis, leafless indigo, pine donkey orchid, oriental false mallow, scant pomaderris, small purple-pea, Tarengo leek orchid
- threatened ecological communities: fuzzy box woodland on alluvial soils (EEC); white box, yellow box, Blakely's red gum woodland and derived native grassland (CEEC); inland grey box woodland (EEC); grey box grassy woodlands and derived native grasslands of South-eastern Australia (Cth EEC); and poplar box grassy woodlands on alluvial plans (Cth EEC).

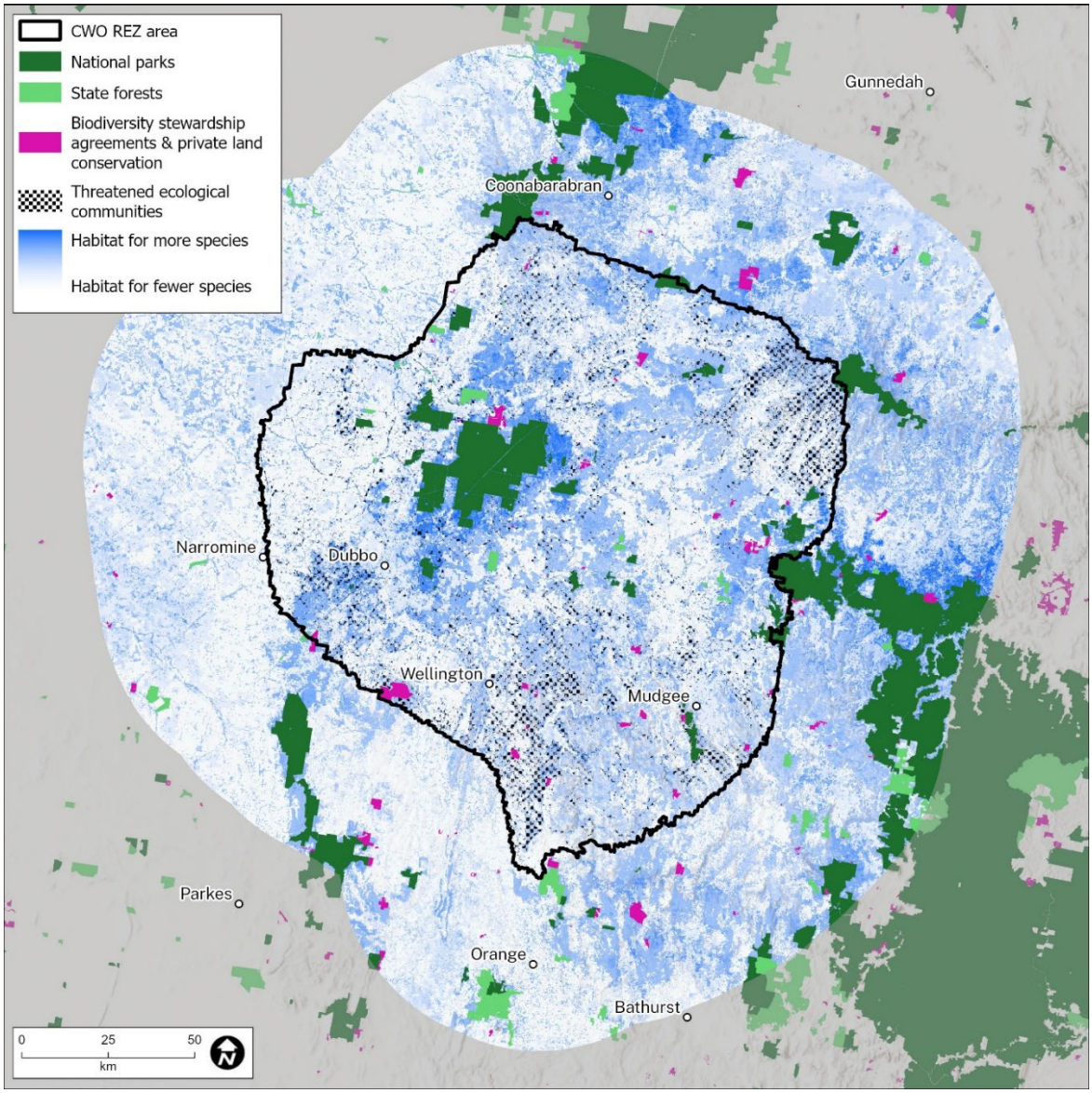

Figure 2 **High-value habitat for threatened species and ecological communities in the Central West Orana region**

Connectivity and important watercourses

Functional and connected ecosystems enable plant and animal populations to move across the landscape to access resources, maintain genetic diversity and adapt to climate change. Ecosystems and habitats in the CWO region are highly fragmented and the remaining small- to medium-sized patches have very high conservation value.

Major rivers in the CWO region include the Macquarie, Bell, Castlereagh, Cudgegong and Talbragar rivers. Rivers are associated with important water-dependent ecosystems including wetlands. Restoration potential has been identified for large sections of the Bell River and sections of the Macquarie River between Narromine and Lake Burrendong, based on the NSW River Styles Database (2023).

In highly cleared areas, travelling stock reserves (TSRs) provide connectivity in the CWO region. The *Conservation value of NSW Travelling Stock Reserves* dataset (DCCEEW,

2017; 2020) found that of the 9,000 ha of TSRs in the region, around 3,000 ha are high value and more than 2,700 ha are medium value.

Corridor analysis identifies opportunities to create vegetation and habitat connectivity in the CWO region by linking large intact vegetation remnants through smaller high-value vegetation remnants and areas requiring restoration (DCCEEW, 2017). In more highly impacted areas, TSRs and waterways may represent the best opportunities to build connectivity (see Figure 3).

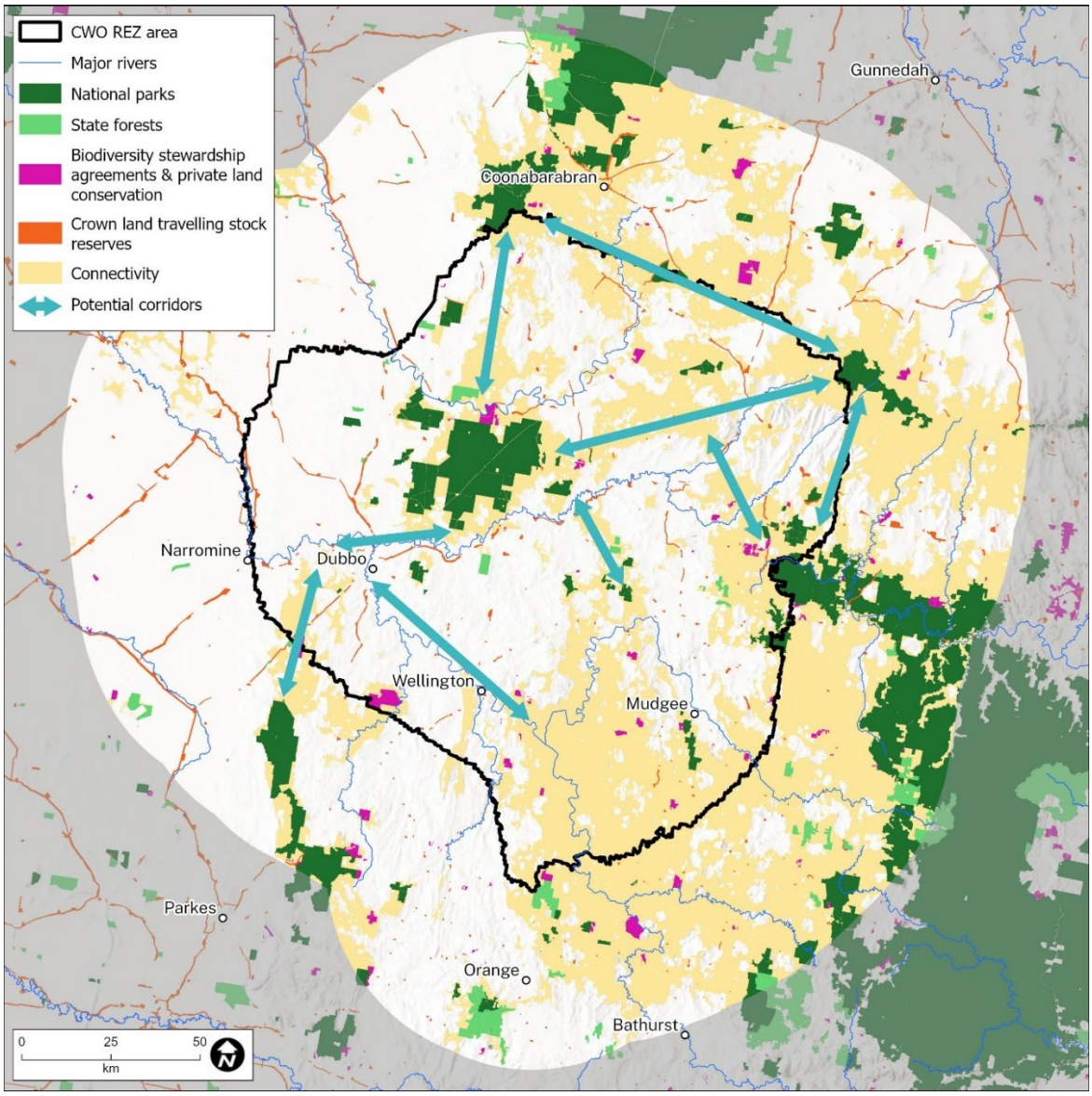

Figure 3 **High-value corridors and opportunities for connectivity in the Central West Orana region**

Remnant vegetation and ecological condition

In the CWO region, remnant vegetation supports animal and plant populations, and its ecological integrity will be important in efficient and effective restoration. Ecological condition analysis (DCCEEW, 2024) shows that opportunities remain in the CWO region to protect large patches of vegetation in relatively high condition that are currently

outside of the reserve system (see Figure 4). Although not all these areas are threatened ecological communities, large remnants of intact vegetation are important regional conservation assets that support ecological integrity and provide a spine of connectivity.

Vegetation remnants at lower elevations tend to be threatened vegetation communities. Areas with reduced ecological integrity provide stepping stone linkages and an opportunity to restore or reconstruct vegetation and habitats. In the CWO region, restoration will be critical for reconnecting ecosystems, improving ecological function and ensuring resilience to climate change.

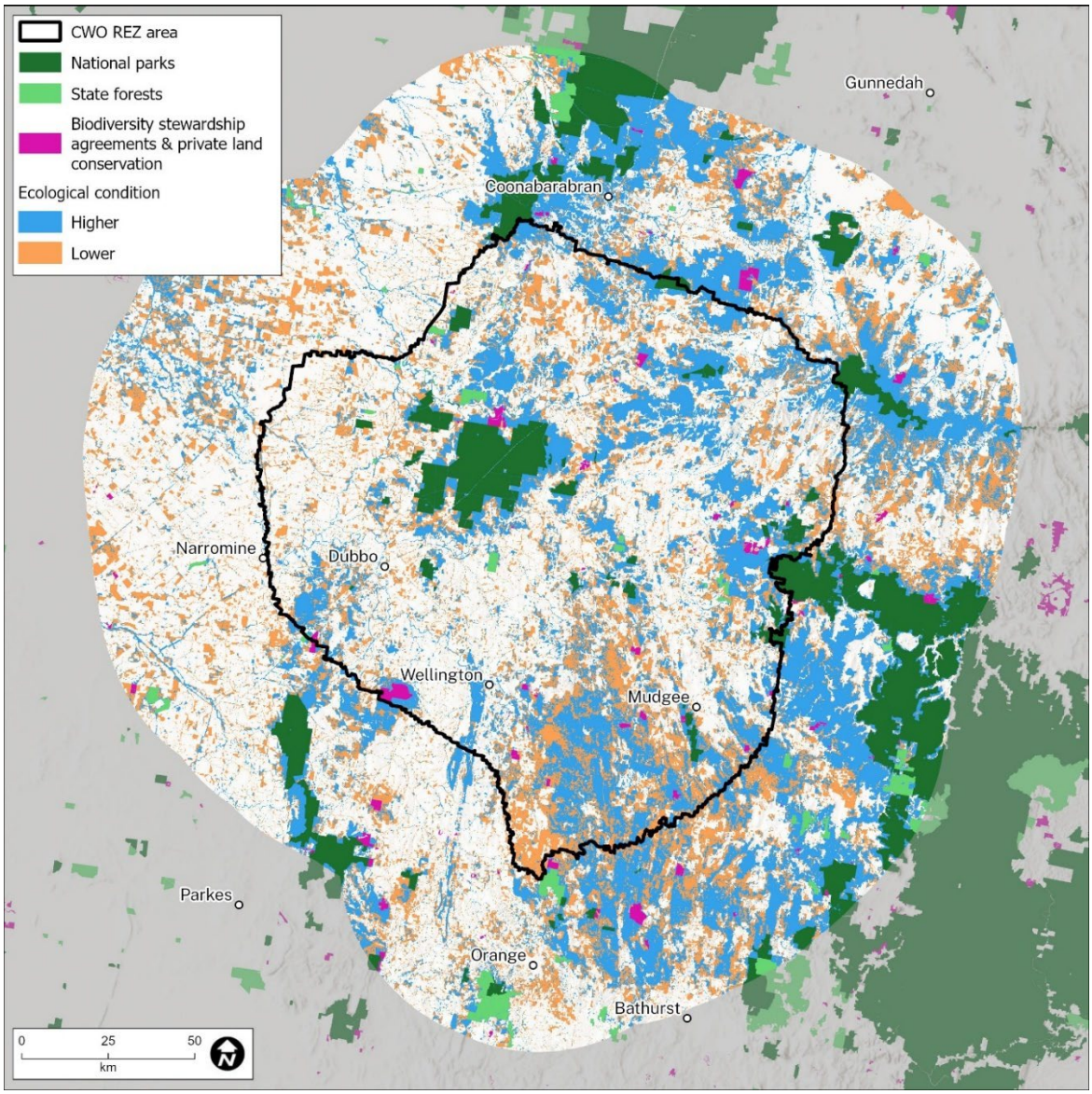

Figure 4 **Ecological condition in the Central West Orana region**

Protected areas and reserves

The CWO region includes several national parks including Goonoo National Park (9,090 ha) and State Conservation Area (54,522 ha), Breelong National Park (6,970 ha),

Durridgere State Conservation Area (6,172 ha) and part of Munghorn Gap Nature Reserve (5,933 ha). Other significant national parks including Warrumbungle, Goulburn River, Goobang and Coolah Tops also border the CWO region.

Other protected areas on private land within the CWO region include biodiversity stewardship agreements (BSAs) (7 established and 6 in development), about 28 permanent conservation agreements and 7 potential new permanent conservation agreements, including some owned by Aboriginal organisations.

It is a priority across public and private land to achieve more comprehensive, adequate and representative protected areas. The CWO region is located mainly within the South-Western Slopes and Brigalow Belt South Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation for Australia (IBRA) regions. There are high numbers of unreserved or poorly reserved landscapes in the region. Protecting unreserved landscapes in each sub-region will improve the adequacy and representativeness of the protected area system (see Figure 5).

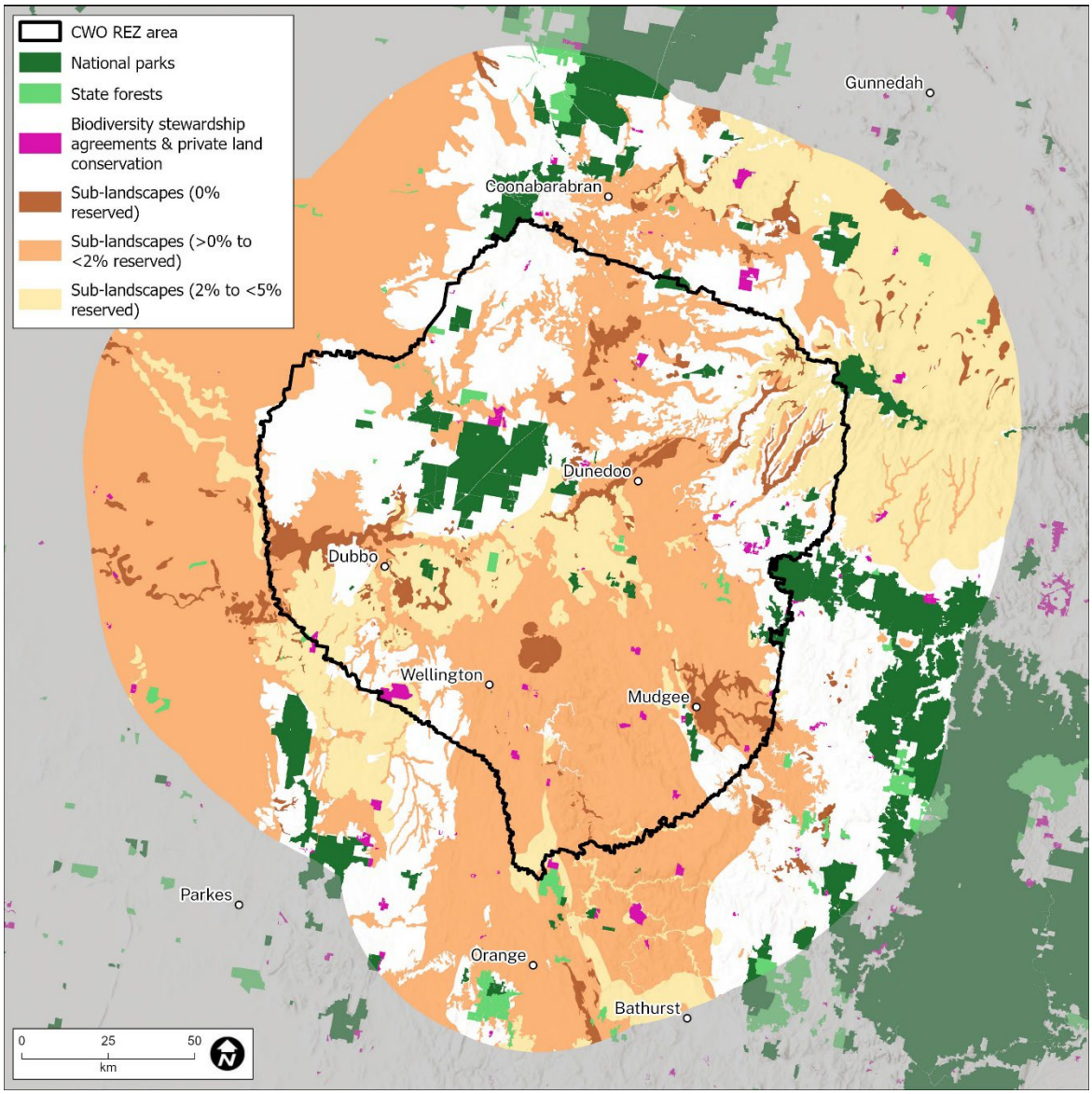

Figure 5 **Landscapes that are under-reserved (0 to 5%) in the Central West Orana region**

High-value conservation areas

The highest value areas for conservation impact in the CWO region have the capacity to maximise the protection and enhancement of key conservation assets (see Figure 6). Multi-criteria analysis combined data across the conservation values to identify priority areas to protect high-value vegetation and habitat and restore lower condition vegetation to enhance habitat and connectivity. Connectivity and ecological condition were weighted more highly than other values to reflect their significance of addressing fragmentation in the CWO region.

Predicted vegetation transformations under climate change scenarios have also informed the identification of high-value conservation areas. Protecting, connecting and restoring these high-value conservation areas will be important for maintaining ecological function and enabling adaptation to climate change. High-value conservation areas should be regularly reviewed to adapt investment strategies in response to ongoing land use change and evolving climate change models.

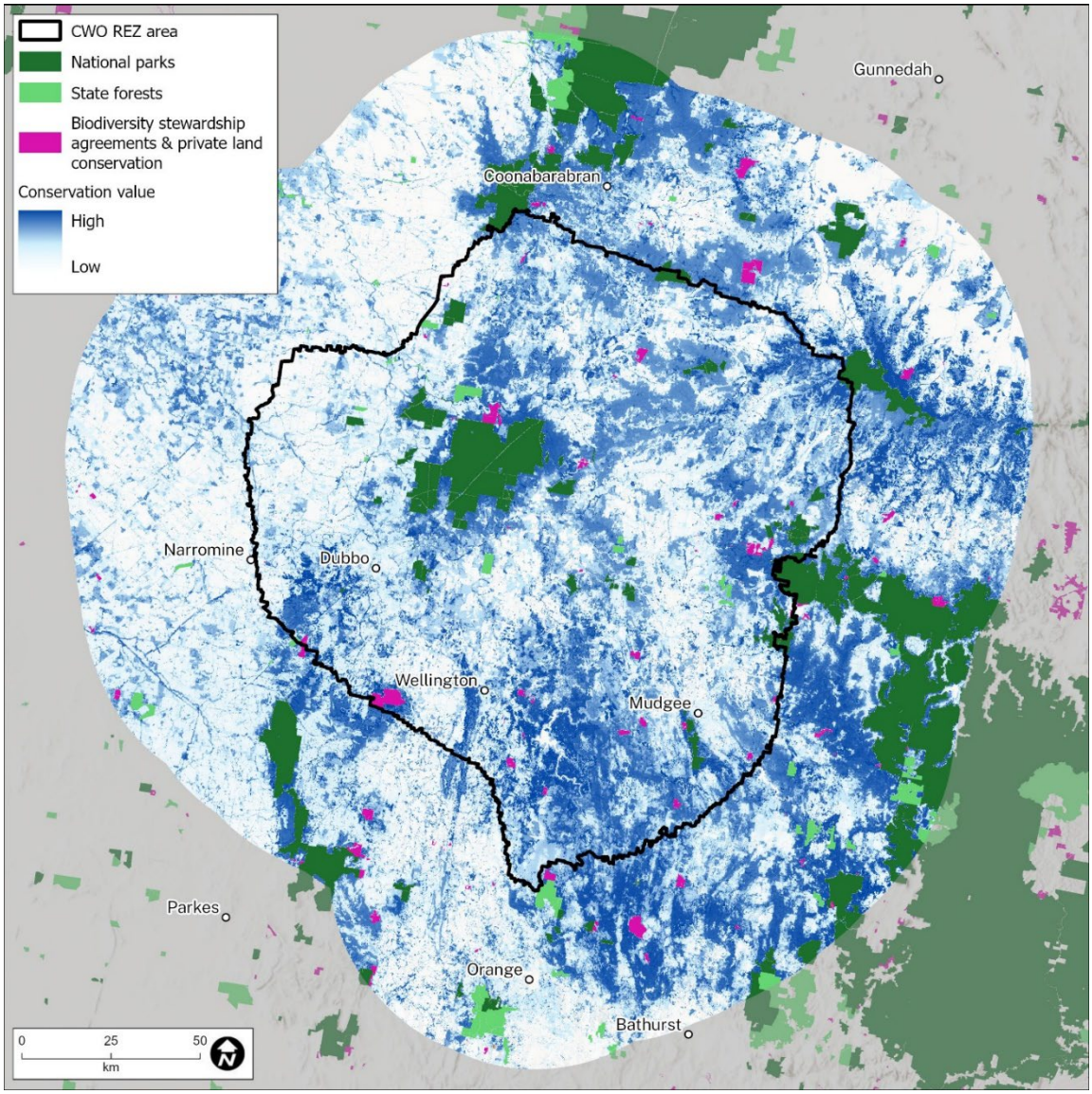

Figure 6 **Conservation value of land within the Central West Orana region**

2.3 Conservation priorities

Drawing on conservation values in the CWO area (see figures 2 to 6) and the combined analysis of values, the priority investment area that will deliver regional conservation outcomes in accordance with the strategy's objectives is shown broadly in Figure 7, with the priorities outlined below to protect, restore and connect key conservation assets. The priority areas for investment are a guide, not a regulatory map. All investment decisions made within individual conservation programs will be subject to the decision-making frameworks that apply to each.

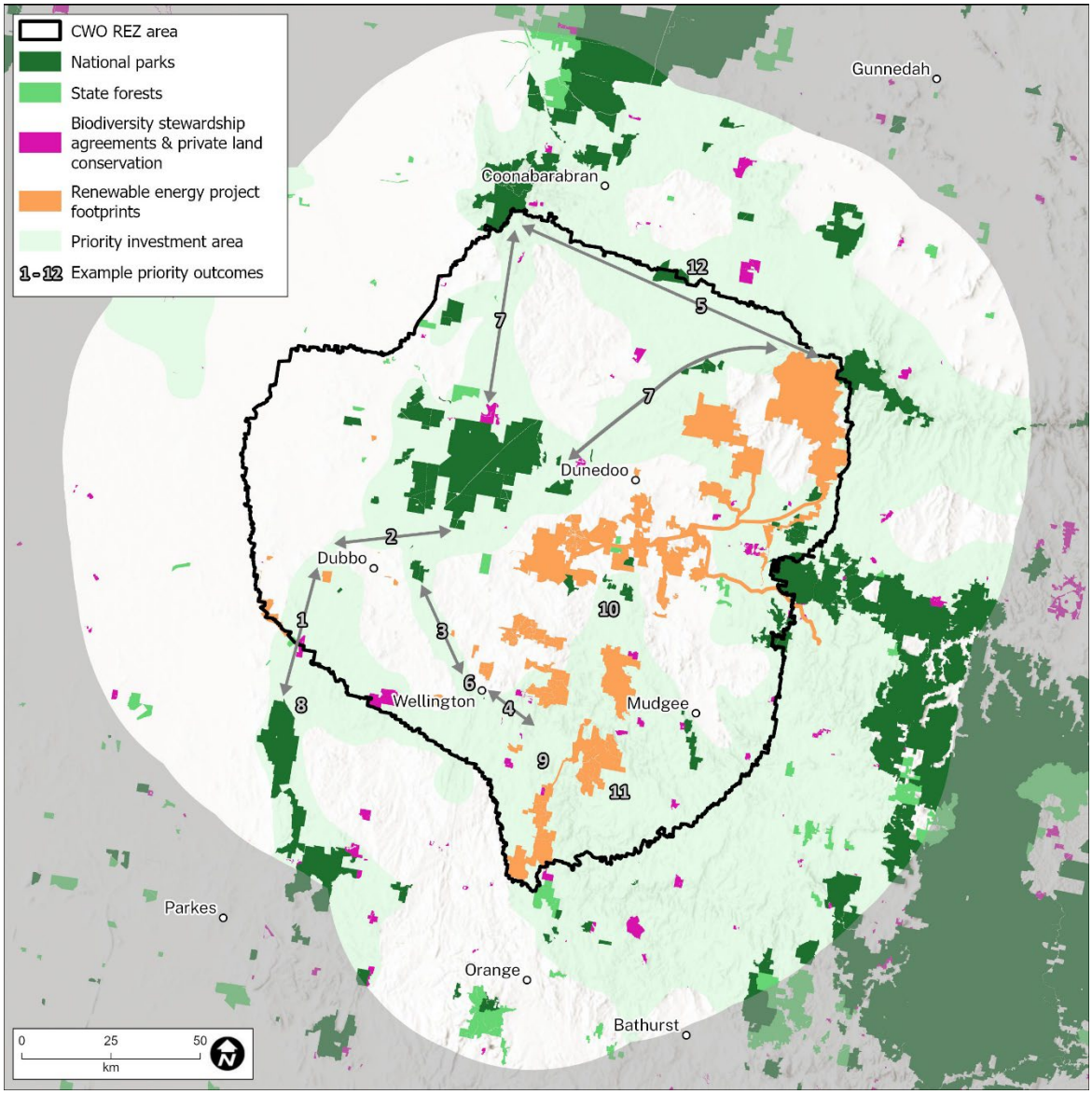

Figure 7 **Priority investment areas and examples of priority outcomes in the Central West Orana region**

Connect vegetation and habitat

Ecological connectivity and resilience to climate change would be improved in the CWO region by establishing and restoring corridors. Conservation efforts could focus on protecting and restoring connections between existing reserves (see Figure 3).

There are fewer large, protected areas within the southern half of the CWO region, but there is opportunity to improve connectivity through a combination of establishing new protected areas on largely intact vegetation and restoring degraded lands in between. In parts of the CWO region vegetation is highly fragmented, and in these places, protection and restoration of riparian zones could be another focus of investment to create functional corridors.

Examples of corridors that could be considered for investment include:

1. between Goobang National Park and the Macquarie River, potentially including TSRs
2. along the Macquarie River and Talbragar River to Goonoo National Park and State Conservation Area
3. south-west from Dubbo to the Macquarie River and the Catombal Range, and
4. between the Catombal Range and the area surrounding Burrendong Dam.

Protect high-value vegetation and habitat

Protecting and managing areas of high-quality vegetation and habitat in the highly cleared landscapes of the CWO region will improve the representativeness of the reserve system, protect habitat for threatened species and ecological communities, and create stepping-stones between existing protected areas.

Building and creating new protected areas will be the focus for areas that are modelled to be in high condition and that have a high potential to provide threatened species habitat for one or more species (see Figure 4). This could include considering the role of other public land in conservation within the CWO region and:

5. expanding Binnaway Nature Reserve
6. expanding Mount Arthur Reserve in the Catombal Range
7. creating new stepping stones to build connectivity in the north of the CWO region
8. protecting high-quality areas north of Goobang National Park
9. protecting high-quality areas in the south-east of the region near Burrendong Dam.

Restore degraded vegetation and habitat

Reviving degraded ecosystems in the CWO region will improve ecological integrity, enhance threatened species habitat and contribute to connectivity. It will support plants and animals to persist and adapt to climate change. Targeting ecosystem restoration in areas that are confirmed to also provide threatened species habitat will also assist multiple different species (see Figure 4). Examples include areas:

10. near smaller, isolated reserves near the centre of the CWO region
11. in the south of the CWO region to connect existing and new protected areas
12. within proposed corridors in the north of the CWO region.

Restoration case study

An 850-ha property in the CWO region has potential for restoration under a biodiversity stewardship agreement. The land is grazed but with sufficient integrity to be restored. It includes 340 ha of critically endangered box gum grassy woodland ecological community.

Survey for forest owls, squirrel gliders and koalas is underway to confirm the presence of habitat.

Restoration will include addressing high-threat weeds and feral animals (e.g. goats, pig, deer and foxes) that are reducing the site's biodiversity value, and introducing ecological burning to support regeneration.

3. Implementation actions

Achieving the conservation outcomes identified under this strategy is intended to draw in efforts across the public and private sectors, encourage partnerships and collaboration, and lead to innovation in the way that conservation is delivered at a regional scale.

Significant investment is expected in the region, including as part of biodiversity offsetting associated with development of renewable energy capacity in the Central West Orana (CWO) renewable energy zones (REZ). Coordinating this investment with funding from other programs and sources will improve conservation outcomes.

By identifying conservation priorities (see section 2.3), the strategy should improve coordinated investment into conservation. A clear plan for conservation in the CWO region has the potential to re-direct existing investment, attract new funding, increase efficiency in delivery, improve coordination between programs and reduce duplication so that effort can be steered towards gaps and make the most of limited resources.

Successful implementation of the strategy relies on meaningful engagement and active partnerships with landholders, local communities, government and non-government organisations. Implementation and communication and engagement plans will foster ownership and adoption of the strategy and facilitate knowledge sharing. Feedback from these processes will contribute to continuous improvement of the strategy.

3.1 Sources of investment in conservation outcomes

Biodiversity offsetting

The transmission project and renewable energy generation and storage capacity projects in the CWO region will involve significant investments in conservation to offset biodiversity impacts. Consistent with the Biodiversity Offset Scheme, biodiversity loss must first be avoided and minimised. If biodiversity loss cannot be avoided or minimised, biodiversity loss must be offset with equivalent biodiversity gain for the species and plant communities impacted.

This investment will be particularly useful in funding restoration to increase connectivity and corridors. It will also increase investment in ecosystems and threatened species, ensuring habitat is managed in ways that increase habitat suitability and address local threats. At least 2 species that are not currently represented in the reserve system in the CWO region will be protected under the offset program. Biodiversity offsets in the CWO region could include those delivered by proponents, offsets delivered under strategic offset delivery agreements and those delivered by the Biodiversity Conservation Trust (BCT), where offset obligations have been transferred through payment to the Biodiversity Conservation Fund.

Strategic offset delivery agreements

Eligible projects may enter into a strategic offset delivery agreement to deliver offsets. The agreement must be consistent with the conservation investment strategy, and offsets will be comprised of either:

a. retiring like-for-like biodiversity credits

b. completing actions that benefit the conservation and recovery of impacted threatened species and ecological communities.

Under the agreements, the Environment Agency Head will deliver offsets within a 3-year timeframe. This will help to drive regionally significant conservation outcomes that also provide opportunities for regional landholders, Aboriginal people and the community to contribute to and benefit from conservation.

Biodiversity stewardship agreements (BSAs), under the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme, will ideally target priority investment areas shown in Figure 7and be located on land that can meet offset obligations for ecosystems and species with capacity for restoration. BSAs outside of this priority area may also contribute to the outcomes of the strategy if they can deliver like-for-like offsets.

For a limited number of species, some offsetting may be delivered using conservation actions where interventions are required for recovery that would be difficult to achieve through vegetation and habitat management under BSAs. Specific management and recovery actions for each species will be developed for the offset program by relevant experts in accordance with the Saving our Species program.

Proponents sourcing their own offsets will be encouraged to meet their offset obligations in accordance with the strategy to increase efficiency in the delivery of conservation outcomes. Under strategic offset delivery agreements, offsetting will be prioritised in this order:

1. like-for-like credits created via BSAs in the:
    i. priority investment area within the CWO region
    ii. CWO region
    iii. priority investment area within 50 km of the CWO region
2. conservation action (on ground) in the:
    i. priority investment area within the CWO region
    ii. CWO region
3. like-for-like credits created via BSAs within:
    i. 50 km of the CWO region
    ii. within the Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation for Australia sub-region/s in which the obligation arises
4. Conservation action (research) with direct application to on-ground management outcomes.

Other proponents will be encouraged to follow the same prioritisation process in sourcing offset supply, noting that the offset rules may provide additional flexibility.

NPWS reserve acquisition program

Existing National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) reserves provide a foundational contribution to regional conservation outcomes, creating core protected areas to build on within the CWO region. However, there are also gaps in the national park estate in the region. Strategic expansion of the national park estate is guided by the *New South Wales National Parks Establishment Plan 2008* and is currently being revised. The NPWS reserve acquisition program may contribute to the CWO conservation priorities where they are best achieved through transfer of public land to the national park estate or acquisition of other available land.

Within the CWO region, NPWS could prioritise properties for acquisition that can contribute to the conservation priorities for the CWO region (see Figure 7) as well as:

- secure good examples of regional ecosystems that are currently poorly represented in reserves
- protect threatened species not currently recorded within reserves
- protect landscapes and places of special significance to Aboriginal people.

Private land conservation program

The *Biodiversity Conservation Investment Strategy 2018* establishes the NSW Government's priorities for investing in private land conservation. As part of this strategy, *Investing in private land conservation: NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust Conservation Management Program 2023–2027* sets out how the BCT is increasing private land conservation. Relevant to the CWO region, the BCT has run recent tenders in targeting box gum grassy woodlands and cultural lands. Future tenders planned for the CWO region include threatened ecological communities, regent honeyeaters, woodland birds and cultural lands. This program is expected to contribute to the CWO conservation investment strategy by working with landholders who want to establish a conservation agreement with the BCT.

When evaluating tenders in the CWO region, investment in private land conservation is typically targeted to land with high-quality vegetation (about 90% in moderate to good condition), generally greater than 20 ha in size.

Biodiversity conservation programs

The Saving our Species program aims to maximise the number of species secure in the wild for 100 years and control key threats to their survival. It works with landholders, the community, non-government organisations (NGOs) and government partners to deliver projects across New South Wales, including in the CWO region. Saving our Species projects are underway for 7 threatened species including regent honeyeaters, malleefowl and granite zieria, across 8 sites in the CWO region. Another 14 threatened species projects are proposed. The BCT also funded the Saving our Species program to deliver conservation actions that meet the Biodiversity Conservation Fund's outstanding offset obligations.

Further investment in targeted recovery activities on-ground will be beneficial in the CWO region. The Saving our Species program could prioritise and support targeted recovery projects that will contribute to CWO conservation priorities. As part of implementing this strategy, investment through the Saving our Species could target species that are receiving limited investment through offsetting.

Koala populations in parts of the CWO priority investment area may be considered for investment to further enhance outcomes from investment under the Koala Strategy. This provides an opportunity to restore habitat and address population-level threats in the Coolah Tops National Park and Munghorn Gap Nature Reserve. Improving connectivity will support expansion of the regional koala population, potentially through Taronga Conservation Society's goal to restore 5,000 ha of box gum grassy woodland in the north-west, a project which is funded by the Koala Strategy.

3.2 New partnership opportunities

Aboriginal landowners and communities

The strategy could provide opportunities for Aboriginal landowners, local Aboriginal land councils and communities in the region. This could include participation in existing conservation programs as landowners, in implementing restoration and recovery actions, or as part of offsetting. Further consultation with the Aboriginal community within the CWO region will help to better identify ways in which the strategy could be adjusted to further outcomes sought by Aboriginal people.

Working with Aboriginal landholders and communities may include:

- targeted work with Aboriginal landowners to maximise opportunities for Aboriginal landholders in private land conservation, including BSAs
- partnering with training and education institutions to develop the land restoration and land management workforce, including scholarships for Aboriginal people and funding for Aboriginal ranger programs
- engaging Aboriginal businesses on land management and recovery.

Addressing threats to biodiversity at a landscape level

Addressing threats at a landscape scale could be one of the more significant innovations under the strategy. This could include coordination across existing conservation programs, including Local Land Services and government land managers to identify and address critical threats.

Local Land Services works closely with landholders to deliver pest animal and plant control programs in accordance with regional pest and weed management plans. Under this strategy, co-design and co-investment could manage multiple key threatening processes and target on-ground action that will benefit multiple threatened species and ecosystems. At a regional scale, this will provide an opportunity to plan action on key threatening processes which most impact conservation outcomes in the CWO region.

Investing in industry development to scale up restoration effort

For restoration to be possible at a landscape scale, it will be necessary to invest in the industry and skills. Organisations such as Landcare and Greening Australia will be important, as will working with local training providers, and businesses that have the potential to provide on-ground delivery.

Scaling up the restoration industry may include:

- industry development programs for restoration including the supply chain
- establishing new restoration facilities, including to supply seed and materials needed for restoration (essential as part of offset delivery)
- partnering with training and education institutions to develop the land restoration and land management workforce.

Targeting support for landholders

A number of government and non-government organisations regularly work with landholders to encourage activities that could contribute to the CWO conservation priorities. Local Land Services, for example, work with individuals and landholder groups to design and secure state and Commonwealth funding in line with their regional natural resource management plans. Priorities for the CWO region include regent honeyeaters and white box grassy woodland and derived native grassland.

Landcare is also active in the CWO region, connecting landholders to opportunities to fund land management and conservation activities. Partnerships with some of the NGO networks that communicate opportunities about conservation to landholders could also be considered, as well as those supported by the Australian Government.

Connecting with landholders

Developing a virtual front counter for landholders interested in conservation programs in the CWO region will help landholders access programs that best fit their needs and connect with the right organisation. A targeted front counter for the CWO region could be developed, linking with the Local Land Services Natural Capital service finder. Landholders and community members are also a source of biodiversity data. A single point of contact for citizens interested in conservation efforts in the CWO region could facilitate the capture and transfer of local knowledge, which could then be integrated in data analyses.

Working with NSW agencies, local government and the Commonwealth

The NSW Government holds land for a variety of operational, strategic and historic purposes. Other government entities, including state-owned corporations and local councils, are also responsible for public land management. There may be opportunities to increase conservation outcomes on these lands by working with other agencies and establishing BSAs with the right policy settings to ensure this is an appropriate use of

government land. Integration of Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures, which may contribute to national conservation targets, with other strategy actions could also be explored.

Opportunities to seek support or partner with the Australian Government to support the CWO conservation strategy could provide the basis of a partnership between the 2 levels of government. This includes in relation to existing conservation programs, Commonwealth offsets under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* and the Nature Repair market as it becomes established. Investment in the CWO region could be attractive if there is an existing strategy for regional conservation outcomes that demonstrates additional investment will achieve additional conservation outcomes.

There may also be opportunities to investigate partnerships in conservation projects within the CWO region with the new National Parks and Wildlife Conservation Trust.

4. Reporting and review

4.1 Review and improvement

The data analysis informing priority investment areas and actions in the strategy will be reviewed with every release of relevant new data. This will ensure that the priorities remain appropriate as more and better information on conservation assets in the region becomes available. Where new data indicates a change in priority investment areas or actions is warranted, these changes will be incorporated through the review process.

The strategy will be reviewed annually to confirm that conservation priorities remain appropriate and implementation is effective. Annual progress reports and feedback from stakeholders will assist in identifying and improving delivery. This will ensure that the strategy remains relevant, taking into account new data or trends that impact on outcomes and reflecting where progress on implementation has been made.

Significant changes in policy or investment levels may trigger earlier review, including the release of the NSW Government's Nature Strategy.

If a review identifies that changes to the strategy are necessary, an updated version of the strategy will be published.

4.2 Outcomes and progress reporting

Strategy outcomes and implementation progress will be reported publicly on an annual basis. Reporting across contributing programs will demonstrate progress at a regional level and help to measure performance against the strategy's objectives. Reporting will include key performance measures to measure progress, based on the conservation priorities identified.

These reports are intended to deliver transparency by clearly reporting on the outputs and outcomes achieved with investment from biodiversity offsets, and the outputs and outcomes achieved with conservation investment from other sources. The reports could include:

- investment in CWO conservation priorities from relevant programs and initiatives
- conservation outcomes from those investments
- progress updates on work to build partnerships for delivery.

The reports could also build on natural capital accounting to ensure there is a consistent and repeatable method, that also scales up to the reporting at the statewide level, or in relation to other natural capital assets.

5. References

BCT (NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust) (2023a) *Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative protected area network data derived from NPWS Reserve Establishment CAR analysis (2022)* [unpublished dataset].

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