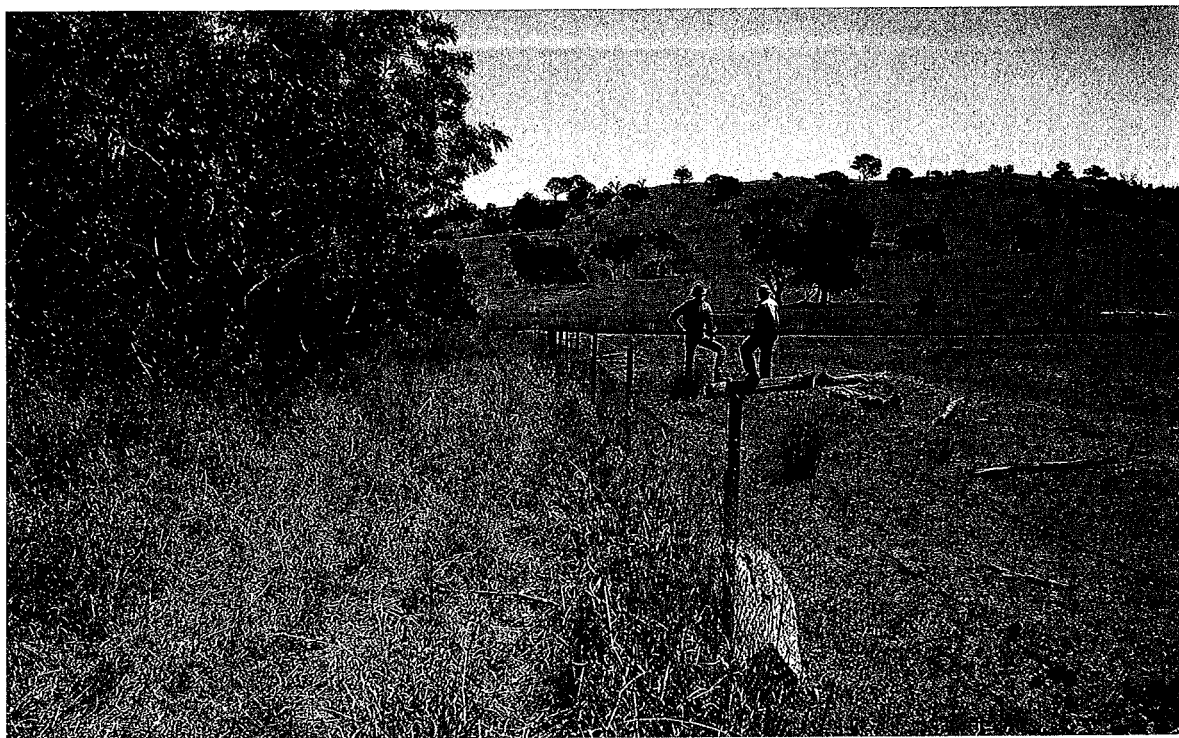


Best Practice Initiatives for Nature Conservation on Private Land



**A report prepared for the Australian and New Zealand Environment and
Conservation Council - Standing Committee on Conservation by the
Working Group on Nature Conservation on Private Land**

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1. Introduction

The last several years have seen nature conservation agencies and non-government organisations embark on new initiatives to promote nature conservation on private land with some significant results. The sharing of best practices is a way of learning from the experience of others, adapting the knowledge gained and significantly improving performance. Best practices sharing can be defined as the capture, dissemination and sharing of a work method, process or initiative to improve effectiveness, delivery and client satisfaction.

A report on best practice in local government, funded by Environment Australia, describes best practices as the best way of doing things which involves more than a change in processes. It requires flexibility to move from the old way of going about things to new ways, embracing a comprehensive integrative and collaborative approach towards the continuous improvement of all aspects of an organisations activities and operations. It is a philosophy that calls for commitment by people to do things in the best way and continually be open to change. Excellence in achieving nature conservation on private land can best be achieved through governments sharing information and learning from each others' experiences.

This report presents a broad range of initiatives which represent best practice in nature conservation on private land. Initiatives have generally been limited to state programs rather than case studies at the regional level. The report includes the following initiatives which represent a range of best-practice programs, but is not exhaustive:

1. Property Management Agreements (Australian Capital Territory)
2. Integrated partnerships for nature conservation on private land (New South Wales)
3. Partnerships with Aboriginal landholders (Northern Territory)
4. Local government incentives (Queensland)
5. Heritage Agreements (South Australia)
6. Property Based Game Management (Tasmania)
7. Land for Wildlife (Victoria)
8. Remnant Vegetation Protection Scheme (Western Australia)
9. Trust for Nature's Revolving Fund concept (Victoria); and
10. Australian Bush Heritage Fund

2. Why conserve nature on private land

The primary aim of promoting nature conservation on private land is to increase the area of private land committed to provision and retention of habitat for conservation of vegetation and wildlife in order that ecosystems and species not represented within reserves are conserved. Private land also provides additional safeguard capacity for ecosystems incorporated in protected areas, buffers for protected areas, and maximising biodiversity, including genetic diversity.

The goals of conservation on private land are to:

- Conserve species and habitats not represented on public land: A landscape approach to conserving flora and fauna must involve private land and is essential for long-term management of natural systems.
- Provide continuity of habitat across landscapes. Private land can make a major contribution to conserving biodiversity and wildlife habitats, particularly those species and habitats poorly represented on public land.

- Promote community participation in conservation. Nature conservation is dependent on the willing cooperation and full support of the community, with private landholders having a special significance as property managers.
- Contribute to ecologically sustainable long-term viability of productive systems. A conservation-oriented and ecologically sound approach to property management has benefits for landholders and for the sustainability and long-term viability of agricultural systems and other rural-based enterprises; this will prove vital to the well-being of the community in general and private landholders in particular.

3. Elements of nature conservation on private land

A comprehensive approach to off-reserve conservation is at an early stage of development and new and innovative approaches are being developed on a regular basis. Off-reserve conservation differs from protected area management in that:

- the range of stakeholders is generally much wider, including State and local governments, non-government organisations, community groups, landholders and private and government trusts,
- off-reserve conservation deals with large numbers of land-holders with a wide range of property sizes and landuses.
- it normally occurs within a multitude of land tenures, including leasehold, aboriginal land and private land
- it is addressed through a wide range of legislation
- it must always be viewed in the wider context of surrounding landuses
- the scale of individual cases of off-reserve conservation are often much smaller with the need to manage significant areas smaller than one hectare
- until relatively recently, resources for off-reserve management have been limited, constraining options for development of best practice.

4. Towards a best practice framework for off-reserve nature conservation

What makes a best practice initiative? In relation to programs which target nature conservation on private land, the initiative should lead to landholders:

- developing a sense of individual ownership of the problem;
- contributing their existing skills and knowledge to undertaking nature conservation activities on their land;
- seeing nature conservation as part of everyday land management, with any associated costs incorporated into normal business practice; and
- integrating nature conservation in whole farm planning.

In addition, a best practice initiative should provide landholders with the following:

- public recognition, where desired;
- timely responses to changing landholder circumstances or attitudes;
- information which is timely, appropriate and of high quality
- information via a range of media and effective channels such as regional delivery;
- information available at a variety of technical levels; and
- targeted support for specific groups with particular needs, such as indigenous landholders.

The initiatives should be broadly based upon the following principles:

- involvement of the widest range of landholders;
- building upon existing community networks;
- development of data standards, through agreement and cooperation, to ensure transferability of data between jurisdictions and for input to broader environmental reporting;
- recognition that the diversity of landholders, in both their land uses and attitudes to nature conservation, necessitates the need for a range of approaches to nature conservation on private land;
- aiming towards multiple outcomes, for example, water quality as well as biodiversity;
- whole-of-landscape approaches which may cross property and jurisdictional boundaries;
- integration of landscape management approaches with more specifically targeted mechanisms such as species recovery plans.

5. Principles for best practice

Best practice should be evaluated on the basis of the efficiency of the measure, the effectiveness of the program against achieving stated objectives, and the degree of transferability.

Best practice in nature conservation on private land involves the adoption of a number of interrelated principles relating to:

- building relationships with landholders;
- incorporating diversity; integration and complementarity; and
- focusing on outcomes;
- monitoring and evaluation.

5.1 Building relationships with landholders

Adaptive management

Recognising that there is a significant lack of information about ecosystems, social attitudes and values, land management techniques and the interactions between them, the principle of adaptive management is integral to nature conservation on private land.

Recognition of the individual's contribution

It is important that the contribution of individual decisions by landholders is appropriately recognised and that this is maintained regardless of the size of the program. Achieving this will rely primarily on staff maintaining contact with landholders and landholder networks. Opportunities for information exchange/skills transfer will also contribute.

Landholders know their own properties. The existing knowledge and skills of landholders and the community should be recognised. Nevertheless, information sharing between landholders, the scientific community and government is an essential component of nature conservation on private land.

Adequate support to landholders

Appropriately qualified staff dealing with landholders is and will continue to be an important element for the success of a program. Staff require good communication skills, empathy and understanding for the communities in which conservation will be implemented, an understanding of the conservation issues at a local level and an ability to translate wider issues into locally relevant information as well as appropriate understanding of the legal aspects of the mechanisms.

Developing local ownership

If landholders are to have ownership of both problems and solution in nature conservation on private land then it is important that extension officers and project officers are employed from the local community, wherever possible.

Building trust

Where organisations are asking for a long-term commitment on behalf of the landholder it is important that organisations guarantee adequate resources to service this commitment in the long-term. Landholders also need to be confident that information about themselves or their property will not be used for other purposes, or passed on to other parties, without their knowledge or permission. The administration should minimise long delays in communications with landholders, and respond rapidly to queries and requests.

Use of financial incentives

Many landholders require small ongoing amounts to undertake or be able to afford management of land for nature conservation. Incentives should be equitable, recognise and maintain altruistic behaviour and encourage behavioural change.

Communication

Open channels of communication should exist between extension officers, project and program coordinators, facilitators, government administrators, and landholders. Information should be disseminated through a wide range of communicative forms. For example, published material such

as newsletters and 'how-to-do-it' information, technical papers on particular issues, local and regional radio and television reports, field days, and on-site demonstrations could all be used.

Recognition of the value of human resources of staff and landholders

The capacity to recognise and value the individual decisions of landholders who implement these mechanisms is crucial to the ongoing success of these programs. This may be achieved by systematically providing opportunities for information exchange and support, initially through appropriate staffing of such programs.

A collaborative consultation process actively seeking community and business input

Consultation on the delivery of the program should take place not only at the design and inception stage, but throughout the life of the program. Consultative mechanisms should be varied and accessible to all, and include, for example, client satisfaction surveys and public meetings. At all times the program should be seen by stakeholders as open to change and improvement through input from the community.

Networks

The feeling of belonging to a club or broad movement, such as Land for Wildlife or Landcare, is an important component of nature conservation on private land. The mutual direction and sense of belonging generates enthusiasm and long-term commitments.

Using and refining existing networks and creating new networks only where necessary is important to maximise communication and avoid unnecessary duplication of resources both for agencies and landholders.

Equity considerations

Programs should be delivered on the basis of fair treatment of different individuals or groups who are eligible to receive them. Measures should be in place to ensure consistency in decision-making and advice across regions, between offices and staff.

It is important that the costs of nature conservation on private land are shared on an equitable basis and the service that landholders provide to the broader community is recognised.

Recognising that some nature conservation initiatives need to be targeted against specific objectives and landholder groups, in general, access should be equitable regardless of cultural background, age, sex or education levels.

Partnerships are important

Partnerships should be developed between landholders, government, industry and non-government organisations if nature conservation on private land is to have broad acceptance within the community.

5.2 Diversity and integration

A Broad spectrum of programs

Landholders are a diverse group with different attitudes to nature conservation on private land. Because of this diversity a range of approaches is needed to ensure broadscale adoption. With a

wide range of initiatives integration and complementarity across the spectrum becomes increasingly important.

Flexible and innovative approaches

Initiatives should be responsive to changing circumstances for, and attitudes of, landholders, as well as changes in government, and administration, at a variety of levels. Established processes and delivery mechanisms should not be seen as static ends-unto-themselves, but dynamic systems which can undergo continuous improvement. Requirements for new approaches in the long-term should be anticipated, and anticipating and meeting these should be regarded as an indicator of success.

Creative approaches towards resources management

While it is widely accepted that landcare has been extremely successful, there remains a significant proportion of landholders who have not adopted this ethic. New and innovative approaches are needed to appeal to those landholders who are not catered for by existing initiatives.

Integration across areas

Nature conservation on private land should be integrated with the full spectrum of nature conservation activities including, protected areas and wildlife management, marine conservation, catchment management, and urban and rural planning at a variety of scales.

Transferability to other areas throughout Australia

Initiatives should be developed in such a way that the systems and processes are not overly dependent on administrative or geographical circumstances. Flexibility should be built into programs so that the program can operate in a variety of locations, and at a range of scales.

Links with conservation planning and scientific expertise

It is important that initiatives on private land are linked with strategic conservation planning. This maximises information dissemination, improves the quality of information available for management planning, encourages uptake of initiatives and focuses resources.

5.3 A focus on outcomes

A clear vision for the program

There is a need for a clear vision of what the private land initiative aims to achieve in both the short and long-term, and translation of the vision into outcomes.

Flagship species

Although the focus of nature conservation on private land should be at the ecosystem scale, the use of flagship species can be useful to generate broader interest.

Prioritisation and targets

While resources for nature conservation on private land remain limited, the need for prioritisation and targeting to particular areas, groups or issues is essential to ensure that resources are used in the most efficient, effective and appropriate manner. The setting of targets and priorities and their review on a regular basis should be a key element of each initiative.

Hierarchy of action

Recognising that it is more efficient and cost effective to protect rather than re-create, it is important that initiatives develop a hierarchy of action: protect first, restore or regenerate second and revegetate, re-create or reintroduce as a final option.

This principle also relates to program delivery. Existing infrastructure networks, resources, tools should be used first where these are suitable, modified or enhanced as a further option and new systems developed only where other options are not viable.

5.4 Monitoring and evaluation

It is very important that nature conservation programs are effectively monitored against objectives of the program. To do this an effective project management system is required, incorporating:

1. Performance Measurement Framework

Objectives: the program should have stated concise, realistic and outcome oriented objectives

Strategies: the program should have strategies which describe the means by which the objectives will be achieved

Effectiveness: measurement of the extent to which the outcomes are achieving the stated objectives

Efficiency: measurement of success in minimising inputs for a given level of outputs or, conversely, maximising outputs for a given level of inputs

2. Performance Assessment

Assessment of the program against standards, targets, benchmarks, milestones

3. Evaluation

Systematic, objective assessment of the effectiveness and/or efficiency of the program.

6. Incorporation of best practice into existing programs

It is important that best-practice is incorporated into existing programs and is targeted to particular avenues. A range of best practice initiatives have been identified. While the principles for best practice have been drawn from the variety of programs addressing nature conservation it is important that best practice is written into each and every program to ensure that on-going program development is informed by the latest and most appropriate technology.

One area for which best practice principles are currently being developed are the Land for Wildlife schemes, based on the Victorian model. A national template and draft agreement have been developed, which set minimum service standards for Land for Wildlife. The area of management agreements for nature conservation on private land is currently being investigated. This is through representation by members of the Working Group on Nature Conservation on Private Land on a steering committee overseeing a consultancy developing these guidelines and through an *ad hoc* management agreements network.

BEST PRACTICE INITIATIVES FOR NATURE CONSERVATION ON PRIVATE LAND

Other areas in which specific best practice guidelines could be developed by the Working Group, in collaboration with ARMCANZ agencies or other relevant coordinating groups, include:

- codes of practice for the management of remnant vegetation, revegetation and habitat restoration and protection (including native vegetation corridors and management of native seed stocks);
- management of flora and fauna in refuge areas, riparian vegetation, roadsides and stock routes;
- nature conservation in property management planning;
- incentives at local, state and national levels;
- planning for nature conservation at regional, state and national levels;
- techniques for flora and fauna inventories on private land and indigenous protected areas;
- monitoring and performance indicators for private land initiatives;

7. Best practice in practice

The following approaches have been identified as best practice initiatives.

7.1 Property management agreements (Australian Capital Territory)

Since the early 1970s all land in the Australian Capital Territory has been held under leasehold (or is unleased Commonwealth or Territory land). Following a review of rural leases conducted in 1993, a Rural Lease Policy was introduced in 1994 which required that a Property Management Agreement between the lessee and the Government must be in place before a new lease is granted. Adherence to the terms of the agreement is a condition of the lease. Conservation and land management policies for rural land are derived broadly from lease conditions and legislation such as the Nature Conservation Act. The Property Management Agreement goes considerably further by identifying conservation values and land management issues applicable to a lease, and setting out agreed strategies for using the land in a sustainable way. A Property Management Agreement is usually preceded by a property survey.

A Property Management Agreement - or at least that part of a Property Management Agreement relating to grazing - is required before a permit to cull Eastern Grey Kangaroos will be granted. The leaseholder must provide evidence that the total grazing pressure, from stock, feral and native animals, has been considered in arriving at a proposed number of animals for which a permit to cull is sought. A kangaroo count is jointly conducted by government officers and the leaseholder to estimate the kangaroo grazing pressure on a property prior to the Property Management Agreement being developed. Property Management Agreements are regarded as a valuable adjunct to the lease for ensuring good management of rural land. The agreement is intended to be dynamic and capable of renegotiation as circumstances change.

The objective of Property Management Agreements for rural leases in the Australian Capital Territory is to establish a framework and strategies for sustainable farming and conservation practices for individual properties.

The success of the program

The Property Management Agreement policy has been welcomed by the Australian Capital Territory farming community, who generally recognise that their stewardship of the land has conservation requirements as well as production opportunities. It is an interesting feature of the Australian Capital Territory's rural lease arrangements that significant areas of farmed land have remained "unimproved" over many years. A recently completed survey of woodland and grassland communities throughout the Australian Capital Territory has revealed the extent and conservation value of these remnant communities remaining on rural leases.

While it is possible to withdraw the most important areas from lease and place them in reserved land categories, the ongoing management costs of this option must be considered, and the option of using the Property Management Agreement process is being progressed.

Critical factors for success

An impediment to the success of the Property Management Agreement policy in protecting remnant native vegetation is that it is not necessary for a leaseholder to seek a renewal of his or her rural lease - and hence develop a Property Management Agreement - until the year 2005. Therefore, at present, only 10% of leases in the Australian Capital Territory are covered by Property Management Agreements.

There is also concern that the legal backing for Property Management Agreements is not well understood - possibly the only sanction available for a breach of the Agreement is to withdraw the lease. Such a drastic course of action may be difficult to justify on conservation grounds.

The Australian Capital Territory government recently commissioned a Rural Policy Taskforce to review aspects of the Australian Capital Territory's rural lease system, including the role of Property Management Agreements. The Task Force has produced its report which contains recommendations covering improved operation of Property Management Agreements. The proposed improvements would address the factors which currently limit the success of the Agreements as instruments for nature conservation on private land (as well as improving their usefulness in promoting strategies for sustainable primary production). The government is expected to respond to the Task Force's recommendation before the end of the year.

Consideration of the recommendations, together with a consultative review of Property Management Agreements, and other voluntary instruments, is expected to result in the long term conservation of valuable remnant vegetation and wildlife habitat on rural land in the Australian Capital Territory.

7.2 Integrated partnerships for nature conservation on private land (New South Wales)

With the inception of the Voluntary Conservation Agreement program in New South Wales in 1987 there were two complementary mechanisms for voluntary private land conservation available to landholders. The other program, Wildlife Refuges had been available in New South Wales for a much longer period of time and during which over 500 landholders had participated.

Voluntary Conservation Agreements are essentially a negotiated covenant on the title of land. They provide permanent protection to the conservation values of the land. Each VCA is accompanied by a Plan of Management (POM) which can be periodically reviewed and updated. The POM provides for detailed information and management of the land. Wildlife Refuges are legally enforceable agreements but may be terminated by the owner by request in writing.

With the adoption of Land for Wildlife in New South Wales (voluntary, non-enforceable, education oriented), and the Farming For The Future program (a workshop series directed at skilling rural landholders and promoting property management planning, the series range from farm business planning, estate planning to nature conservation), New South Wales will have a full suite of complementary mechanisms which provide the basis for partnerships in nature conservation with private landholders. Further these mechanisms are increasingly being targeted at conservation planning projects in conjunction with reserve planning, Ramsar wetlands, wilderness and threatened species management. Altogether these mechanisms form the basis of what is called the community conservation program. In providing this program, New South Wales is aiming at:

- maximum opportunities for participation;
- measures which are partnerships with landholders;
- opportunities for implementation at a local scale which can contribute to overall landscape (ecosystem) viability as well as identifiable successes on-site;
- integration with strategic conservation planning programs eg bioregional planning for CAR reserves; endangered and threatened species conservation programs;
- partnership with other agencies as part of the Farming For The Future program; and
- measures which reinforce/provide economic and social benefits wherever possible.

The community conservation program aims to provide support through:

- targeted support for new Natural Heritage Trust projects by the NPWS Bushcare coordinator and project management of existing funded projects;
- links with existing networks: Keep Australia Beautiful Campaign, State Landcare Working Group, Rural Women's Network, IBIS Awards, Roadside Environment Committee;
- upgrading of a database for VCA/WR and LfW properties;
- guidelines and ongoing support for NPWS District based staff across the State (responsible for negotiations) including development of a training package in VCA negotiation; and
- developing networks of involved landholders in each NPWS District.

Success of the programs

Voluntary Conservation Agreements

Momentum in this program has increased rapidly in the last two years. Of 38 agreements, 17 have been completed in the last year with almost 5000 hectares protected. Of these:

- 58% protect known sites of species listed under the New South Wales *Threatened Species Conservation Act, 1995*
- 30% protect known sites of species listed under the *Endangered Species Protection Act, 1992*,
- 5% protect declared wilderness under the New South Wales *Wilderness Act, 1987*,
- 52.6% protect sites in IBRA regions with less than 10% reservation status,
- 8% protect known sites of Aboriginal heritage.

There are over 160 VCAs under active negotiation.

Landholders may receive assistance with on-ground works including: fencing, weed control, archaeological survey, detailed plans of management where appropriate, flora and fauna survey, signage and interpretive features. The NPWS provides a boundary survey, legal review, title search and registration of agreements for each agreement. The Plan of Management for VCAs is an important tool for providing information about the land, details of management practices and even the history of that particular land. It's also important to note that Voluntary Conservation Agreements are also targeted at protecting Aboriginal cultural heritage.

Wildlife Refuges

There are over 500 wildlife refuges in New South Wales. In the past year the program has been reinvigorated and 15 new areas have been gazetted.

Farming For The Future (Property Management Planning)

The program has commenced a new phase with New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service doubling its staff (now 8) employed to facilitate workshops. An important aspect of the new phase is that staff are facilitators and expected to present all aspects of the program. Forty staff based across three government agencies present workshops which include those on nature conservation. The program aims at exposure to all New South Wales farmers by the year 2000 and an expansion of delivery by the use of accredited private providers.

Land for Wildlife

New South Wales has received agreement from the Victorian Department of Natural Resources and Environment and has also submitted an application to the Natural Heritage Trust for assistance to accelerate implementation of Land for Wildlife in New South Wales. The extension strand of Land for Wildlife will automatically extend to all landholders participating in the VCA and WR program and the program will initially concentrate on developing the newsletter and notes for New South Wales and finalising signs for registered properties. Guidelines for use by NPWS staff and a pilot promotion of Land for Wildlife property registration will be part of the initial program.

Critical factors for success

Conservation planning projects including bioregional planning and species recovery planning are consulting with landholders and providing opportunities for landholders to participate in

information gathering. Over time, the awareness generated by these projects results in increased demand for opportunities to implement mechanisms such as VCAs (for example in the South of the State, over 69 landholders have requested VCAs around one particular valley). Realistically, meeting this demand is a challenge and will be critical to the continued success of the program.

Appropriate staff dealing with landholders is and will be an important element for the success of the program. Staff require good communication skills, empathy and understanding for the communities in which conservation will be implemented, an understanding of the conservation issues at a local level and an ability to translate wider issues into locally relevant information as well as appropriate understanding of the legal aspects of the mechanisms.

Links with conservation planning and scientific expertise

It is important that links with strategic conservation planning exercises are maintained and strengthened. This maximises information dissemination, improves the quality of information available for management planning, encourages uptake of initiatives and focuses resources. However it is also important that a foundation of general support for mechanisms is maintained across the State. It is critical that the New South Wales NPWS, as the primary agency in New South Wales for biodiversity conservation maintains the expertise resident in the organisation or develops strong links with scientists to ensure that information provided to landholders is both legally and scientifically accurate.

Incentives for uptake and removal of disincentives which hinder uptake.

Many landholders require small ongoing amounts to undertake or be able to afford management of land for nature conservation. Work on possible incentives is extensive and will not be repeated here. The challenge now is to develop realistic incentives and remove disincentives to implementation stage. Importantly incentives should be equitable, recognise and maintain altruistic behaviour in addition to encouraging behavioural change, address current disincentives for some groups such as those on aged pension (who are significant landholders). It should be recognised that for many an equitable system which values their contribution is an incentive in itself.

An integrated system of incentives for nature conservation on private land is a complex issue and to be complementary will require the involvement of Federal, State and Local government and other institutions. Recognising and removing disincentives to nature conservation on private land is perhaps a more important first step towards maximising the uptake of these programs.

Complementary mechanisms

Mechanisms should have, as a founding principle, the opportunity to maintain a dialogue with landholders about nature conservation. Mechanisms should therefore maximise the opportunity to communicate with different groups of landholders. A continuum in the security of the mechanisms from temporary to permanent is also important for achieving nature conservation outcomes across the broader community.

Alternative proposals

Currently there is increasing interest from non-government organisations to implement similar programs. There needs to be some recognition of existing programs and planning, time to allow existing programs to mature and refinement of existing programs to incorporate other initiatives. The danger of confusion, waste of resources arising from duplication requires serious consideration. In New South Wales it is proposed that as Land for Wildlife is resourced, an advisory group incorporating non-government organisations be formed to consult on the program and, where appropriate to facilitate implementation.

7.3 Partnerships with Aboriginal landholders (Northern Territory)

In its submission to House of Representatives Standing Committee on Environment Recreation and the Arts, the Northern Territory Government proposed that important parks and reserves should be offered enhanced protection by developing conservation plans and cooperative arrangements with surrounding landholders. While there are many different agreements used in the Northern Territory to ensure conservation on private land, cooperative agreements with Aboriginal landholders to include their land as part of the conservation estate are particularly significant.

The Northern Territory's landscapes have been moulded by many thousands of years of Aboriginal occupation and management. Whilst natural ecosystems changed during this time the area retains an outstanding array of wildlife. White settlement brought equally significant change, but in a much shorter period. Introduced animals, changed fire regimes and new forms of land use led to a reduction in biological diversity, most notably demonstrated by the rapid loss of vertebrate species. Despite this, in comparison with many other areas, the Territory's natural systems may be regarded as substantially intact. They offer the opportunity of slowing or hopefully arresting the loss of biodiversity through effective conservation management. Establishment of a system of parks containing viable and representative samples of the Territory's natural environments is an important aspect of such management.

Aboriginal traditional practice is an essential element in developing strategies for conservation management of Northern Territory lands. It is pointed out in the National Strategy for Conservation of Australia's Biological Diversity that traditional Aboriginal management practices have proved important for the maintenance of biological diversity. It recommends their integration into current management programmes where appropriate. As well as its own specific knowledge base, Aboriginal traditional practice has much in common with mainstream conservation practice including the concept of protected areas and sanctuaries. A common concern for conservation has already provided a foundation for cooperatively managed parks and can continue as a prime focus in future arrangements.

A fully representative Northern Territory park system can only be achieved through the involvement of Aboriginal landholders. Within the Northern Territory, Aboriginal ownership of, and traditional attachment to, land is a significant issue for planning, development and management for conservation. Aboriginal people have acquired substantial areas of land either through purchase or under the Aboriginal Lands Right Act. With the prospects of additional holdings or interests being granted under this Act or the Native Title Act 1993 as well as ongoing purchases, some groups see the establishment of conservation reserves on their land as an avenue for economic empowerment and self-determination. Such a view has been encouraged by precedents for successful joint management arrangements involving parks on Aboriginal land.

It is appropriate that the Aboriginal inhabitants of the Northern Territory, as major stakeholders in the Territory and as the original carers for the country, should play a major role in conservation and park management. Legal recognition of Aboriginal rights, interests and responsibilities in relation to land in the Territory further highlights this role. Aboriginal land in the Northern Territory (as at February 1996) comprised 41.57% with a further 8.38% under claim. Following on from land acquisitions by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, and through the Aboriginal Benefit Trust Account, the Indigenous Land Corporation is likely to continue to acquire land in the Territory for the benefit of Aboriginal people. Much of this land is, or will be, of conservation and tourism interest. The Native Title Act while causing uncertainty for land administration, has not yet had any impact on land ownership. However Aboriginal people can be expected to continue to assert rights and interests in relation to land set aside as Territory parks.

Success of the program

The Northern Territory Government has a long history of involvement with Aboriginal people in conservation management. Through the Parks and Wildlife Commission, it has implemented joint management arrangements with Aboriginal custodians. Flexible approaches have been developed to meet the specific requirements of particular groups. Probably the best such arrangement in practice is that between the Parks and Wildlife Commission and the Jawoyn people in the management of Nitmiluk National Park. This is where a legal agreement has been reached over the management of a defined area for conservation purposes. Another good example is Gurig National Park.

For example, Boards of Management for the Gurig and Nitmiluk National Parks have majority Aboriginal representation with executive powers which are not subject to the direction of the Director of the Parks and Wildlife Commission or the Minister.

Critical factors for success

It is sometimes suggested that management by Aboriginal people will automatically achieve the conservation objectives of the broader community. The reality is more complex. Traditional conservation management practices were not equipped to deal with new environmental threats arriving with white settlement. Also, with greater diversity of social and economic objectives in Aboriginal society, options for land use have broadened. Conservation may not always be the first choice of Aboriginal land holders. However, the general Aboriginal concern with 'caring for country' and the conservation objectives of the Parks and Wildlife Commission often are in accord. It is pointed out in the National Strategy for the Conservation of Australia's Biological Diversity that effective conservation management of lands and waters over which Aboriginal people have title or in which they have an interest is a cornerstone of the well-being, identity, cultural heritage and economy of Aboriginal communities.

In many cases, Aboriginal people have seen involvement in parks and conservation as a means of re-establishing connections with traditional lands. Some groups have pursued this as an avenue to economic empowerment and reduced dependence on Government assistance. Such aspirations have been encouraged by successful arrangements involving parks on Aboriginal land under various joint management arrangements, in some cases extending to ultimate control. As major stakeholders in the park system, it is reasonable for Aboriginal people to expect their interests to be recognised and accommodated. These may include substantial involvement in planning and management, realisation of commercial opportunities, and training and employment with the Parks and Wildlife Commission.

7.4 Local government incentives for nature conservation (Queensland)

The following Queensland examples show recent innovative developments in incentives offered by two local governments for nature conservation on private land in south-east Queensland.

Brisbane City Council

Brisbane City Council's Voluntary Conservation Agreement Program provides that a person who enters into a deed of agreement with the Council is entitled to assistance for environmental management activities on their land. Agreements can have a duration of 99 years, however Queensland property law prevents the agreement being registered against title. Financial assistance is paid annually to the landholder, following a joint evaluation against the management goals for the preceding 12 months.

Its value is calculated according to a formula in the Council's Voluntary Conservation Agreement Policy. The formula refers to the percentage of the property subject to the voluntary conservation agreement and the amount of general rates levied on the property. Maximum cash assistance is \$1500 per annum or 50% of the general rates whichever is the lesser amount. There are two levels of agreement: the higher level leads to the land being rezoned to Conservation Zone. In this case the Council will meet all costs associated with the rezoning.

Target Landholder Group

A landholder can participate in the scheme if:

- the property has high conservation significance
- the land has strategic function (for example position in the landscape)
- there is likely to be a leadership/promotional value for improved environmental management in the local community.

Most of the agreements cover land in the Council's Green Space System as identified under the Brisbane City Strategic Plan. Some landholders were introduced to the program by community groups.

Logan City Council

Logan City Council provides a 25-50% discount on the general rate for land in its Residential Conservation Zone. The concession policy was included in the Council's Strategic Plan in December 1994. The primary intent of the zone is to facilitate the protection and/or enhancement of the conservation value of the land while allowing for the provision of dwellings and ancillary activities in a bushland environment. For land to be included in the zone, the property owner must apply; Council will not unilaterally initiate a rezoning. In addition the land must be situated within areas designated under the Strategic Plan as either Conservation "A" or "B". These lands are situated within Council's Habitat Protection Area. Standard conditions attaching to rezoning may include:

- a building envelope of 2000m²;
- the rehabilitation of cleared or degraded areas;
- a prohibition on rural and other activities that may have a detrimental impact on habitat quality;
- controls on domestic animals;

- controls on fencing types;
- provisions requiring fire safety issues to be addressed; and
- the provision of "a vegetated buffer between any development and any waterway or wetland area".

Non-compliance by a landholder with the conditions attached to the rezoning approval could lead to the removal or downgrading of any concession. Incentives are:

- Where land is included in the Conservation "B" designation a 25% concession on the general rate will apply. This concession may increase to 50% provided there is satisfactory progress in achieving the conditions attached to the rezoning approval.
- A property wholly within the Conservation "A" designation will receive a 50% rate concession.

In addition certain landholders within the Conservation "B" designation have limited subdivision potential, above that currently available in the Rural zone. There are no application fees.

The success of the program

Brisbane City Council

The program commenced in June 1996 and 12 agreements covering some 59 hectares have been entered into to date. As most of the owners have chosen to enter into a higher agreement, almost all this land (some 57 hectares) will be rezoned to the Conservation zone.

Cost effectiveness

Financial assistance to the 12 landholders over the first two years will be \$15,000, reducing to about \$7,000 per annum thereafter. Funding is structured to provide greater amounts in the early years when rehabilitation programs are commenced.

In a local government area where land values are quite high, the program represents an efficient supplement to a system of lands in public ownership and other bushland strategies. The estimated purchase price of 57 ha of bushland is \$1.8 million.

Logan City Council

Three applications have been approved for the Residential Conservation zone totalling some 17.5 hectares. Inspections have been undertaken of other properties where owners have expressed a desire to participate. Response has been slower than expected, which is attributed in part to the spread of misinformation about the scheme.

On 2 July 1996 the Minister for Local Government and Planning announced a grant of \$30,000 to Logan City Council to promote the conservation zone rate rebate scheme as a model for other local governments. Consultants have been engaged to prepare guidelines for lifestyle issues and development within the zone, to review Council's strategies and the zone's effectiveness. Funding for the grant was provided through the State Government's Regional Open Space Scheme for south-east Queensland (ROSS).

Comment

It is too early to evaluate the various incentive schemes provided by Queensland local governments. The Logan City Council initiative links the landholder's agreement to the loss/gain of certain rights with a financial incentive, and further links land management outcomes with a higher level of financial incentive. This appears conceptually to be one of the best models operating in Queensland. One operational difficulty is that very few land purchasers in Queensland obtain a town planning

certificate prior to purchase. The Brisbane City Scheme has an advantage in the agreement, which could be later varied if the opportunity arose to register such agreements against title and to be binding on subsequent owners.

It should be noted that incentive schemes based on local government rates may only be successful in areas where land valuations/rates are higher. In rangelands and similar areas used for broadscale farming, rates payable on areas of conservation value within the property may only represent a small proportion of outgoings for the landholder.

Critical factors for success

Provisions of the Local Government Act 1993

Incentives for nature conservation activities on rateable land are available under the Local Government Act 1993. All land in Queensland is rateable other than:

- unallocated State land;
- land occupied by the State or a government entity, except where the land is occupied under a lease from a private person; and
- land in State Forest or Timber Reserve other than land occupied under a permit or lease;
- and certain Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander lands; and
- land exempted under an Act from rating or under a regulation made under the Local Government Act 1993 (s.553).

Local Governments may set and levy their rates in one of two different ways:

- an (ordinary) general rate whether or not under an averaging formula (s.555)
- a differential general rate (s.559).

The differential general rate allows a local government to categorise land in its area and these categories may be defined in any way at all (s.573, s.575). "Nature conservation" could be a category. The purpose of the differential rate is to allow a different level of rating to be set for different categories.

The third way in which the occupiers of lands held for nature conservation could benefit is through the concession power (s.627, 629). A local government can remit the whole or part of unpaid rates only if:

- the circumstances of the particular case warrant the making of a remission (s.629(1)(a)); or
- the case falls within a class of cases that the local government had identified by resolution as warranting a remission of rates (s.629(1)(b)).

The Act, by way of example, lists circumstances or factors which may justify the making of a remission including - "(d) the preservation, restoration or maintenance of structures or places of cultural, environmental, historic, heritage or scientific significance to the local government area;".

In conclusion a landholder could obtain rate relief -

- (a) under an exemption under a regulation; or
- (b) under a differential rating scheme; or
- (c) through a remission of rates.

7.6 Property Based Game Management (Tasmania)

Need For Strategic Browsing Animal Management

During the past decade, statewide populations of nearly all browsing animals in Tasmania have increased, many to their highest recorded levels. In many areas, these animals cause significant damage to crops, pasture, trees and native vegetation. Recent studies indicate that the collective cost of browsing damage to the farming and forest industries alone is nearly \$20M per annum. The cost to the community of browsing animal damage to remnant native vegetation has not been assessed; although it would likely exceed the cost to industry.

Consequently, there is a need for strategic management and control of browsing animals in Tasmania. The challenge faced by the numerous stakeholders involved with their management and/or control is to develop strategies that achieve a sustainable balance between wildlife control and conservation. These strategies must be community-inclusive and involve active consultation with all major stakeholders.

Property-Based Game Management Program

In July 1996 the Parks and Wildlife Service established a Property-Based Game Management Program as part of its new Off-Reserve Conservation Program. The Property-Based Game Management Program will be implemented by a Property-Based Game Management Unit located within the Nature Conservation Branch. The unit will interface with two other new off-reserve programs, Land for Wildlife and Threatened Species, as well as other agencies and the private sector.

Vision

Landholders, hunters and conservation managers working together to achieve an ecologically sustainable balance between the management and use of wildlife and broader nature conservation objectives in Tasmania.

Goals

- To assist landholders, hunters and other stakeholders in the development and implementation of Property-Based Game Management Plans that facilitate integrated wildlife management and conservation on off-reserve lands in Tasmania.
- To promote and facilitate ethical, responsible and humane hunting and harvesting practices that are consistent with State and Federal wildlife management and conservation programs.
- To reduce the reliance on 1080 poison for browsing animal control through a strategic and integrated management approach which utilises alternative control methods such as shooting and fencing.
- To provide sustainable populations of game species for future generations through the application of sound game management principles.
- Property-Based Game Management is the localised, integrated and planned management of game and pest species on off-reserve areas. Whilst principally a program for private land, it can also be applied to corporate or public land and can include groups of properties, districts and regions.

Property-Based Game Management Plans

Property-Based Game Management is implemented on private lands through Property-Based Game Management Plans. Property-Based Game Management Plans are property-specific written

agreements between landholders and hunters facilitated by the Parks and Wildlife Service. The plans can be simple or complex depending upon the landholder's circumstances and needs. Much like a Whole Farm Plan, Property-Based Game Management Plans assist landholders in the planning of an integrated approach to wildlife and property management. As such, they can become an important component of Whole Farm Plans and provide linkages to other conservation initiatives such as Landcare, Land for Wildlife and Threatened Species.

The success of the program

This new program fills a previously vacant niche and has proven highly successful. Presently, in Tasmania there are more than 30 landholders and 1000 recreational hunters already operating under management plans and many others are expressing interest in developing plans. These properties total more than 150,000 ha. At present, the demand for management plans exceeds the staff resources available within the unit.

Critical factors for success

The most critical factor for the ongoing success of the program is obtaining sufficient funding to employ staff. The unit currently consists of three people, of which only one is permanent. One of the remaining two temporary positions ends in June 1997 and the other in December 1997. Although a second full-time permanent position is expected to eventuate within the next 12 months, it will still be insufficient to meet the community demand for service. The next most important factor is locating suitably qualified applicants with appropriate game management skills. These particular skills appear largely lacking in Australia.

7.7 Land for Wildlife (Victoria)

Land for Wildlife is a voluntary program that aims to help private landholders to benefit from integrating biodiversity into the management of their property. It is administered by the Department of Natural Resources and Environment (Victoria) in partnership with the Bird Observers Club of Australia. The program began in 1981 and was substantially upgraded in 1990.

Aims

Land for Wildlife incorporates two main elements. Firstly, there is the Land for Wildlife registration scheme which encourages and assists private landholders to integrate nature conservation with other uses of their property. In this case, the program's role is to offer support and encouragement to participants. Secondly, Land for Wildlife aims to help all landholders through provision of advice on the range of measures that enable them to benefit from incorporating wildlife habitat into the management of their property.

Target landholder group

Land for Wildlife provides assistance to all private landholders including landholders associated with larger farming enterprises, smaller rural properties, school grounds, golf-courses, parks, cemeteries, etc.

Services to landholders

Land for Wildlife offers on-ground advice during property assessment, ongoing contact with a network of extension officers and access to the extensive resources of the Department of Natural Resources and Environment which is the principal land management agency in the State. There are opportunities to participate in field and neighbourhood days. An extensive range of publications, including a quarterly newsletter and more detailed technical notes, offering detailed and up-to-date advice and information, are provided free of charge to members.

The success of the program

There are currently (March 1997) 4,043 properties participating in the Land for Wildlife registration scheme. These properties cover an area of 456,124 ha of which landholders have nominated 110,655 ha as managed for nature conservation. Over 500 properties are registering annually.

Habitats of conservation significance on Land for Wildlife properties include 16,678ha of Box-Ironbark Forest, 9,693 ha of Box-Buloke Woodland, 5,562 ha of Red Gum Woodland, 8,013 ha of grasslands and 7,613 ha of freshwater wetlands on 505 properties.

Over 15 targeted projects, in which landholders with key areas of habitat are offered assistance, have been undertaken. Threatened species, such as the Superb Parrot and Grey-crowned Babbler, benefit whilst the program acts to retain and restore the habitats in which they occur by taking an active role in working with local landholders.

Land for Wildlife has recently been established in Western Australia and is proposed by several other Australian states.

Cost effectiveness

Land for Wildlife is allocated approximately 4% of the Flora and Fauna budget or \$400,000 annually. This employs 14 half-time facilitators, a Statewide Coordinator and one support staff and pays for operating expenses and publications. Two-hundred and forty-one participants responding to a survey of 1000 members indicated that they spent 8,267 days and \$203,755 managing the

habitats on their property. Participants in Land for Wildlife manage 3.3% of private land and constitute about 6% of private landholders (estimating 70,000 eligible properties).

Critical factors for success

Land for Wildlife provides a focus on biodiversity conservation on private land, lacking in other programs, by being a program led by, and with access to, staff with knowledge of nature conservation principles and management. Of great importance has been the use of part-time facilitators, drawn from local communities, in delivery of the program at the field level whilst supported by the resources of the Department, including access to expert resource managers. Quality publications of practical value to land managers are an essential means of communication and highly regarded by participants.

7.8 Heritage Agreements (South Australia)

In 1974 the South Australian Government set up a committee to examine the status of native vegetation clearance. In its report in 1976, this committee recommended that procedures be put in place to encourage rural landholders to retain remnant native vegetation on their properties.

Arising from this the State's Heritage Agreement Scheme was developed and was formally launched in 1980. The main elements of the Scheme are as follows:

- The Heritage Agreement is a legally binding document signed by both the landholder and the State Environment Minister;
- The landholder agrees to retain the subject area of native vegetation for conservation purposes and not to undertake any activity which could adversely affect the vegetation without the consent of the Minister;
- The Minister generally meets the cost of fencing required to protect the Heritage area (eg from grazing);
- The landholder is also relieved of the requirement to pay rates and taxes over the subject area;
- The Heritage Agreement is registered on the land title and therefore continues to apply with change of land ownership; and
- The Agreement can only be cancelled through the agreement of both signatories.

During the period 1980-1985 the Heritage Agreement Scheme was purely voluntary. It attracted considerable interest from some regions of the State but generally from the minority of committed conservationists rather than mainstream commercial landholders. In 1985 the *Native Vegetation Management Act 1985* provided a link between Heritage Agreements and areas of bushland refused clearance consent under the Act's clearance controls. In short, a landholder refused permission to clear native vegetation could, subject to some conditions, receive a financial assistance payment if the subject area was placed under Heritage Agreement.

This linkage led to a substantial proliferation of Heritage Agreement areas until 1991, when the replacement legislation, *Native Vegetation Act 1991*, replaced the automatic linkage between clearance refusal/ financial payment and Heritage Agreement with a discretionary link - that is, giving the Minister discretion to offer financial assistance as an incentive to an Agreement.

In 1997 Heritage Agreements are still being established either on a purely voluntary basis or in association with vegetation clearance negotiations. Across the State there are now more than 1,050 Heritage Agreement areas encompassing a total area of more than 550,000 hectares.

Since 1996 the Heritage Agreement Scheme has been extended with a grants program being initiated to assist Heritage Agreement landholders in management of the Heritage vegetation. This is an annual program and individual landholders can currently seek up to \$2,000 per year for management activities. In addition, four regional natural resource management officers have been appointed by DENR, with the primary task of assisting Heritage landholders with management aspects.

The success of the program

The program is considered to have been highly successful. The fact that there are now more than 1,050 private conservation areas over 550,000 hectares represents an extremely important adjunct to the State's formal reserves system. Although the initial response to the scheme in the early 1980s

was limited and slow, the program now has the general acceptance of the community, particularly rural, and the emphasis has now shifted from “why conserve” to “how to manage”.

Critical factors for success

The intrinsic attractions of the Heritage Agreement Scheme are the financial and material incentives associated with it (ie fencing, waiving of rates and taxes, and management assistance). These have been accepted by the community as providing a good and equitable basis for conservation of native vegetation on private lands.

The **extent** of the success of the program is undoubtedly due to the linkage between the Heritage Agreement Scheme and the clearance control process, as referred to above. This State’s experience is that a **purely voluntary** scheme, by itself, will be of quite limited value in achieving off-park conservation. Linkage with the clearance control process was a difficult decision at the time and caused much dissent in the rural sector in the mid 1980s. However, this move has proven to be a vital step in the evolution in off-park conservation programs, and a combination of extension programs to raise awareness about conservation issues, and of general realisation that broad-acre vegetation clearance has gone far enough, has led to overall acceptance of the program.

Another critical factor is obviously resources. The combined Heritage Agreement-clearance control program has cost South Australia an estimated \$80 million since 1980. As a total figure this is daunting but when related to the effective conservation of 550,000 hectares of vegetation (and a general cessation of broad-acre clearance) it can be seen as a cost-effective program. In terms of on-ground works associated with Heritage Agreements, fencing is the major item and it is important that this be adequately resourced.

7.9 Remnant Vegetation Protection Scheme (Western Australia)

The Remnant Vegetation Protection Scheme is a fencing subsidy scheme. The Scheme was initiated by the Western Australian government in 1989 following the preparation of two reports on the conservation and management of remnant vegetation in the agricultural region of south west Western Australia. These reports asserted that assistance for fencing would be the single most effective means of encouraging remnant vegetation protection in these areas.

The objective of the Scheme is to encourage land owners to fence and protect areas of remnant vegetation for the purposes of flora and fauna conservation, land conservation and aesthetics. Thus, the Scheme aims to help prevent further land and vegetation degradation, restore landscape values and protect and enhance nature conservation values.

A number of factors are considered in selecting areas to receive the grants. These factors ensure grants are directed to priority areas for conservation. They include:

- the significance of the vegetation concerned to nature and land conservation objectives;
- the condition of the vegetation;
- the size or robustness of the vegetation to be protected to withstand degradation from the influence of surrounding land use and loss of species; and
- the cost effectiveness of fencing the area.

Agriculture Western Australia is responsible for administering the Remnant Vegetation Protection Scheme on behalf of the Soil and Land Conservation Council, under the *Soil and Land Conservation Act 1945*. The Department of Conservation and Land Management assists in the administration by providing nature conservation advice to the operation of the Scheme, and in assessing the nature conservation value of areas of remnant vegetation.

The Scheme is voluntary whereby private landholders submit applications for a subsidy to fence off identified areas of remnant vegetation. Landholders receiving grants under the Scheme must agree to protect the remnant for at least 30 years. This is administered through the placement of a memorial on their land title by the Western Australian Commissioner of Soil and Land Conservation. The memorial also acts to advise future owners that they must preserve the area of fenced vegetation according to the terms of the landowner's agreement with the Commissioner.

Under the agreement, as set out in the memorial, the landowner is obliged to manage the land for a period of at least thirty years in such a way that it does not degrade the conservation value of the remnant vegetation, or allow:

- grazing of the remnant vegetation by livestock;
- removal of vegetation, soil, stones, sand, rock or gravel;
- activities that may damage or destroy any plants;
- interference with natural water supplies;
- construction of buildings; or
- depositing of litter.

All individual landowners can apply, and there is no restriction on the vegetation type and size of remnant nominated. Group applications are also received from landholders who wish to:

- link remnants on neighbouring properties;

BEST PRACTICE INITIATIVES FOR NATURE CONSERVATION ON PRIVATE LAND

- provide a catchment approach to management of remnants;
- protect a corridor of riparian vegetation on various properties; and
- protect riparian vegetation that is vital to the protection of a wetland.

In 1995, a significant increase in funding was made available to the Scheme, in association with greater land clearing controls in the State. Specific priority areas for funding allocations were also identified at this time for the Scheme. These were:

1. projects that protect riparian and wetland vegetation;
2. in shires with less than 20 percent vegetation, strategically placed remnants are a priority regardless of size;
3. in the south coast / northern sandplains and west coast zones, the specific priority areas are:
 - ecosystems of which less than 20 percent of the original area remains;
 - areas of vegetation which, when protected, have a direct effect on the health of downstream estuaries;
 - in both the south and west coast zones, projects that enhance and protect vegetation corridors that link coastal communities with inland communities;
 - in the south coast zone, any project that provides enhancement or protection to the "biosphere area" surrounding the Fitzgerald River National Park.

During the initial phase of the Remnant Vegetation Protection Scheme, funds were allocated for monitoring. Monitoring included administrative aspects, such as fence erection, but also included biological monitoring of the vegetation within the remnants. This information is available for latter condition comparisons, and to evaluate the effectiveness of the assessment process.

The success of the program

The scheme has been operating since 1988/89 and has provided fencing for 836 remnants totalling 38,281 hectares to 1994/95 at an average cost of \$58.82 per hectare. At least an equivalent input has been provided by the landowners in protecting remnant vegetation.

A review of the Scheme undertaken after the first three years of operation identified the following achievements:

- a good spread of funded areas across the south west of the State, with most protected areas being in the more highly cleared agricultural areas;
- a high proportion (80%) of higher priority vegetation types being protected;
- the establishment of 296 vegetation monitoring transects and landowner information packages; and
- administrative overheads of less than 18%, including the cost of monitoring.

The details of fencing subsidies is as follows (final data is not available for 1995/96):

Year	88/89	89/90	90/91	91/92	92/93	93/94	94/95	Total
Applicants funded	111	185	174	113	94	98	61	836
Area protected (ha)	7948	6694	6419	6122	4341	3423	3334	38281
Fence constructed (kilometres)	468	722	683	594	433	417	464	3781

Critical factors for success

The critical factors for success of the Remnant Vegetation Protection Scheme are considered to be:

- the voluntary nature of the Scheme whereby landowners apply for assistance to protect native vegetation because they want to;
- the placement of a memorial on the land title to provide longer term protection, and commitment by the landowner;
- the requirement for at least matching contribution to the total cost of erecting the fence to ensure some level of direct commitment by the landowner;
- provision of adequate funding to the Scheme to ensure that suitable areas of vegetation nominated to the Scheme are accepted for funding;
- minimal administrative overheads to demonstrate a commitment to achieve on-ground implementation on the part of government;
- an effective, but cost efficient, assessment process to maintain standards within the Scheme; and
- review and evaluation to ensure that the Scheme is meeting current demand and priorities.

7.10 Revolving Fund Concept (Non-Government)

The Trust for Nature (Victoria) administers a revolving fund which involves the purchase of land and application of statutory covenants to the title to protect conservation values in perpetuity, followed by resale to sympathetic purchasers. The revolving fund enables the establishment of a substantial private conservation reserve system managed by private owners. The effectiveness of the revolving fund is that it:

- recaptures most of the capital purchase cost; and
- passes responsibility for land management to owners who are committed to a conservation ethic.

Private land at the edge of conservation reserves generally has high conservation value and is often readily marketable and the Trust has covenanted many of these areas. The Trust, which administers the revolving fund, is a statutory authority and is therefore exempt from stamp duty and from some rates and taxes. This enables the Trust to keep transaction costs low. However, conveyancing and program management costs are borne through the Trust.

The success of the program

As at April 1996, four properties had been resold with covenants. Other achievements of the Trust are:

- over 200 covenants permanently protecting more than 8,000 ha have been registered on title;
- A further 120 covenants on 5,000 are being negotiated;
- 100 properties covering 7,000 hectares have been purchased by the Trust

Critical factors for success

One of the major benefits of the Trust managing the revolving fund program is that the Trust is not bound by the usual government and ministerial approval process for land acquisition and therefore is able to react quickly when high value conservation properties come onto the market. An added benefit is that the Trust is able, if it wishes, to buy above valuation, which is sometimes necessary.

7.11 Australian Bush Heritage Fund (Non-Government)

As many important natural areas are privately owned the Australian Bush Heritage Fund specifically aims to acquire private land of outstanding significance and to manage it for the benefit of all Australians for all time. The work is funded entirely by donations and there are currently around 4,000 people on supporters' list, including about 300 Regular (monthly) Donors. Donations to the Australian Bush Heritage Fund are tax deductible and donors receive our quarterly newsletter. The inspiration for creating the Australian Bush Heritage Fund came from large land acquisition bodies such as The Nature Conservancy and the Trust for Public Lands in the United States and the Woodlands Trust and Royal Society for the Protection of Birds in the United Kingdom. While distinctly Australian, the Australian Bush Heritage Fund is building on the extensive experience of fellow organisations overseas, to ensure the best protection for Australia's national heritage.

The Australian Bush Heritage Fund was established in 1990 when two magnificent forest blocks, abutting the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, were put up for auction. Realising that these 241 hectares were destined to be wood-chipped, environmentalist Dr Bob Brown used his US Goldman Environmental Prize of \$49,000 as a deposit, borrowing the rest from friends and the bank, to buy the properties and set up the Australian Bush Heritage Fund.

The Australian Bush Heritage Fund chooses its reserves on the basis of ecological and conservation values and surveys of the biological values of the areas proposed for purchase enable us to place them in a national, state and regional conservation framework. Although extensive assessment is made of areas for potential purchase, once the land has been bought, more data is collected for the preparation of management plans and this process may reveal interesting details which add to the conservation significance of our purchase.

The success of the program

The Trust has bought four properties to date:

- Woodland and Dry Rainforest at Brogo, New South Wales - 120 ha;
- Liffey Valley, Tasmania - 105 ha;
- Wandoo woodland at Kojonup, Western Australia - 330 ha; and
- Queensland's Daintree lowland rainforests.

Critical factors for success

The Australian Bush Heritage Fund is a non-profit organisation funded by tax-deductible donations from the public. Like many organisations, the Australian Bush Heritage Fund is limited by the availability of funding and resources. Consequently, careful consideration is given to land selected for purchase. To outline the underlying principles that form the basis of decisions to purchase blocks of land, the following concepts are considered:

Concept 1 - Viability

Many areas of high conservation significance are fragile and susceptible to outside influences; consequently the possibility of future degradation must be considered. The effects of external influences such as weed invasion, feral animals, the intrusion of neighbouring human activities and nutrient enrichment from surrounding areas, are greatly increased by the high "boundary to core area" ratios of small sized reserves. Large areas are significantly less susceptible to edge effects and random events. They also usually provide a more diverse matrix of habitats and are consequently

more self contained. This does not mean that small areas of high conservation value should not be considered but preference is given to larger areas where possible. The purchase of areas that include aquatic habitats must include assessment of their catchment. The shape and topography of reserves must also be considered as these factors greatly contribute to the assessment of the viability of areas managed for nature conservation.

Concept 2 - Continuity

The Australian Bush Heritage Fund cannot act in isolation from other organisations and individuals. The Fund therefore considers the relationship of its purchases to other reserves and also with areas that have similar values but are managed for purposes other than nature conservation. These associations may be either immediate or dispersed. For instance, reserves may aim to provide refuges for organisms that are threatened in adjoining areas that are managed for purposes other than nature conservation, eg. the maintenance of an old growth resource for forest dependent species, adjacent to an area that is to be logged but which will eventually regenerate. This will prevent the localised extinction of species that are dependent on tree hollows and the structural complexity of older forest types, in areas that are remote from other examples of this structural type. Also purchases may act as a stepping stone for species that have a wide but scattered distribution or have regular migratory routes, eg. wading bird refuges.

Concept 3 - Specific Values

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature has created a system of categories that allow the classification of organisms in relation to their potential future survival. These include well known categories such as Rare, Threatened and Endangered and numerous intermediate categories that have more subtle definitions. Many biological communities have also been categorised in a similar fashion. The Australian Bush Heritage Fund recognises these categories and uses them as guidelines for the selection of reserves. National, state and regional conservation priorities are also considered and the opinions of nature conservation authorities and relevant experts are sought, to establish the nature conservation values of areas under consideration.

Concept 4 - Management

It is important to emphasise that each purchase that the Australian Bush Heritage Fund makes commits it to ongoing management. Therefore the selection of reserves is dependent on its ability to create a mechanism by which areas can be maintained. The Australian Bush Heritage Fund aims to maximise the effect of its donors' contribution to nature conservation. Consequently the Fund has put in place procedures to achieve this end, such as, assessment of the value of potential purchases based on criteria that are updated as new information becomes available. Matters such as the management of proposed reserves are factored into decisions to purchase particular areas of land. The development of management plans for areas held by the Fund aids in the maintenance of values, and the involvement of the local community in management committees ensures a feeling of ownership and participation among local people.