

## ECONOMIC VALUE OF BIODIVERSITY

### SHIRE OF BUSSELTON OFFERS RATE REBATES ON LFW SITES.

Carolyn Switzer and Cherie Kemp

**R**ATEPAYERS in Busselton Shire can benefit from a partnership arrangement between *Land for Wildlife* and the Shire's Biodiversity Incentive Program which came into action in April 2002.

The incentive program offers two rate rebate options to landowners with bush which meets certain criteria. One option is conditional on signing a ten-year management agreement with the Shire and being a member of *Land for Wildlife*. The other is conditional on taking out a conservation covenant with a body offering stewardship arrangements (currently either the Department or the National Trust). The rebate offered is proportional to the area of bushland set aside and is 35% for a management agreement with the Shire, and 50% for a conservation covenant.

The *LFW* management agreement option has proved popular. It is designed to limit the following activities:

- ▶ clearing, removal or damage to vegetation;
- ▶ the removal of timber, including fallen timber (unless specifically negotiated for limited personal use);
- ▶ any act that may adversely affect local indigenous flora or fauna;
- ▶ the grazing of remnant vegetation by any non-native animal, except in parkland cleared areas that are isolated by fences where crash grazing may be required to reduce fuel loads;
- ▶ burning except in accordance with approved fire management recommendations contained in the management plan;
- ▶ wildflower picking;



- ▶ any act that may affect the natural state, flow supply, quantity or quality of any water body (unless required to do so by law).

The advantages for the Shire and property owners are manifold! The *LFW* Officer already has personal contact with landowners and offers an extensive range of information to assist them manage their bushland. If needed, the Shire has some funds to help with fencing or rehabilitation of land that otherwise would meet the criteria. In the future this funding pool is likely to be topped up.

*LFW* property owners have been keen to take advantage of this offer of rate rebate as many have been active bush managers for quite some time. Being involved in *LFW* has given them a network to work within and a support system to assist them in their management and conservation, and now the Shire has come forward with a further reward for their efforts.

When a landholder applies, a Shire Biodiversity Officer and the *LFWO* visit the property (a revisit for the *LFWO*); the Biodiversity Officer will write a bushland criteria assessment report for the rate rebate scheme and the *LFWO* will write a Management Plan for the property owners, based on the *LFW* Report.

The two programs reinforce each other – receiving a rate rebate rewards the *LFWer* for valuing their bush and the Shire is able to conserve some of the area's biodiversity. The Shire of Busselton has only 35% of its remnant vegetation left and only 10% of the Abba Plains vegetation communities.

The Shire of Augusta/Margaret River is moving towards having a similar Biodiversity Strategy, and other Shires in WA have made enquiries as to how the scheme works. Having a Biodiversity Incentive Scheme in place in almost every Shire in WA would give large benefits to Shires, property owners and the biodiversity of our State.

For more information regarding the Shire of Busselton's Biodiversity Incentive Scheme contact Carolyn Switzer or Kirrilly White on 9781 0444, or Cherie Kemp, *LFWO* Busselton, on 9752 5533

*Did you know?*

That some *Calothamnus* (One-sided Bottlebrush) species exude resin from their roots, which glues together soil and sand particles to make a tube around the root. This effectively protects the plant against attack by root parasites such as Sandalwood and Quandong.

From: Grant Woodall, AgWA Sandalwood project.