

ECONOMIC VALUE OF BIODIVERSITY

NATURE CONSERVATION COVENANTS – FURTHER TAX CONCESSIONS

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In a media statement released last month, Dr Judy Edwards, State Environment Minister, said that legislation had been introduced into Parliament to remove the land tax liability for those areas of private land that were protected and managed for nature conservation under eligible conservation covenant programs. This State land tax concession is in addition to the Federal income and capital gains tax concessions that were discussed in the January 2004 edition of *Western Wildlife*. As per the Federal tax concessions, owners of land under conservation covenant with Department of Conservation and Land Management's Nature Conservation Covenant Program or the National Trust of Australia's (WA) Covenant Program will be eligible for the land tax exemption. The lifting of this disincentive was the result of a long campaign by conservation groups, and the implementation of election commitments made by the current

Government prior to the last election. It is hoped that the legislation for the land tax exemption will be passed by 30th June, to enable any land tax liability to be removed for this year. For information on the application of these tax concessions please consult your taxation agent or, in the case of the income or capital gains tax concessions, the Australian Tax Office.

Nature Conservation Covenants provide a mechanism for ensuring the long-term protection of the biological diversity of your bushland. They are voluntary, legally binding agreements between the landowner and covenanting organization. The conditions of the covenant are negotiated between the landowner and the Department with the objective of allowing the landowner to be able to enjoy their land, while ensuring the land management will not cause any degradation of its conservation values. Where a landowner is

already managing their bushland in an appropriate manner, the landowner's management will probably not be altered by the covenant. The landowner continues to manage their own land and then, when the land changes ownership, they can be reassured that the land will continue to be managed to conserve its biological diversity, as they intended. Other benefits of a Nature Conservation Covenant with CALM include the provision of management advice and the opportunity for financial assistance with management costs (subject to availability). Voluntary Nature Conservation Covenants with the Department are free of charge.

If you would like to know more about conservation covenants, you can contact the Acting Nature Conservation Covenant Program Coordinator, Anthea Jones on (08) 9334 0477 or the National Trust Covenanting Coordinator, on (08) 9321 6088.