

ECONOMIC VALUE OF BIODIVERSITY

BUSSELTON SHIRE BIODIVERSITY INCENTIVE STRATEGY

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Are there any Land for Wildlifers in Busselton Shire who would like a rate rebate for their bushland?

Do you fit the criteria?

The Biodiversity Incentive Strategy for private land in the Busselton Shire was written and implemented in April 2002. It has two forms of incentives – a) subdivision incentive and b) rate rebate incentive for private landholders who have high quality biodiversity values on their property and who would like to preserve those high values.

The strategy essentially acknowledges that protection of conservation values on private land is often associated with a financial burden on the landowner. Landowners who choose to set aside wetlands or bushland on their property for conservation purposes usually forego potential income that may have been generated from using the land for agricultural production.

The strategy provides landowners with two rate rebate options:

- receiving a 50% rate rebate proportional to the area of bushland/wetland protected that is covered by a voluntary conservation covenant; \$250 minimum rebate and \$1500 maximum rebate; or
- receiving a proportional 35% rate rebate for bushland where a fixed term (10 year) management agreement in association with a *LFW* membership has been agreed; \$150 minimum rebate and \$1000 maximum rebate.

In addition to the rate rebates, grants may be available for fencing or rehabilitation works.

Initially, the Shire carried out surveys of the poorly represented vegetation types, then they picked the largest and better quality lots of these poorly represented vegetation types and offered these small number of properties the options listed above. There are 12 poorly represented vegetation types within the Busselton Shire.



*Example of good quality rate rebate *LFW* property: Yelverton (Yw) poorly represented vegetation.*

The minimum criteria for lots to receive a rate rebate are:

- minimum of 5ha bushland in 'fair' or better condition; or
- rehabilitation projects of 2ha or more or being at least 200m wide that have a strategic function ie formation of a corridor or buffer to a core habitat area (consisting of local native species and local provenance);
- bushland or wetlands of any size containing Declared Rare Flora, or a Threatened Ecological Community as identified by DEC (was CALM); and
- lots containing a Conservation Category wetland.

Requirements of the landholder (35% rebate option):

- joining *LFW*; a management plan will be written for the property;
- signing a 10-year management agreement (legal agreement) with Council, based on the *LFW* management plan;
- the management agreement must include protection of bushland in addition to specifying any active management;
- the management agreement must include permission for an annual inspection of the property by *LFW* or Council officers for the purposes of monitoring.

(Note – when the property is sold, the *LFW* registration, management plan and management agreement do not automatically continue, it is up to the new owners as to whether they would like to continue with these programs and receive the rate rebate.)

The Busselton Shire Environmental Officers have found since the initial uptake of these incentives that there are many more areas of good quality bushland and wetlands that could qualify and would like to further extend their offer of a rate rebate to other *LFW*ers in the Busselton Shire.

So, if you are in the Busselton Shire and have more than 5ha of bushland or wetland on your property and would be keen to preserve it with a management agreement with the Shire, contact your local *LFWO* on 9752 5533.