

Ipswich Enviroplan Strategic Investment Plan

Informing the future revenue, investment and delivery priorities of the Ipswich Enviroplan Levy

📍 Flinders - Goolman Conservation Estate

CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 3

 Key Takeaways 4

WHAT IS THE ENVIROPLAN LEVY 5

THE BIG PICTURE – WHAT’S MOST IMPORTANT 7

 Strategic Investment Priorities 7

GOVERNANCE AND DECISION-MAKING 8

 Operating context – Policy 8

 Operating context – Strategy 8

 Operating context – Legislation 8

 Operating context – External influences 8

 Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats 9

THE PLAN – OUR STRATEGIC INVESTMENT PRIORITIES 10

 1. Increasing Conservation Planning and Management 10

 2. Targeted Land Acquisition 12

 3. Enhancing Visitor Experiences 14

 4. Exploring Alternative Revenue Sources 18

Environmental markets 18

Nature-based solutions 19

Joint ventures 19

Expansion of the portfolio 20

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS 22

 Benchmarking 22

SCENARIOS AND 10-YEAR FINANCIAL MODEL 23

 Scenario 1: Enhanced conservation management 23

 Scenario 2: Annual land acquisition allocation 23

 Scenario 3: Major capital projects to increase visitor experiences 23



Acknowledgement of Country

Ipswich City Council respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners as custodians of the land and waters we share. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging, as the keepers of the traditions, customs, cultures and stories of proud peoples.



📍 Denmark Hill Conservation Reserve

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 1996, council introduced the Ipswich Enviroplan in recognition of the valuable contributions our wildlife, waterways and natural bushland make to our way of life. Enviroplan commenced with a broad vision, to *promote important environmental issues and provide innovative and effective programs for the safe-keeping and management of the city's natural resources.*

Council's foresight in the mid-1990s to purchase large tracts of natural bushland across the city has been crucial to the program's success. Almost 30 years later, Enviroplan has enabled council to secure more than 7,500 hectares of native bushland within dedicated conservation estates and reserves, as well as supporting more than 100 conservation partners with protecting and enhancing ecosystems on private property.

As the only local government in South-East Queensland without a dedicated national park, Enviroplan has been instrumental in securing six percent of the city as publicly owned bushland, providing critical habitat for more than 2,000 species of native plants and animals, protecting areas of cultural significance and providing green spaces for nature-based recreation.

The next ten years bring exciting opportunities to further increase our city's green future through Enviroplan. As the population of Ipswich continues to grow, so too does the importance of our balancing the need of our natural areas to function as biologically rich ecosystems and habitat for threatened species and maintaining cultural landscapes and values with managing the increasing desire for nature-based recreation activities and pursuits.

We also have an opportunity to consider how Enviroplan's portfolio may extend into related areas of natural environment management such as urban greening, waterway and wetland restoration and carbon sequestration.

However, it must also be acknowledged the pressures faced by Enviroplan now and into the future. Current funding is not sufficient to meet the standards of management required to maintain or improve ecological condition, keep up with legislative land management obligations, nor to adequately meet community demands and expectations for visitor access. A quarter of the conservation estates remain closed to public access due to a lack of resourcing and infrastructure to allow for these areas to be open.

Additional revenue sources will need to be explored to meet a desired level of service across the entire Natural Area Network. This may include an increase in the annual levy paid through general rates, or alternative funding mechanisms such as co-investment in conservation management through offsets, impact investment and environmental markets.

The conservation outcomes that council achieves through Enviroplan continue to be vital to our city's green future. This Strategic Investment Plan sets a high-level direction for revenue generation and investment for the next decade, with detailed targets for the next three years. Through this structured and considered approach, council can ensure it meets its goals under the iFuture theme 'Natural and Sustainable' and the Natural Environment Strategy.

Key Takeaways

The next 3 years

-
- ✓ Develop a Land Acquisition Plan to identify priority areas for revegetation through offsets and environmental markets.
-
- ✓ Increase the annual Enviroplan Levy per rateable property in line with CPI or a fixed amount of at least \$5 per year, whichever is the greater.
-
- ✓ Increase operational investment in direct on-ground management and dedicated resourcing of visitor management officers, conservation program officers and Indigenous rangers.
-
- ✓ Invest in visitor infrastructure to mitigate the current impacts on culturally significant sites and critically important ecological areas.
-
- ✓ Explore joint venture opportunities for ecotourism and education or nature-based recreation facilities.
-
- ✓ Focus effort towards securing alternative revenue through mechanisms such as environmental markets and carbon offsets.
-

Beyond 3 years

-
- ✓ Prioritise acquisition of land towards consolidation of existing conservation estates, protection of wetland ecosystems and areas for revegetation through offsets and environmental markets.
-
- ✓ Target capital investment towards the design and construction of purpose-built visitor and nature-based recreation infrastructure that enhances visitor experiences, protects natural and cultural values and allows for more estates to be open for public access.
-
- ✓ Continue to build on the success of community and landholder support programs such as Landholder Conservation Partnerships.
-
- ✓ Explore opportunities for expansion of the portfolio of programs funded under Enviroplan to include programs such as urban greening, Bushcare and waterway and wetland management.
-

WHAT IS THE ENVIROPLAN LEVY

The Enviroplan Levy was launched in 1996 as an ambitious goal to secure large tracts of natural bushland across the city, ahead of Ipswich's predicted population boom. Funded by Ipswich ratepayers, the Levy has been instrumental in protecting and managing critical habitat for native flora and fauna, and in delivering numerous projects and initiatives directly addressing the protection and enhancement of Ipswich's natural environmental values.

This has been achieved through:

1	Preserving, managing and enhancing ecological communities, biodiversity and habitat values of Ipswich's natural landscapes.
2	Securing and managing connected, intact tracts of critical habitat for the long-term survival of native flora and fauna in Ipswich.
3	Acknowledging, respecting and protecting Aboriginal Cultural Heritage and Cultural landscape values.
4	Providing places for high-valued experiences in ecotourism, nature-based recreation and adventure within well-managed natural environments.
5	Supporting and enhancing community, landholder and visitor understanding and appreciation of the natural environment.

The Natural Area Estate

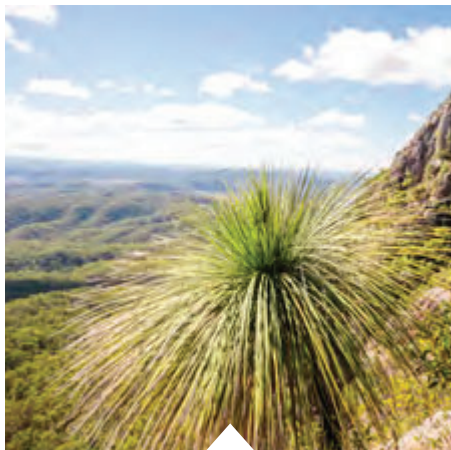
Through the Enviroplan Levy, council has secured approximately six percent of city (6,671.43Ha) through the acquisition and management of conservation estates and reserves, referred to as the Natural Area Estate.

This includes:

NAME	AREA (HA)
White Rock – Spring Mountain Conservation Estate	2,992.1
Flinders – Goolman Conservation Estate	2,249.74
Mount Grandchester Conservation Estate	1,037.6
Kholo Enviroplan Reserve (Cameron's Scrub)	158.42
Mount Beau Brummell Conservation Park	157.00
Purga Nature Reserve	138.52
Redbank Rifle Range	128.94
Hillview Drive Reserve	37.23
Stirling Road Reserve	32.37
Haig Street Quarry Conservation Reserve	23.29
Ric Nattrass Environmental Park	13.71
Denmark Hill Conservation Reserve	12.30
Ipswich Pteropus Park/Woodend Nature Reserve	1.79

Programs, Initiatives and Core Services

Through the Enviroplan Levy, council delivers a range of conservation programs, grants and initiatives to our community, including:



**CONSERVATION ESTATE AND
NATURAL AREA MANAGEMENT**



**LANDHOLDER CONSERVATION
PARTNERSHIPS PROGRAM**



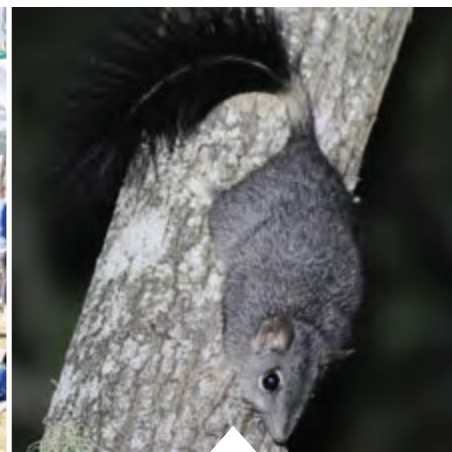
**ICONIC SPECIES HABITAT
RESTORATION PROGRAMS**



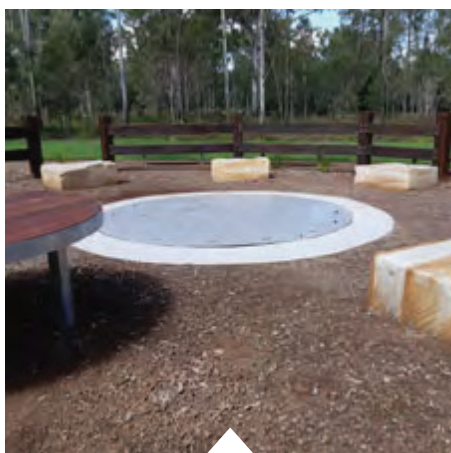
**NATURAL AREA
VISITATION PROGRAMS**



**EDUCATION AND AWARENESS
PROGRAMS AND EVENTS**



**BIO CONDITION MONITORING
AND ASSESSMENTS**



**ABORIGINAL CULTURAL
HERITAGE MANAGEMENT**



**RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS
AND VOLUNTEERING**



**ENVIRONMENT AND
SUSTAINABILITY GRANTS**

THE BIG PICTURE – WHAT’S MOST IMPORTANT

Ipswich’s natural environment is recognised by our community as essential to the vitality and liveability of the city. Council’s Corporate Plan iFuture identifies actions to achieve a natural and sustainable city through a connected and well managed network of natural areas and waterways.

The Natural Environment Strategy sets council’s vision and goals for managing the city’s environmental assets and provides the strategic direction for the protection and restoration of natural areas that contribute towards:

- Providing habitat for native flora and fauna
- Supporting the lifestyle and well-being of our community
- Improving air and water quality
- Providing carbon sequestration
- Preserving natural and cultural landscapes, and enabling continued connection and cultural practices by Traditional Owners.

Further, as the region looks towards a climate-positive Olympic Games in 2032, Ipswich will be a showcase of a green, sustainable and natural city. Council’s *Leveraging 2032* roadmap speaks to the opportunities for enhancing habitat and biodiversity in Ipswich through the protection of bushland and increasing canopy cover across the city.

Strategic Investment Priorities

The four strategic investment priorities identified in this plan are those providing the highest impact, and are the highest importance for delivery, over the next three years. They are not a comprehensive list of every action that would improve ecological condition or protect all high-value environments across the city.

Each priority is aligned with the Corporate Plan vision and council’s purpose statement, being:

VISION	A city of opportunity for all.
PURPOSE	‘Together we proudly enhance the quality of life for our community.’

The four strategic investment priorities are:

Increasing Conservation Planning and Management

Targeted Land Acquisition

Enhancing Visitor Experiences

Exploring Alternative Revenue Opportunities

GOVERNANCE AND DECISION-MAKING

Operating context – Policy

The Ipswich Enviroplan Program and Levy Policy guides council's decision-making in the allocation of revenue generated from the levy. The intended outcomes of the policy are to support council in achieving its nature conservation vision, creating a healthy and vibrant natural environment and supporting the community in environmental initiatives.

The Enviroplan Program and Levy Policy stipulates where funds collected through Enviroplan can be directed. This is primarily for the acquisition, management and embellishment of council's natural area estate, environmental education and landholder support programs.

Operating context – Strategy

Council's commitment to the protection and management of the natural environment is guided by the Natural Environment Strategy, Waterway Health Strategy and the Sustainability Strategy. Where the outcomes of the Natural Environment Strategy align with the Enviroplan Program and Levy Policy intent, these actions can be funded through Enviroplan. Currently, the broader suite of environment and sustainability projects and initiatives identified in these strategies and their implementation plans are funded through other revenue sources, including:

- Council general revenue
- External grants
- Developer contributions
- Biodiversity and Stormwater Quality offsets
- Sponsorship and third-party agreements

Operating context – Legislation

The projects, programs and initiatives delivered under Enviroplan are done so in accordance with the relevant legislation and to ensure council meets its legislative obligations in managing conservation estates and natural areas as landowner and manager.

The relevant Commonwealth and State legislation includes:

- *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*
- *Nature Conservation Act 1992*
- *Land Management Act 1994*
- *Vegetation Management Act 1999*
- *Biosecurity Act 2014*
- *Local Government Act 2009*
- *Environmental Protection Act 1994*
- *Environmental Offsets Act 2014*
- *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003*
- *Native Title Act 1993.*

Operating context – External influences

The delivery of environment and conservation management in Ipswich is also guided by a range of local and regional plans that provide population growth targets, land use planning intents and conservation and biodiversity targets.

These include:

- ShapingSEQ 2023 – Regional Plan
- SEQ Regional Natural Resource Management Plan
- Ipswich Planning Scheme.

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

A SWOT analysis was undertaken to test the current strengths and weaknesses of Enviroplan, and to identify future opportunities and threats to Enviroplan from external influences or through expansion of the portfolio to fund other environment and sustainability initiatives.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES	OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<p>Dedicated funding focused towards council's commitment to environment.</p> <p>High-level community acceptance and expectation.</p> <p>Supports delivery of the Natural Environment Policy and Strategy.</p> <p>Guided by Enviroplan Program and Levy Policy and Procedure.</p> <p>Well established (more than 27 years).</p>	<p>Annual expenditure has not been in line with annual revenue.</p> <p>No forward investment plan or financial forecast developed.</p> <p>Limited to programs defined in the Policy.</p>	<p>Investigate inclusion of other environmental programs such as waterways, urban greening.</p> <p>Increase annual levy charge to be consistent with other SEQ councils.</p> <p>Identify alternative revenue sources through environmental markets, ecotourism and joint ventures.</p>	<p>Expanding the portfolio too broadly without due consideration, planning or increased revenue.</p> <p>Not increasing the levy to account for CPI and expanding conservation estate active management.</p> <p>No longer supported by the community or politically.</p> <p>Impact of population growth and demand for access and use of natural areas on ecological and cultural values without proper planning and management.</p>



THE PLAN – OUR STRATEGIC INVESTMENT PRIORITIES



1. INCREASING CONSERVATION PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT

Under relevant Commonwealth and State legislation, council is required to meet landholder responsibilities in managing the land it owns or holds in trustee for conservation, native species, and Aboriginal cultural heritage values. To meet these responsibilities, Enviroplan funds the development and implementation of citywide natural environment strategies and plans, such as Conservation Estate Management Plans. Enviroplan also funds annual conservation management and maintenance programs for the purpose of improving the ecological value and condition of natural areas and managing visitor use and access.

Primary management programs include:

- Pest and weed management
- Fire management and hazard reduction
- Illegal use management
- Habitat restoration
- Track and trail maintenance
- Minor works.

Currently, about 17 percent of the natural area estate is actively managed. This is comprised of:

- 544 ha (8.16 percent) managed and maintained through the Conservation Works Program, and the Fire Management Program
- 602 ha (9.02 percent) managed and maintained through current Service Standards.

About 20 percent (1,334.28 ha) of the total conservation estate contains the highest value core bushland and is the minimum target for active management and upgrade to maintenance standards. This is in addition to the currently managed and maintained 1,146.42 ha (17 per cent) that contains built infrastructure designed to access and protect these high value core bushland areas.

As such, a target of 30 per cent (~2,000 ha) minimum active management of the Natural Area Estate is desired.

It is estimated that currently less than 15 percent of the total natural bushland habitat is in good condition, with most of these areas being in good condition because they are not accessed by the public due to their isolation.

It is also estimated that 65 percent of built infrastructure (tracks/trails/signage) within the natural area estate is currently to standard.



The following management programs have been developed to manage and maintain the conservation values contained within the Natural Area Estate:

- Conservation Works Program
- Fire Management Program
- Pest Animal Management Program
- Natural Areas Maintenance Program
- NAE Capital Expenditure Program.

WHAT OUR SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE	WHAT WE WILL DO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ 30 per cent target area of the Natural Area Estate is actively managed for pest plants and animals, improved ecological condition, and habitat protection. ✓ An increased understanding, protection and management of Aboriginal cultural heritage sites is being led by Indigenous Rangers. ✓ Masterplans and management plans are completed for the three largest conservation estates (Flinders - Goolman; White Rock - Spring Mountain; and Mount Grandchester conservation estates). ✓ Asset management plans, with agreed service standards, are completed for the Natural Area Network. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Increase management within the existing conservation estates and reserves to a level needed for improving condition. ✓ Phased increase in annual budget for conservation land management programs to grow the program to meet our target of 30 per cent of the natural area estate actively managed. ✓ Within the Natural Environment Branch, establish: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Two Indigenous Ranger positions in collaboration with the Traditional Owners and registered Native Title Party, and – Two Conservation Management Officer positions to plan, manage and deliver on the conservation works and fire management programs across the natural area network. ✓ Complete Masterplans and review Management Plans for priority estates. ✓ Develop asset management plans to inform maintenance standards and budget requirements for the Natural Area Network.



📍 Purga Nature Reserve

2. TARGETED LAND ACQUISITION

Ipswich has secured about 6,000 hectares of conservation estate as freehold land through Enviroplan since 1996. The prioritisation of land for purchase has been guided by council's previous Nature Conservation Strategies in 2000, 2008 and 2015, and based on the CAR (Comprehensive, Adequate and Representative) system for vegetation protection. In addition, scenic amenity and the provision of nature-based recreation opportunities have been used as secondary factors to assess acquisition priorities.

Strategic properties were considered for voluntary acquisition based on criteria such as protection of significant species, habitats or landscapes, consolidation within council's conservation estates, enhancing water quality and catchments, and supporting nature-based recreation.

Land acquisition priorities over the next 10 years will be on establishing new areas suitable for reinstatement of native vegetation or floodplain reengagement through mechanisms such as environmental markets. This includes land suitable for receiving offsets, creating corridor connections, increasing city greening, and expanding native bushland areas across the city.

Priority acquisition areas will be guided by the Natural Environment Strategy and the Enviroplan Acquisition Plan. Six important locations for acquisition have been previously identified as Grandchester, South Ripley, Pine Mountain, Ten Mile Swamp, Seven Mile Swamp and Willowbank/Ebenezer.

Securing future land will primarily be through opportunistic purchase via market sales or voluntary contact from landowners. However, for high priority areas, there may be a need for a more targeted approach to landholders in the future. Funding for acquisition may be sourced from the Enviroplan reserve, through the annual capital allocation or through borrowings and repaid annually through the Enviroplan Levy as has been done previously.

Table 1 – Acquisition Priorities

LOCALITY	STRATEGY
Grandchester	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expansion of the Mount Grandchester Conservation Estate through acquisition of land directly adjoining the estate to increase the area of protected land within the Little Liverpool Range, and to provide future nature-based recreation and ecotourism opportunities.
Ripley Valley	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure a conservation corridor in South Ripley Valley to link Flinders - Goolman and White Rock - Spring Mountain conservation estates. Focus on denuded land suitable for revegetation, habitat restoration, and nature-based recreation linkages.
Pine Mountain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure land between Pine Mountain and Kholo Enviroplan Reserve (Cameron's Scrub) through acquisition of land on or directly surrounding the Pine Mountain landscape feature.
Bremer and Warrill Basin Wetlands (e.g. Ten Mile Swamp, Seven Mile Swamp)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure significant wetlands for the protection of threatened ecosystems and species, improve waterway and wetland health through floodplain management, and provide areas for delivery of nature-based solutions for flood mitigation.
Ebenezer / Willowbank	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secure koala habitat, patches of critically endangered <i>Melaleuca irbyana</i> (Swamp Tea-tree), natural floodplains and wetlands Focus on denuded land suitable for revegetation and the delivery of nature-based solutions.

WHAT OUR SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE	WHAT WE WILL DO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Expansion of the Natural Area Estate within high priority areas for protection of threatened species. ✓ Land secured for the purpose of increasing vegetation cover in Ipswich; attracting investment through alternative revenue sources such as environmental markets and offsets; and to deliver nature-based solutions for floodplain reengagement. ✓ Increased protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage sites and landscapes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Review and update the Enviroplan Acquisition Plan, to include areas of consolidation and focus on land for the purpose of receiving offsets or carbon farms. ✓ Identify and explore alternative funding models to support the delivery of the Enviroplan Acquisition Plan.



📍 White Rock - Spring Mountain Conservation Estate

3. ENHANCING VISITOR EXPERIENCES

Ipswich's conservation estates and reserves are the 'green lungs' of the city, providing the scenic backdrop and a natural respite for a rapidly growing urban population. Greenfield developments at Springfield Central, South Redbank Plains and South Ripley will see a predicted 300,000 people living on the doorstep of the White Rock - Spring Mountain and the Flinders - Goolman conservation estates. A further 150,000–200,000 people are expected to live in close proximity to these estates in new greenfield developments in the adjoining local government suburbs of Greenbank, Flagstone and Undulla.

Recreation studies show a growing trend in outdoor and nature-based recreation, with an increase in the number of people involved in bushwalking, mountain-biking and trail runs. Well designed and constructed nature-based recreation and visitor infrastructure is critical to ensure visitors and users have safe access to the conservation estates, while experiencing the natural values and providing protection to the high biodiversity and cultural values.

Visitor and user experiences in natural areas are greatly enhanced when there is a demonstrated commitment to conservation outcomes, and a presence of on-site conservation and visitor management officers. Dedicated staff with skills in visitor management, interpretative presentations and nature-based recreation will support the achievement of enhancing visitor experiences and the active promotion of Ipswich's natural areas as nature-based recreation destinations. Council currently has one visitor management officer to cover the entire natural area network. To date, the officer has been limited to focusing on visitor experiences within the White Rock - Spring Mountain Conservation due to the popularity of White Rock, and the impacts to ecological and cultural values.

Traditional Owners and Indigenous Rangers will play a key role in ensuring Aboriginal Cultural Heritage, landscapes and values are protected and managed within the conservation estates. Through discussions with Traditional Owners, there is strong connection to the conservation estates, and concerns raised with ongoing impacts to cultural values. There is also growing community interest and demand for cultural education and interpretative experiences which showcase Indigenous knowledge of Ipswich's natural environment, its landscapes, flora and fauna, and significant sites. These experiences should be led by Indigenous Rangers and incorporated into council's visitor experience programs.

Six conservation estates and reserves have been identified as priorities for investment in nature-based recreation and visitor infrastructure. This may include capital investment for visitor information centres, community hubs, day use areas, wayfinding and information signage, single and multi-use track networks, boardwalks and ecotourism joint ventures.

These priority natural areas are:

- White Rock - Spring Mountain Conservation Estate
- Flinders - Goolman Conservation Estate
- Mount Grandchester Conservation Estate
- Denmark Hill Conservation Reserve
- Purga Nature Reserve
- Kholo Enviroplan Reserve (Cameron's Scrub) and Sapling Pocket

Capital investment for nature-based recreation and visitor infrastructure will be informed by site-based masterplans for each of the prioritised conservation estates and reserves. Currently, the White Rock - Spring Mountain Conservation Estate Masterplan has been adopted by council and the Flinders - Goolman Conservation Estate Masterplan is underway.

Outside of an adopted masterplan, capital investment decisions will be guided by a set of criteria, being:

- Safety / Australian standards
- Conservation significance
- Cultural significance
- User demand and nature-based recreation need
- Accessibility
- Ecotourism potential
- Co-investment opportunities (eg: joint ventures, government grants, labour markets)



Table 2 – Priority Conservation Estates and Reserves for Capital Investment

STRATEGY	STRATEGY
White Rock – Spring Mountain Conservation Estate	
<p>Ipswich's premier nature-based recreation Hub</p> <p><i>Centrally located in the heart of large urban population areas with an estimated 500,000 people over the next 20 years to live on the doorstep of this culturally significant and biologically diverse conservation estate.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Visitor Information and Environmental Education Centre ▪ Single and multi-use recreation trail network upgrades and expansion ▪ Smart walks with digital technology (apps for maps) and signage ▪ Traditional Owner interpretative walks to identified / agreed areas of cultural significance ▪ Lookouts at high vantage points along ridgelines ▪ Visitor access and day use area(s) from Springfield Central ▪ Entry nodes from Ripley Valley, including trail heads and track network to link with Paperbark Flats day-use area.
Flinders – Goolman Conservation Estate	
<p>Ipswich's premier environmental and iconic species estate</p> <p><i>Flinders Peak is Ipswich's highest peak and is an iconic feature in Ipswich's scenic landscape. The rocky outcrops across the estate provide essential habitat for the Brush-tailed rock wallaby and has high ecological and cultural significance.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Facilitated nature-based recreation, guided bushwalks and interpretative experiences ▪ Ecotourism joint ventures (e.g. glamping, tree-top walks) ▪ Brush-tailed rock wallaby experiences through digital signage and the construction of viewing points ▪ Flinders Plum day-use area upgrade of facilities, amenities and trail heads ▪ Flinders Road and entry feature upgrade ▪ Visitor access and day use area at Wards Road including picnic facilities, amenities, trail network, and gorge walk ▪ Spowers Road and entry feature upgrade ▪ Trail network linking Wards Road day-use area and Spowers Road entry with Hardings Paddock day-use area ▪ Traditional Owner interpretative walks to identified / agreed areas of cultural significance ▪ Expansion of campground at Hardings Paddock.
Denmark Hill Conservation Reserve	
<p>Urban bushland experience</p> <p><i>Centrally located within the Ipswich CBD and inner-city precinct with a rich mining and fossil history. Denmark Hill is home to a small resident population of koala.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Master plan Denmark Hill as Ipswich's premier urban bushland experience within the inner-city green space network ▪ Fossil information centre ▪ Digital interpretative signage focused on the mining and fossil history ▪ Trail network upgrade, including access to the water tower ▪ Expansion of the nature-play area ▪ Understorey vegetation thinning to increase visibility and create an open bushland experience ▪ New parking and entry location ▪ Adventure activity / infrastructure.

STRATEGY	
Kholo Enviroplan Reserve (Cameron's Scrub) / Sapling Pocket	
<p>Ipswich's premier river and bushland experience</p> <p><i>Sapling Pocket offers a prime location for nature and water-based recreation nestled in the largest remaining tract of semi-evergreen vine forest on the mid-Brisbane River. Kholo Enviroplan Reserve is a biologically rich estate with a wide variety of significant flora and fauna species.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Visitor access and day use area at Sapling Pocket including amenities, picnic facilities, canoe launch and trail heads ▪ Single use hiking trails ▪ Joint venture with Education Queensland / Private school(s) / Scouts to create an environmental education or adventure facility for school groups ▪ Ecotourism joint ventures (e.g. glamping on the Brisbane River at Kholo Enviroplan Reserve).
Mount Grandchester Conservation Estate	
<p>Ipswich's western nature-based recreation hub and koala refuge</p> <p><i>Located at the northern extent of the Little Liverpool Range, Mount Grandchester Conservation Estate provides important habitat for Koala and Glossy black cockatoos. The estate offers sweeping views of the Bremer River basin and is an ideal location for nature-based recreation.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ecotourism joint venture (e.g. eco-cabins, touring MTB) ▪ Horse-riding facilities including upgrade of the Woolshed holding yards ▪ Visitor access and day use areas off Long Gully Road and Heise Road ▪ Hiking trail network including a Mount Grandchester peak track and connection to Grandchester township ▪ Partnership with a local university or school as a research site ▪ Koala habitat refuges and offset sites.
Purga Nature Reserve	
<p>Swamp tea-tree and Koala hub</p> <p><i>Purga Nature Reserve provides significant koala habitat and wetlands adjoining Purga Creek. The Reserve has the largest protected tract of the critically endangered Swamp tea-tree ecosystem (<i>Melaleuca irbyana</i>) in Australia.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Koala and wetland education and visitor centre ▪ Boardwalk, tracks and interpretive signage upgrades ▪ Middle Road entry feature upgrade

WHAT OUR SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE	WHAT WE WILL DO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Increased visitor experiences offered across the Natural Area Estate, including guided and self-guided options ✓ Aboriginal cultural heritage experiences offered in partnership with Traditional Owners ✓ Ipswich's natural areas are valued and promoted as destinations for conservation and nature-based recreation enthusiasts, and ecotourism experiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Finalise masterplans for the highest priority conservation estates to inform nature-based recreation and visitor experience decisions ✓ Engage with the Traditional Owners in the development of the masterplans, and to identify opportunities for Aboriginal cultural heritage experiences ✓ Within the Natural Environment Branch, establish an additional Conservation Visitor Management Officer position ✓ Explore and investigate options for partnerships and joint ventures in providing Ecotourism and Environmental Education experiences within the Natural Area Estate.



4. EXPLORING ALTERNATIVE REVENUE SOURCES

Environmental markets

Environmental markets are being adopted globally for use in carbon abatement and sequestration, pollution reduction, environmental offsets, reef credits and biodiversity enhancement. These markets are created where a financial value is placed on an environmental or ecosystem service, providing an alternative revenue source for channelling investment towards on-ground solutions.

In 2023, the Australian Parliament passed the Nature Repair Bill. It establishes a legislative framework for the national, voluntary Nature Repair Market to enable private finance to invest in the repair and protection of the natural environment. The objects of the Act are to enhance biodiversity and promote engagement and cooperation of market participants in the enhancement or protection of biodiversity in native species in Australia.

Tradable certificates will be tracked through a national register, providing a framework to facilitate private and philanthropic investment in biodiversity. Businesses and investors seeking to invest in projects for carbon abatement or to meet their ESG requirements will be able to purchase the certificates. Private landholders, including local governments, can participate in the market through the delivery of projects on land, in waterways, and in marine and coastal environments.

Environmental markets in Australia consist of:

- **Carbon markets**

- Australian Carbon Credit Unit (ACCU) scheme is an example of a carbon market, generating carbon credits by reducing emissions or increasing sequestration.

- **Biodiversity markets**

- Biodiversity credits are created through the protection or restoration of species or ecosystem biodiversity on private land.

- **Water markets**

- Market-based approaches are used to manage water distribution or improve water quality.

- **Co-benefit markets**

- May apply when other carbon or environmental projects lead to additional positive environmental, socioeconomic and First Nations outcomes.

- **Energy and renewable markets**

- Financial compensation for energy saving and renewable energy initiatives.

- **Sustainable and green finance**

- Finance sector developing financial products and mechanisms to value environmental goods and services including debt, equity, guarantees, and other investments, such as green loans and green bonds to encourage on-farm investments.

Environmental markets provide an opportunity for council to investigate and explore alternative revenue sources for on-ground environmental improvement, and to support private landholders in conservation management. Combined with a more strategic and targeted investment approach for Enviroplan funds, these markets will allow council to increase investment in on-ground environmental improvement and carbon sequestration. This may be achieved by using Enviroplan funds to purchase denuded land and supplementing with externally sourced revenue for the purpose of replanting. Alternatively, by proactively engaging in environmental markets for the protection and management of native species and ecosystems within existing conservation estates and reserves.

Nature-based solutions

Nature-based solutions are actions to protect, sustainably manage, or restore natural ecosystems, while also addressing challenges such as climate change, water security, or natural disasters. As an example, flooding impacts traditionally tackled by infrastructure such as dams and levees can be addressed through nature-based solutions such as tree planting and floodplain reengagement. They are a cost-effective way of reducing climate related risks, whilst improving environmental outcomes and addressing land degradation.

Council is currently engaged in a nature-based solutions study to investigate possible solutions within Ipswich. This will assist council in the implementation of the Ipswich Integrated Catchment Plan which identifies nature-based solutions as a cost-effective approach for flood risk mitigation in several creek catchments, including the Bremer River, and Warrill and Bundamba creeks.

When coupled with green finance and environmental markets, nature-based solutions can provide many co-benefits for Ipswich.

Joint ventures

Ecotourism is a growing industry, with many people seeking a variety of nature-based recreation experiences that are both sustainable and engaging within the natural and cultural landscape. Ecotourism fosters environmental and cultural understanding into most forms of nature-based activities such as bushwalking, cycling, water-based activities, and other outdoor and adventure activities. With a focus on future investment in ecotourism in Ipswich, there is potential for Ipswich to grow this through partnerships and joint ventures with private ecotourism providers, universities, and other education or sustainable nature-based recreation organisations.

This may include:

- Eco-cabins
- Canoe / riverfront camping
- Mountain biking events
- Overnight walks
- Volun-tourism
- Environmental education and adventure camps.

Council's conservation estates and reserves have strong potential as nature-based and adventure tourism destinations. Several enabling factors underpin the success of building Ipswich's positioning as an attractive destination for ecotourism and adventure tourism investment. These are:

- Working closely with Traditional Owners in nature-based tourism ventures, and greater Indigenous participation in tourism planning
- Ensuring the environmental qualities (vistas, water quality, landscapes) that provide the opportunities are managed and not impacted by proposed uses
- Working with local providers and potential partners for ecotourism offerings
- Actively promoting Ipswich's potential for offering a wide-variety of outdoor nature-based activities.

WHAT OUR SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE	WHAT WE WILL DO
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Large-scale revegetation and restoration projects are funded through environmental markets and offsets on council-owned land and land acquired through Enviroplan ✓ Council has entered into a partnership or joint venture for ecotourism within a conservation estate ✓ Council has developed a portfolio of alternative revenue options for environment and sustainability outcomes ✓ Nature-based solutions are being delivered to address climate change and disaster risk impacts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Engage with relevant stakeholders and State Government agencies, such as Education Queensland, to investigate joint ventures and other partnership opportunities ✓ Investigate all possible avenues for alternative revenue to deliver environmental projects in Ipswich ✓ Continue to partner with universities and research institutes in identifying nature-based solutions for Ipswich in the management of natural hazards, such as flood risk ✓ Investigate partnership mechanisms and incentive packages to support private landholders in participating in landscape-scaled projects.

Expansion of the portfolio

The Enviroplan Program and Levy Policy stipulates what and how funds collected through the Levy can be used. There is potential for the policy to be reviewed to cover other environment and sustainability programs, particularly where there is a strong synergy with the current intent of the policy and in meeting the core objectives of council's environment and sustainability strategies.

Before moving to include other programs, consideration needs to be given to the ability of Enviroplan to meet the goals and objectives of the currently funded programs, and the impacts of expanding the portfolio on revenue, resourcing and expenditure. The below analysis summaries the risks and opportunities of including other programs.

Waterways and Wetlands

- Healthy waterways and catchments are a top environmental, cultural and community priority for Ipswich residents.
- Ipswich waterway and wetland values and management priorities have been articulated in council's adopted Waterway Health Strategy.

RISK	OPPORTUNITY	RECOMMENDATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ability to manage multiple priorities and legislative responsibilities. ▪ Links to other funding sources such as stormwater quality offsets. ▪ Mostly on private land and not within council's jurisdiction. ▪ Requires significant funding to make a change to waterway health and aesthetics. ▪ Community expectations vs reality of improving waterway health in the short term. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Synergies with habitat and iconic species management. ▪ Use of dedicated funding for waterway health improvement, and aquatic habitat restoration. ▪ Links with local and regional funding bodies, and grants e.g. CityDeals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Investigate the pros and cons and model the financial impacts of including waterway and wetland management under Enviroplan. ▪ Consider future inclusion of waterway and wetland management over the next three years.

Urban greening

- Urban greening is an important part of creating a resilient and liveable city. The urban forest, urban bushland and corridors, and planting on public and private land all contribute to increasing the greening of the city.
- Urban greening provides shade and cooling, increases well-being and aesthetics, mitigates the impacts of climate change, and reduces the urban heat island effect.
- Council's goal is to increase the quality and quantity of vegetation cover across Ipswich's urban footprint. The Urban Greening Plan provides a plan for this, currently funded through general revenue.

RISK	OPPORTUNITY	RECOMMENDATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Currently delivered via other programs such as urban street tree program. Requirement of developers to contribute to the streetscape through the Ipswich Planning Scheme. Potential redirection of funds from the primary purpose of biodiversity and conservation management to amenity outcomes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To make a notable increase in urban canopy and urban biodiversity. Urban greening is an environmental asset that has had limited dedicated funding. Increase community wellbeing benefits, such as urban cooling and urban amenity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate the pros and cons and model the financial impacts of including urban greening under Enviroplan. Consider future of inclusion urban greening over the next three years.

Sustainability and Decarbonisation

- Council's Sustainability Strategy details how council will increase existing efforts and implement new actions towards making Ipswich a more sustainable city.
- The strategy provides direction on how we will deliver, partner and advocate for effective sustainability outcomes.
- Council has made a commitment to acting on climate change by setting a target to reduce operational carbon emissions by 50 percent by 2026.
- This will be achieved through initiatives such as moving to 100 percent renewable energy, transitioning to a zero emissions fleet, carbon sequestration, installation of solar and other energy efficiency initiatives.

RISK	OPPORTUNITY	RECOMMENDATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Actions to meet the operational carbon emissions target are primarily associated with council facilities and resource consumption. Significant costs associated with operational expenditure for council's annual electricity cost, and fuel usage. Well outside the current scope of Enviroplan. Enviroplan Levy is not sufficient to cover major capital and operational investment needed for transition to 100 per cent renewable energy or zero emission vehicles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Synergy with carbon sequestration through revegetation and urban greening. Synergy between environmental markets and carbon offsets. Linkages with aspects of sustainability (ie: tree planting), which may be achieved through urban greening and other environmental initiatives funded under Enviroplan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainability is not included in the Enviroplan program. Investigate opportunities for co-benefits in projects, such as tree plantings, that value-add to investments made under Enviroplan.

FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

Benchmarking

A comparison of similar environmental levies across South-East Queensland local governments has been undertaken to ascertain where Ipswich is placed in relation to these, and to inform any future increases in the Enviroplan Levy.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT	ANNUAL LEVY (2022/2023)	EXPENDITURE ITEMS
Ipswich City Council <i>Enviroplan Levy</i>	\$53 per rateable property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acquisition Planning and research Management and embellishment of conservation areas Community support and events Private landholder support
Sunshine Coast Regional Council <i>Environment Levy</i>	\$80 per rateable property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community support On-ground projects Knowledge building Acquisition Other environmental activities
City of Gold Coast <i>Open Space Levy</i>	\$58.50	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nature-based recreation Natural area management Private landholder support programs
Brisbane City Council <i>Environmental Management and Compliance Levy</i>	5% of general rates \$38.28 – \$126,065.04	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitoring and enforcement of environmental compliance Environmental programs
Brisbane City Council <i>Bushland Preservation Levy</i>	3% of general rates \$29.72 – \$88,245.56	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acquisition Protection of natural bushland Private landholder support programs Other environmental programs
Logan City Council <i>Environmental Levy</i>	\$94.40 per rateable property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Management of ecologically significant land Community support and events River recovery, nature conservation and climate change
Redland City Council <i>Environment and Coastal Management Levy</i>	\$172 per rateable property	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Acquisition Management and restoration of natural bushland Waterway rehabilitation Community support and private landholder programs

Note: Unlike most other local governments, Ipswich City Council manages the vast majority of publicly owned natural areas and bushland in Ipswich, as owner in freehold or as trustee for State land under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*.

SCENARIOS AND 10-YEAR FINANCIAL MODEL

Scenario 1: Enhanced conservation management

Including:

- a. Increased budget for conservation management programs to meet minimum service standards, improve biodiversity condition, and to achieve the target of 30 per cent of active management across the Natural Area Estate
- b. Dedicated resourcing for conservation management funded through Enviroplan for positions in conservation management, visitor management, and Indigenous rangers.

Scenario 2: Annual land acquisition allocation

Including:

- a. Acquisition of denuded land for the purpose of receiving offsets or large-scale revegetation projects
- b. Securing priority conservation and landscape areas.

Scenario 3: Major capital projects to increase visitor experiences

Including:

- a. Visitor infrastructure upgrades in currently opened conservation estates
- b. Opening new conservation areas in highest priority conservation estates (e.g. Mount Grandchester Conservation Estate)
- c. Supporting joint venture opportunities.

A high-level financial model across the 10 years has been developed to include consideration for the three scenarios of increased conservation management, targeted land acquisition, and enhanced visitor experiences.

The model has been developed on the following base assumptions.

- Population growth is set at the rate defined by Treasury (between 2.5% – 3.5%)
- The annual levy is increased by \$5 per year
- Maintenance is based on current rates and grow in line with annual CPI increases
- Base service standards are not sufficient. New service standards have been piloted in the White Rock - Spring Mountain Conservation Estate and are now being tested across the network for inform the development of minimum acceptable standards and associated unit rates. These will be included into the model in future years, once tested
- Natural Area asset data and an understanding of the full extent of assets is still maturing
- Unexpended Enviroplan revenue is accounted for as the Enviroplan reserve, and any underspends will be returned into the reserve each year
- Funds may be drawn from the Enviroplan reserve for unplanned or emergent expenditure, such as opportunistic land purchases
- Alternative funding sources have not been included in the model
- Years 1–3 have been developed with a higher level of confidence in proposed expenditure, with years 4–10 being more indicative
- The current loan will be fully repaid by December 2026.



Ipswich City Council
PO Box 191, Ipswich QLD 4305, Australia

Phone (07) 3810 6666
council@ipswich.qld.gov.au
ipswich.qld.gov.au

Join us online:



[/IpswichCityCouncil](https://www.facebook.com/IpswichCityCouncil)



[/ipswich-city-council](https://www.linkedin.com/company/ipswich-city-council)



[/IpswichCityCouncilTV](https://www.youtube.com/IpswichCityCouncilTV)