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1. Statement

Council recognises that identifying, protecting, and maintaining the health of vital ecosystems and natural environmental values is a priority in creating a sustainable and liveable community.

The levy provides funding for Enviroplan projects and initiatives, associated with implementation of council's strategies/plans.

These projects and initiatives directly address the protection and enhancement of Ipswich's natural environmental values including, but not limited to:

- Significant habitat for flora & fauna
- Vegetation communities
- Aboriginal Cultural Landscape values and regional landscape corridors

2. Purpose and Principles

This policy guides Council's decision making to inform allocation of revenue generated from the levy.

This policy is guided by the following principles:

- Transparent, systematic and practical delivery;
- Conservation, improvement and adaptive management;
- Collaborative partnerships with stakeholders; and
- Council's Nature Conservation Strategy.

The intended outcomes of this policy are:

- support for Council to achieve its nature conservation vision;
- create a healthy and vibrant natural environment, highly valued by, and connected to the community;
- support development and implementation of nature conservation strategies/plans;
- acquisition of land with significant nature conservation values and protection in council's Natural Area Estate;

- preserve, manage and promote Aboriginal Cultural Heritage and Cultural Landscape values within the Natural Area Estate;
- maintain and protect European cultural heritage values within the Natural Area Estate;
- embellishment and promotion of nature-based recreation within the Natural Area Estate while maintaining their nature conservation and cultural landscape values;
- effective nature conservation partnerships with a range of stakeholders;
- community nature conservation engagement and support initiatives; and
- an increased level of awareness and engagement with regard to nature conservation issues.

To achieve this the Environment Levy Revenue will be distributed to the Enviroplan Program in the following ways:

- The annual levy charge per rateable property is reviewed and determined by Council as part of adopting its annual revenue statement.
- All revenue raised through the levy is placed into Council's general revenue and is accounted for in a clear and transparent way to ensure it is used for Enviroplan project and program spending only.
- In addition to revenue generated from property charges, levy funding may also be generated through approved levy business activities which may include grants, fund matching, fees, payments, penalty charges, donations and sponsorships.
- Levy can be used in the development of the annual Ipswich Enviroplan Program.
- The levy can only be expended with the Ipswich local government area.
- The amount of environment levy revenue allocated to each of the four primary Ipswich Enviroplan Program funding themes is determined based on an assessment of annual priorities and emerging needs and endorsed by council.
- Expenditure of the levy for enhancing core environmental values is guided by the *Nature Conservation Strategy* which is developed based on evidence based research and studies using qualified independent specialists, and reviewed every 5 years.
- Any unspent funds associated with each of the four funding themes is returned to the Enviroplan Levy fund.

The Enviroplan Program (the program) aims to deliver outcomes to protect and enhance the health of Ipswich's natural environment through four program funding themes:

- Acquisition of significant nature conservation land:
 - Protect and enhance the City's and region's environmental values and ecological processes by expanding nature conservation areas through a strategic approach to acquiring land.
- Community nature conservation partnerships and support:
 - Protect, manage and enhance nature conservation through building community capacity and effective partnerships with stakeholders.

- Nature conservation planning:
 - Create a resilient natural environment and lessen the impact of detrimental processes through city-wide systematic planning, management and research activities/projects.
- Embellishment, capital and operational management investment within the Natural Area Estate
 - Protect, manage and enhance the Natural Area Estate (the Estate) through the application of sound environmental management principles – consistent with the Conservation Estates and Reserves Management Policy.
 - Funding supports Council’s nominated environmental operational management activities within the Estate in accordance with their strategies, plans and service levels.

3. Strategic Plan Links

This policy aligns with the following iFuture 2021-2026 Corporate Plan themes:

- Natural and Sustainable
- A Trusted and Leading Organisation

4. Regulatory Authority

The implementation, application and governance of Enviroplan will give consideration to the following regulatory authority:

- *Local Government Act 2009*
- *Local Government Regulation 2012*
- *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003*
- *Nature Conservation Act 1992*
- *Land Title Act 1994*
- *Vegetation Management Act 1999*
- *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*
- *Environmental Protection Act 1994*

5. Human Rights Commitment

Ipswich City Council (Council) has considered the human rights protected under the *Human Rights Act 2019 (Qld)* (the Act) when adopting and/or amending this policy. When applying this policy, Council will act and make decisions in a way that is compatible with human rights and give proper consideration to a human right relevant to the decision in accordance with the Act.

6. Scope

This policy supports the allocation of funds and management of the levy through Enviroplan’s projects and initiatives that complement council’s core environmental activities; and applies to all Council endorsed Enviroplan projects and initiatives that are funded and supported, wholly or partly with revenue from the levy.

Ipswich supports a highly diverse range of vegetation communities that provide home for a wide number of native flora and fauna - all of which help support the lifestyle, liveability and livelihoods of the region.

Council’s seminal document for citywide natural environment management, its *Nature Conservation Strategy*, is used to inform investment and resource focus.

The environment levy (charge) is a key revenue source to assist in the implementation of Council’s terrestrial nature conservation – the Ipswich Enviroplan Program. Council can only use funds raised via a separate charge for the specific purpose identified in the revenue statement adopted each year as part of Council’s annual budget process. All revenue raised through the levy is accounted for separately from Council’s general revenue and is not at any time available for expenditure as general revenue.

The intent of the Ipswich Enviroplan Program is to ensure terrestrial nature conservation values within the city are managed and maintained for future generations. Enviroplan aims to provide both strategic and locally based environmental initiatives to facilitate the retention and management of the natural resources within Ipswich City.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

Council will review the environment levy charge, Policy and Program annually.

The implementation of the Enviroplan Program and Policy is integrated across the business area of Infrastructure and Environment Department, and the following key roles are responsible for specific aspects:

Role	Responsibility
General Manager (Infrastructure & Environment)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> For the overall coordination of the Enviroplan Program and levy including policy guidance to Council, coordination of corporate and other reporting requirements, the preparation of a five year program. Coordinates decision making and recommends the Nature Conservation Strategy and other studies to Council. Ensure consultation with Council is undertaken as part of the review of the Enviroplan levy.
Manager (Environment and Sustainability)	Ensure that the Enviroplan Program and associated projects are delivered in accordance with the policy and funds are applied accordingly. Ensure the delivery of the Nature Conservation Strategy.
Manager (Works and Field Services)	Ensure that delivery of maintenance and management within the Natural Area Estate is in accordance with the policy and funds and applied respectively.
Manager Business Services Infrastructure and Environment	Support with the provision of financial reporting on a regular basis.
Principal Officer (Finance & Funding)	Support with the financial modelling and funding direction.

8. Key Stakeholders

The following will be consulted during the review process:

- Manager (Environment and Sustainability)

- Manager (Works and Field Services)
- Manager Business Services Infrastructure and Environment
- Principal Officer (Finance & Funding)
- Business Finance Officer
- Natural Environment and Land Manager
- Senior Planning Officer (Strategic Conservation Planning)

9. Monitoring and Evaluation

Enviroplan monitoring and evaluation includes:

- A report is tabled with Council on an annual basis to report on financial year performance/achievements on program delivery.
- Core environmental values are monitored and measurement on a 5-year basis using independent qualified scientists.
- A reviewed after 3 years and after assessing the balance of acquisitions and enhancements.

10. Definitions

Aboriginal Cultural Heritage: is anything that is (in accordance with the *Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003*) –

- (a) a significant Aboriginal area in Queensland; or
- (b) a significant Aboriginal object; or
- (c) evidence, of archaeological or historic significance, of Aboriginal occupation of an area of Queensland.

Aboriginal Cultural Landscape Feature: is a feature valued by an Aboriginal group (or groups) because of their long and complex relationship with that land. Features include, but are not limited to rock outcrops, caves, areas of biogeographical significance, waterholes, springs, particular types of vegetation and some hill and mound formations.

Aboriginal cultural landscape emphasises the landscape-scale of history and the connectivity between people, places and heritage items. It recognises that the present landscape is the product of long-term and complex relationships between people and the environment.

Embellishment: Additions added to improve the visitor experience or management within Natural Area Estates.

Environment Levy: refers to a levy (charge) raised by Ipswich City Council (in accordance with the Queensland *Local Government Act 2009*), on all rateable properties within its jurisdiction, in order to assist with environmental protection and management.

Natural Area Estate: Collection of Council's public open space lands comprising Conservation Estates and Conservation Reserves (excluding local bushland reserves) that are specifically managed by Council for their nature conservation values and ecological importance.

Nature-Based Recreation: Activities that are dependent on the natural environment; have an appreciation of nature as a motivational factor; do not require substantial modification to the natural environment; and are environmentally sustainable.

Nature Conservation Values: A tool used to classify prioritise conservation efforts for ecosystems, habitat and their constituent parts such as plant and animal species.

Operational Management: Activity concerned with planning, organising and delivering habitat restoration works.

Significant Nature Conservation Land: Defined areas that contain ecosystems and habitat of highest priority for protection and maintenance efforts.

Terrestrial: relating to land based aspects rather than water and air.

11. Policy Owner

The General Manager (Infrastructure and Environment) is the policy owner and the relevant Manager (Environment and Sustainability) is responsible for authoring and reviewing this policy.