

City of Ipswich **Ipswich Enviroplan Program and Levy Progress Report**

2019-2020



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View of White Rock

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DISCLAIMER

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

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

ENVIROPLAN SNAPSHOT

In November 2019 council adopted an updated policy and procedure for the Ipswich Enviroplan Program and Levy. This heralded an increase in transparency and governance for the long-standing initiative. As a result, council committed to providing an annual report and making this available to the community. This report is the inaugural document providing a summary of the 2019-2020 financial year program deliverables and investment.

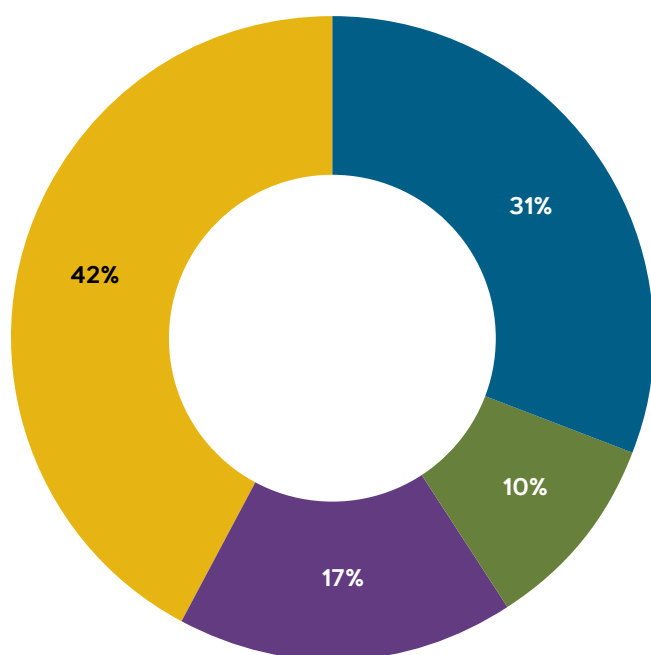
The amount of special charge for Ipswich Enviroplan Program on all rateable land for the 2019-2020 financial year \$45.00. During this period revenue totalling \$3,765,416 was raised through the levy.

All revenue collected via Enviroplan Levy, plus any additional unspent Levy funds, is accounted for separately from council's general revenue. The balance of funds accounted for in reserve at the end of the 2019-2020 financial year was \$5,210,913

As a breakdown of your levy:

Servicing loan for land acquisition	\$13.95
Partnering and supporting the community	\$4.50
Planning citywide nature conservation	\$7.65
Managing natural areas	\$18.90
Total Levy Charge	\$45.00

Where did your levy funds go in 2019-2020?



- Acquisition of significant nature conservation land and loan servicing – \$861k
- Community nature conservation partnerships and support – \$269k
- Nature conservation planning – \$461k
- Embellishment, capital and operational management investment within the Natural Area Estate – \$1.1m

Total Spend: \$2.6m

The levy is a key funding source in the delivery of the Ipswich Nature Conservation Strategy. This strategy outlines council's strategic approach, objectives and long-term vision for Ipswich's natural environment. It also provides direction for decision-making, prioritisation and implementation.

IPSWICH NATURE CONSERVATION STRATEGY 2015 OBJECTIVES



Building a resilient natural environment



Maintaining biodiversity



Investing in nature conservation



Promoting partnerships

ACQUISITION OF SIGNIFICANT CONSERVATION LAND AND LOAN SERVICING

Future-proofing natural areas.

Through the Enviroplan Acquisition Program council identifies and prioritises valuable conservation areas across the city. Council considers these areas for voluntary purchase and negotiates with landholders willing to sell land for conservation.

Additional funds totalling \$10 million were borrowed against the levy from Queensland Treasury Corporation to assist with both purchasing new land as well as increasing capital investment needed for nature-based recreation infrastructure in the Natural Area Estate. A loan for \$6 million was taken in 2011 and a further \$4 million in 2012. In 2014/2015 the loans were combined into one account. The loan terms are for 15 years.

Direction for fund investment is guided by council's adopted Enviroplan Capital Investment Strategy 2017-2022. The plan is to:

- double visitation to the conservation estates
- design and construct \$5 million worth of new ecotourism, nature-based recreation, visitor access and cultural awareness infrastructure
- deliver \$1 million worth of improvements to existing infrastructure/conservation estate assets
- employ two dedicated visitor management officers
- acquire an additional 500 hectares of conservation estate.

\$861,000 in Enviroplan funds was allocated to service the loan in 2019-2020. As of June 2020 the closing balance on the loan is \$4.5 million.

Improvements were made to the program during the year by documenting the process for assessing land and approval. This was applied to the seven community enquiries received to purchase land. Although none were purchased, one of these enquiries has progressed to an active investigation that has carried over into 2020-2021.

Acquisition snapshot since 2011

- \$3.53M total investment
- 550ha land acquired
- 312ha added to Mount Grandchester Conservation Estate
- 238ha added to Flinders-Goolman Conservation Estate

ENVIROPLAN CAPITAL INVESTMENT STRATEGY 2017-2022

EXPANSION & MANAGEMENT OF COUNCIL'S NATURAL AREA ESTATE

As the population of Ipswich continues to grow, so too will the importance of our natural areas to function as biologically rich ecosystems and desired destinations for nature-based recreation.

Through well-planned and targeted investment, council will be better placed to balance the protection of biodiversity and cultural landscape values with the pressures and opportunities of increased visitation and use of our natural areas.

This will need a transition of capital investment from the acquisition of new conservation estates to the design and construction of purpose-built visitor and nature-based recreation infrastructure. This will need to be supported by a committed investment in the improvement of natural values and enhancement of visitor experiences.



COMMUNITY NATURE CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIPS & SUPPORT

Ongoing community support for conservation effort.

LANDHOLDER CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIPS PROGRAM (LCPP)

The LCPP is one of the mechanisms in the Nature Conservation Strategy 2015 (NCS), used to deliver on-ground conservation outcomes. The objectives of the LCPP are to protect, maintain and enhance biodiversity by:

- fostering stewardship and environmental advocacy
- facilitating on ground conservation outcomes and provide a reliable platform for conservation on private land
- supporting and up-skilling private landholders through education, provision of resources and knowledge sharing
- actively engage with landholders in strategic priority areas as defined by the Nature Conservation Strategy and the Waterway Health Strategy
- engaging with internal and external stakeholders to achieve broad environmental outcomes.

\$157k contributed by landholders in time, money or resources towards projects.

LANDHOLDER PROGRAM REVIEW

A review of the Landholder Conservation Partnerships Program was undertaken primarily to address transparency, accountability and legal concerns resulting from an internal audit in 2019, and was performed taking into account a range of council strategic planning documents as well as the views of various internal and external stakeholders. Program Officers engaged with an external consultant and reduced service levels in order to dedicate time to the development of a new model, which will launch in July 2021.



Renewed 2019/2020 Regional Partnerships:

- Queensland Fire and Biodiversity Consortium
- Land for Wildlife (SEQ)
- Little Liverpool Range Initiative

LAND MANAGEMENT PAYMENTS AND VOLUNTARY CONSERVATION AGREEMENT PROGRAM

Land management payments were provided to landholders with Voluntary Conservation Agreements. This financial assistance supports landholders with ongoing maintenance of significant nature conservation areas on private land.



\$106k Land Management Payments provided to 76 private landholders

LITTLE LIVERPOOL RANGE INITIATIVE

The Little Liverpool Range Initiative is a council-endorsed program supported through Enviroplan funds, which aims to achieve landscape-scale conservation through the collaboration between Ipswich, Lockyer Valley, Scenic Rim and Somerset councils, as well as a range of conservation organisations. Council employed a Project Officer to deliver the coordination of the Initiative at 0.2FTE; a position that is co-funded by the Turner Family Foundation, Queensland Trust for Nature and council. The project officer delivered workshops, property visits, developed a strategic plan and was successful in receiving a state funded grant.



BENEFITS IN REGIONAL COLLABORATION ON FIRE AND BIODIVERSITY

The Queensland Fire and Biodiversity Consortium (QFBC) is a network of land managers and stakeholders devoted to providing a coordinated response and best-practice recommendations for fire management, fire ecology and the conservation of biodiversity.

The research, work and knowledge within the network was used extensively in the planning and execution of council's prescribed burns and fuel reduction activities within the Natural Area Estate. Prior to work being undertaken, location of habitat trees and significant species were determined so protection measures were in place prior to burning.



NATURE CONSERVATION GRANTS PROGRAM

The levy supported landholders with Voluntary Conservation or historical agreements with environmental projects on their private property. Projects funded under the Nature Conservation Grant Program in 2019/2020 included weed removal in a variety of ecosystem types, riparian area rehabilitation, and restoration and rehabilitation of endemic dry-vine scrub.

\$75k provided in Nature Conservation Grants provided to 18 private landholders for projects.



ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY COMMUNITY GRANT PROGRAM

Financial assistance was provided to community-led initiatives that contribute to the protection, enhancement and sustainability of the environment. Projects funded included

- riparian koala habitat restoration in the Franklin Vale Creek Catchment
- clean-up Australia day event removing rubbish from local park and waterways
- community planting along the Bremer River
- school and community group community gardens and educational programs
- wildlife care equipment to help rehabilitate local wildlife.

\$13k of grants provided to community based projects.



ENVIROFORUM – OUR WILDLIFE NEIGHBOURS

Each year council invests the levy into Enviroforum as its leading community environmental awareness and capacity building event. Held on 22 August 2019, the event focused on the wildlife of Ipswich, their protection and their natural areas. Speaking topics encouraged discussion around the consideration of who are your wildlife neighbors, how can we protect them and their habitat and how wildlife and humans can live and interact together. The event also incorporated the inaugural Ipswich EnviroAwards which recognises and celebrates those in the community who are undertaking outstanding environmental and sustainability projects.

\$13k invested in delivery of the Enviroforum. 97 attendees heard from 5 key speakers and attended a networking event. 82% of attendees found the presentations improved their awareness of emerging issues and networking was again appreciated by attendees at the 2019 event.



NATURE CONSERVATION PLANNING

Targeting support for key species.

BRUSH-TAILED ROCK WALLABY RECOVERY ACTIONS

\$26K was invested in implementing key actions of the Brush-tailed Rock Wallaby Recovery Plan. Highlights included:

- rehabilitation of foraging habitat
- implementation of a feral pig control program targeted habitat areas on Mount Flinders
- undertaking monitoring of recovery areas, of which key sections show signs of habitat quality improvement.



KOALA CONSERVATION AND HABITAT MANAGEMENT

\$39K was invested in restoration and management activities to support koalas within key hotspot areas. This included:

- habitat restoration works at White Rock-Spring Mountain and Mount Grandchester conservation estates
- citywide monitoring run and population assessment.



CREATING A WALLABY STRONGHOLD

Council endorsed an ambitious plan to prevent declines in the northern part of the Brush-tailed Rock Wallaby range.

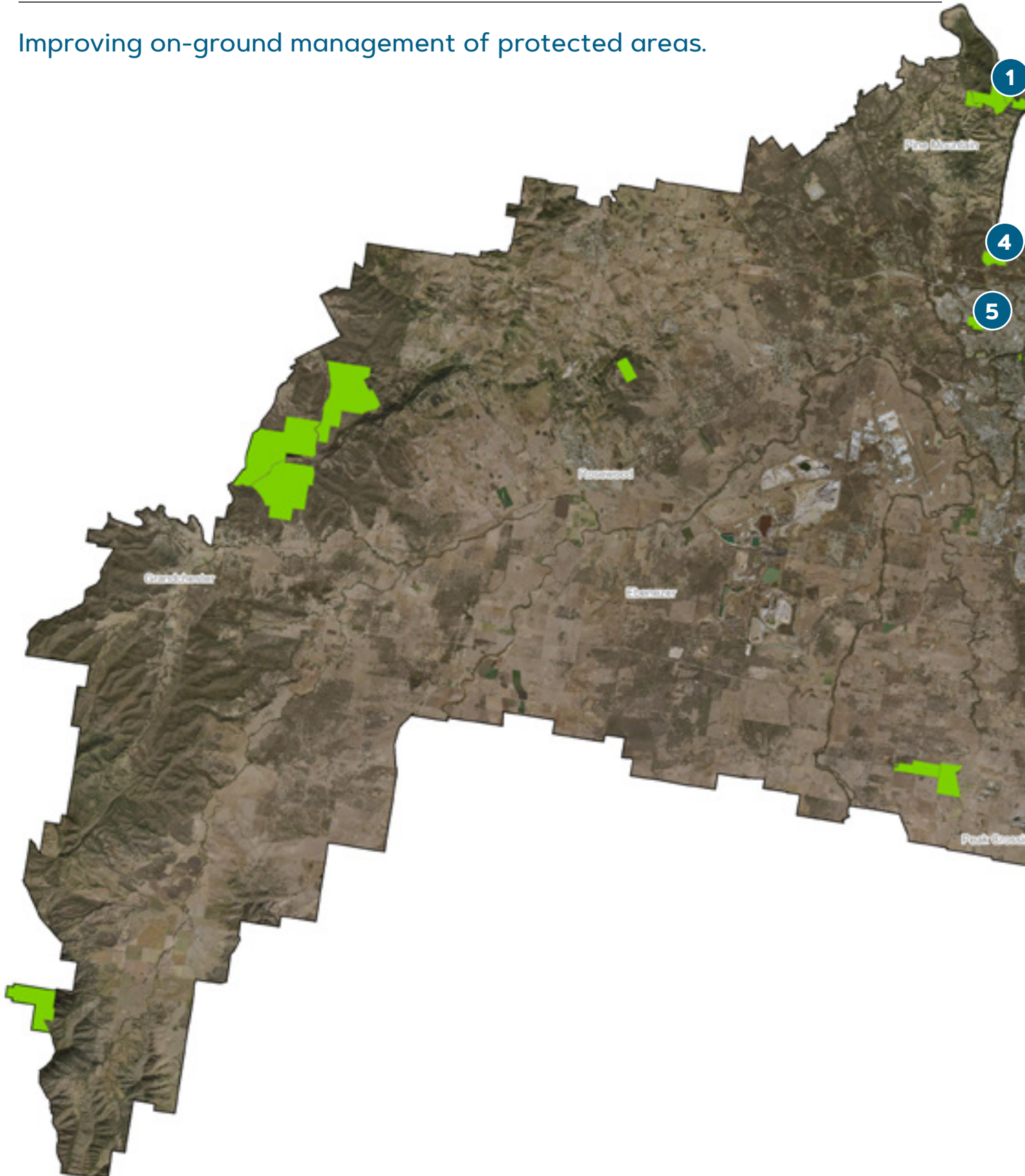
Habitat restoration activities have focused on sites within Flinders-Goolman Conservation Estate. Other actions include monitoring and supporting research. Monitoring typically involves placing remote sensing cameras in foraging habitat and areas of past sightings.

Scats are also used as evidence of wallaby presence within an area.

This information can be used to implement management approaches.

EMBELLISHMENT, CAPITAL AND OPERATIONAL MANAGEMENT INVESTMENT WITHIN THE NATURAL AREA ESTATE

Improving on-ground management of protected areas.





1 Kholo Enviroplan Reserve (Cameron's Scrub)

- \$80K invested on service track access improvements.

2 Denmark Hill Conservation Estate

- \$12K to undertake design work for upgrading visitor facilities
- \$26K to undertake gully erosion works.

3 Redbank Rifle Range

- \$154K spent on constructing barrier fencing.

4 Hillview Drive Reserve

- \$10k invested on constructing an access gate and associate barrier fencing.

5 Haig Street Quarry Conservation Reserve

- \$59k spent on constructing 470m of barrier fencing
- Aquatic weed harvester boom \$2k

6 Flinders-Goolman Conservation Estate

- \$370 spent on undertaking visitor information centre design work
- \$12,200 spent on installing double rail timber entrance fencing.

7 White-Rock Spring Mountain Conservation Estate

- \$154k on constructing barrier fencing, service track and installing recreational trail signage.

FENCING-OUT ILLEGAL ACCESS

Extensive environmental impacts to natural areas and financial impacts to council are caused by unauthorised access by motorised vehicles such as 4WDs, motorbikes, mini-bikes and quad bikes. They increase soil erosion, prevent revegetation, introduce weeds and disturb wildlife and legitimate park visitors.

With this in mind, council annually targets a priority capital infrastructure program for construction of barrier fences. Sites are selected based extent of activity, while balancing environmental values and risks to legitimate users.

MAINTAINING NATURAL AREAS

Three specialist natural area teams receive funding through Enviroplan to undertake management and maintenance activities in the Natural Area Estate.

Ensuring service tracks and fuel reduction areas are in working order is an important task for the team. \$134K was invested in undertaking inspections and carry-out maintenance of these tracks and areas across the estate network.

Pest plant control is also the team's focus. \$91K was spent on targeting pests threatening higher value areas.



FOCUS ON REDUCING FOREST FUEL

The frequency and intensity of forest fires is ever increasing, impacting both the community as well as the wildlife who call the forest home. With this in mind one of council's key pillars of its natural area fire program is investing in forest fuel reduction at strategically important sites.

Works totalling \$177K were undertaken to implement prescribed burns or remove understory fuel. Reducing understory fuel helps support management in wildfires situations.



PEST ANIMAL MANAGEMENT AT WORK

\$50K invested in undertaking pest animal management, primarily focusing on:

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

Over 100 pest animals controlled, feral pigs and wild dogs contributing the highest number of 60. These two species can cause the most significant environmental damage through predation and weed spread. 10 remote cameras in use 24/7.

EXPERIENCE NATURE

While the physical, emotional, mental and social benefits of experiencing nature are well documented, our conservation estates proved to be incredibly valuable in supporting community wellbeing during Covid restrictions. Visitors reported “being able to get out into nature is a lifesaver” and “thank God we can still come out here, the kids weren’t coping cooped up at home”. Similar sentiments were heard from numerous visitors. Numbers peaked in May with over 13,000 people visiting Paperbark Flats alone (White Rock – Spring Mountain Conservation Estate).

During the 19/20 financial year Experience Nature conducted a total of 24 nature activities with a total of 345 participants, including Nature at Night Adventures for children, Citylights and Moonrise Guided Nightwalks, and facilitated school excursions. These activities focus on enhancing community connection with the environmental and cultural values of our local natural areas, and support positive behaviour change in sustainable lifestyles. Activities were suspended from March to July due to Covid restrictions.

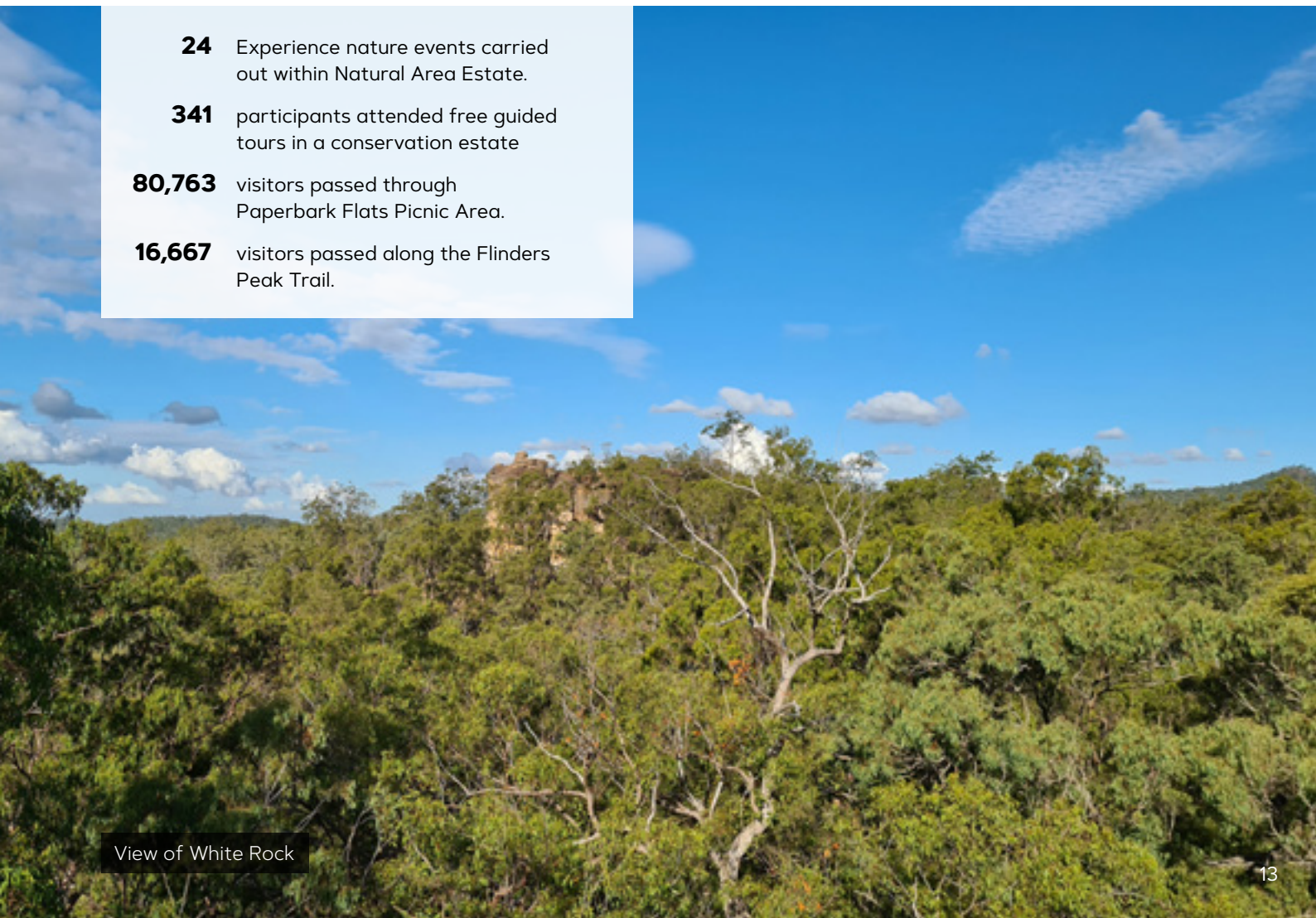


24 Experience nature events carried out within Natural Area Estate.

341 participants attended free guided tours in a conservation estate

80,763 visitors passed through Paperbark Flats Picnic Area.

16,667 visitors passed along the Flinders Peak Trail.



View of White Rock

2019-2020 FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE STATEMENT

Activities	Actuals
Income	
Revenue generated from levy in 2019-2020	\$3,821,653
Discount/Remission	-\$57,237
TOTAL INCOME	\$3,764,416
Expense	
Nature conservation planning	
Planning Operations - Labour, plant & equipment usage	\$282,463
Program Operations - Labour	\$113,088
Koala Hub - implement actions from the plan	\$39,008
Brush-tailed rock wallaby - implement actions from plan	\$25,516
Conservation works	\$1,053
Community nature conservation partnerships and support	
Cherish the environment - plant & equipment usage	\$4,386
Citizen Science	\$7,876
Enviroforum Event	\$12,929
Contribution to regional Fire & Biodiversity Consortium partnership	\$7,739
Enviroplan Partnership Operations	\$4,989
Land management payment commitments to Voluntary Conservation Agreement Landholders	\$106,122
Nature Conservation Grants	\$75,158
Voluntary Conservation Agreement incentives	\$5,167
Environmental Weed Control Rebate	\$6,179
Landholder Workshops	\$233
Contribution to regional Land for Wildlife program	\$10,614
Land for Wildlife newsletter	\$705
Environment & Sustainability Grants	\$13,052
Undertake review of Landholder Partnerships Program	\$14,100
Embellishment, capital and operational management investment within the Natural Area Estate	
Pest Animal Management Operations - Labour, plant & equipment usage	\$50,417
Fire Management Program Implementation - fuel reduction burns & post vegetation management	\$177,053
Natural Area Maintenance Operations - Service contracts, Labour, plant & equipment usage	\$405,467
Acquisition of significant nature conservation land	
Interest on loan	\$301,986
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$1,665,300
Capital	
Acquisition of significant nature conservation land	
Debt redemption	\$559,041
Embellishment, capital and operational management investment within the Natural Area Estate	
"Land & Fire Management Infrastructure Development Nature-Based Recreation & Visitor Management Infrastructure Development"	\$533,983
TOTAL CAPITAL	\$1,093,024
NET RESULT (2019-2020) - Total Income less Total Expenses less Total Capital	\$1,006,092
ENVIROPLAN LEVY RESERVE BALANCE CALCULATION	
2018-2019 Reserve Balance	\$4,204,821
Drawdown required for 2019-2020 - Net Result (2019-2020)	\$1,006,092
New Reserve Balance end of 2019-2020	\$5,210,913





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