

Ipswich City Council

Voluntary Conservation Covenant Bursary

Applicant Guidelines

Red-necked Wallaby by Chris Wiley



Ipswich.qld.gov.au/lcpp

Voluntary Conservation Covenant Bursary Guidelines

Bursary program overview

The Voluntary Conservation Covenant Bursary (VCCB) aims to support tangible conservation outcomes on private land. The VCCB is funded by Ipswich City Council's (council) Enviroplan levy to assist landowners who have a Voluntary Conservation Covenant registered on their property. The VCCB provides partnering landowners with an additional opportunity to undertake on-ground initiatives that support the rehabilitation of degraded landscapes, protect and improve habitat and biodiversity and improve the climate resilience of Ipswich's natural environment.

Objectives

- build a resilient natural environment
- improve and maintain biodiversity
- invest in nature conservation
- promote community participation and capacity building.

Timeframe

Applications must be lodged at least six (6) weeks before the proposed activity or purchase of item commences to allow sufficient time for the assessment of projects.

While an application may be made at any time during the year, funding will be subject to availability of annual budget.

Recipients

This is a competitive funding program open to landowners who have a Voluntary Conservation Covenant on their property, whose initiative meets the eligibility criteria.

Funding range

Applicants are eligible to apply for a maximum of up to \$2,000 (excluding GST) per initiative per funding round.

Eligibility criteria

General Eligibility Criteria:

- have no overdue debts with council and have satisfactorily accounted to council for the expenditure of any previous council funding
- give permission for council to publish the name of the recipient and the funding amount in accordance with council's requirements under the *Local Government Act 2009* and the *Local Government Regulation 2012*
- have not received other funding from council for the same initiative
- can demonstrate sound workplace health and safety practices.

Funding must be linked to actions in Property Management Plans.

A representative or Auspicing Organisation acting on behalf of an eligible applicant may submit an application with a letter of approval from the eligible applicant.

Eligible initiatives

The VCCB is:

- open for applications all year
- does not require in-kind contribution from the applicant
- supports minor purchases for events, activities (workshops and training) or equipment
- provides access to quick-release funds for emerging or unexpected issues, opportunities, or concerns
- provides landholders with the opportunity to be up-skilled with access to resources, information and networking opportunities
- does not have to be associated with a large project.

Applicants must demonstrate how their Property Management Plan objective/s will be met. Other initiatives, which are not mentioned below, may also be considered during the assessment process.

Examples of some eligible events and activities:

- open property tours
- flora and/or fauna survey
- planting
- fauna monitoring
- pest plant and animal management
- natural disaster preparation (e.g. fire breaks)
- fees to attend conferences, consortiums and other educational events relevant to conservation
- engaging Indigenous fire consultants to undertake ecological burns.

Examples of some eligible equipment or materials purchase or upgrades to planting materials

- mulch material
- weed matting
- plants
- water crystals
- herbicide
- powered tools
- hand tools
- habitat creating resources and/or materials
- textbooks and other educational equipment
- wildlife monitoring equipment.

Projects related to works must be carried out within the boundary of the Agreement area. All bursary requests must be aligned with the Property Management Plan.

Bursary Funding Principles

Council applies the following principles when providing support through its Voluntary Conservation Covenant Bursary:

- encouraging best practice management in the conservation of natural resources on private land
- improving and maintaining the condition and status of national, state and local matters of environmental significance
- recognising nature conservation as a major feature of good governance for the city
- providing continuous communication and engagement with the Ipswich community in regards to nature
- upskilling landholders to assist them in developing ecological skills to facilitate land stewardship
- conservation and environmental values in Ipswich
- valuing local collaborations and partnerships
- valuing the social, economic and environmental sustainability of our city.

In addition, council is committed to the efficient and effective delivery of the Voluntary Conservation Covenant Bursary and transparency and accountability in decision making.

Bursary Funding Priorities

Ipswich City Council's Voluntary Conservation Covenant Bursary support initiatives that:

Native vegetation

- protect or enhance native vegetation cover
- protect or enhance iconic species habitat
- improve ecosystem resilience
- enhance climate change refugia areas
- reduce threats to biodiversity.

Ipswich Habitat Network – connectivity

- improve and enhance ecological connectivity within identified corridors.

Waterway quality improvement

- reduce the risks of sediment loss and improve waterway stability
- improve the quality of stormwater run-off and reduce nutrient levels
- Improve the water quality of mapped streams and waterways.

Riparian corridor management

- protect and/or enhance riparian buffers
- protect and improve the quality of natural wetlands.



Ethics Framework

Ipswich City Council will not support any activities, entities, or individuals associated with entities, that are considered to:

- discriminate, or encourage discriminatory behaviour, including discrimination on the basis of age, disability, race, religion, sex and/or sexual orientation
- contribute to, or advocate for, the infringement of human rights
- demonstrate behaviour that does not align to council's strategic intent for the city and community of Ipswich
- pollute land, air or water, or otherwise damage the natural environment
- market, promote or advertise products or services in a misleading or deceitful manner
- produce, promote or distribute products or services likely to be harmful to the community
- entice people into financial over-commitment
- exploit people through the payment of below-award wages or poor working conditions
- represent a reputational risk for Ipswich City Council to partner with or support, or be seen to partner with or support.

Bursary Funding Approval Process

Final decisions and approval of successful applications are made by council's General Manager.

Suitably qualified council officers will assess the bursary application against the following assessment criteria (not all will apply):

- does the fund contribute to achieving conservation outcomes in the covenant area?
- is the fund urgently required to rectify damage done to the covenanted area (e.g. from a recent flood, or other weather events)?
- is the fund urgently required to take advantage of an opportunity to achieve conservation outcomes in the covenant area?
- is the initiative directly linked to applicant's property management plan?

Terms and conditions that apply to successful applicants

Successful applicants will receive the approved funding from council subject to the following terms and conditions:

- The applicant's proposed project must be completed within 12 months of the funds being approved
- The applicant will be required to enter into a funding agreement which details all funding conditions and agreed outcomes, which must be signed before funds are issued
- Applicants are required to complete an acquittal at the completion of the funding period. If council funds are not spent, all remaining funds must be returned to council
- Council may make funding conditional on other specific conditions not being met, as outlined in the funding agreement
- An elected official may contact you to notify of your successful application.

Conflict of interest

- A real or perceived conflict must be declared by bursary assessors. Where there is a real conflict of interest, disclosure and management will occur. Either by removing the panel member, or, if their expertise is required to assess the grant (and they are unable to be replaced), an objective 3rd party will oversee the integrity of the decision making process.
- All bursary applications are assessed using specific criteria, aligned with its governing documents as specified in these guidelines.

Quotes

A minimum of one (1) quote is required for services and or items. Contractors cannot be a direct family member. Quoted documents must include:

- business details, including ABN
- total and the breakdown of costs
- detailed summary of works included within the quote.

Bursary acquittal

To ensure appropriate accountability by bursary recipients, all funding provided by council will require a report and financial acquittal using SmartyGrants, outlining the use of the funds (including proof of expenditure through invoices, declarations, bank statements) and the achieved outcomes of the project/activity.

Landowners who have not satisfactorily acquitted council funds within the appropriate timeframe agreed by council will be deemed ineligible for council funding until the acquittal is submitted.

All applicants must answer all application questions on the online SmartyGrants form clearly demonstrating how the project outcomes address the selection criteria.

Extensions and scope changes

If you believe that you will not be able to achieve your funding objectives or not all funds were spent, any unspent funds must be returned to council. Contact your Conservation Partnerships Officers for approval prior to doing this.

If initiative details change but the scope of the initiative remains the same, no council approval is necessary. Provide justification in your acquittal to reflect minor changes, and communicate with your Conservation Partnerships Officers prior to submitting the acquittal.

If initiative details change and the scope of the initiative changes as a result, council approval is necessary, and a refund could be requested if the reason for changes does not meet any of the reasons identified below. To seek council approval, submit a formal request to partnerships@ipswich.qld.gov.au.

If you believe that you will not be able to achieve your funding objectives within the prescribed timeframe, you can request an extension stating the reasons.

Acceptable reasons for extension requests and scope changes:

- changes in Property Management Plans have occurred
- six weeks notice before the end of financial year for requests for extension and scope change.
- contractor falls through, and you are unable to hire an alternative contractor
- extreme weather conditions
 - flood drought
 - fire
 - cyclone or severe storm
 - local Disaster Declaration.
- illness to yourself or a dependent family member that requires hospitalisation and inhibits your ability to undertake your project.

Your extension will not be approved if the reason for extension does not meet any of the reasons identified above.

Application Process

Applications must be made using the appropriate online application forms through SmartyGrants. Additional information can be attached as required.

Applicants will be notified via email of the outcome of their application.

Incomplete applications will not be considered for funding. This includes applications without essential documentation.

Please contact council on (07) 3810 6666 if you have any questions regarding the Voluntary Conservation Covenant Bursary.

