



Biodiversity Blueprint Overview

Why was the blueprint developed?

A key driver for the development of the blueprint was recognition by FOBIF and others that critical elements of the shire's native biodiversity are under threat. Further, the good work already being undertaken to counter this threat is not being maximised by any overall plan, leading to the problem that energy and benefits may not be as great as they could be if they were conducted in an overall framework.

In the light of changing weather patterns and an apparent drop in the average rainfall in the region, the project is also driven by 2005 findings by the Bureau of Agriculture and Research Economics on farm viability. These findings suggest that appropriate natural resource management, including landcare activity and crop diversity, can help farms survive climate risk. Further information on some of the benefits of conservation programs to agriculture can be found on Connecting Country's website.

The project is founded on the assumption that a healthy natural landscape and a prosperous agricultural sector are interdependent.

What are the Benefits of a blueprint?

There are several advantages in having a blueprint that clearly shows landscape change and work related to it:

- It provides a baseline for our understanding of what is happening now.
- It offers a chance of feedback for ongoing work and it shows how different projects work together.
- By showing the relationship between ecological problem areas such as endangered species or degraded streams and completed work, it facilitates strategic planning for future work.
- It offers a perspective for planners concerned with housing, road or other development/infrastructure works.
- As a result of all of the above, it can provide the basis for funding applications: works shown to fit into a carefully conceived and strategic context will be more credible and effective.

Left to right: Swift parrot;
Dust storm; Overpass
at Forest Creek; Typical
grazing landscape.



Left to right: Blueprint; Remnant
vegetation at Arthurs Track;
Newstead Cricket Club
planting day; Regeneration
at Spring Gully.

The Focus

Protection of remnants and enhancing connectivity is recognised as a key action to maintain the health of our landscape. Therefore a key focus of the blueprint is to protect and enhance the condition of habitat across the shire through supporting natural regeneration and rehabilitation, in tandem with careful consideration of the relationship between 'natural' bushland and the agricultural context in which it is set.

The ability of landscapes to withstand system shocks, such as forecast rise in temperature and reduction in rainfall has been compromised by the legacy of the past. The actions and initiatives developed within the blueprint are directed at increasing the resilience of our landscapes and, if successfully implemented, will buffer our ecology, economy and community in the face of climate change. They will increase the ability of our local community to live in and manage a changing landscape.

While there is general interest, participation and sympathy for biodiversity conservation across the shire, the important role that natural systems play in sustaining our way of life is not understood in detail. The blueprint itself will engage the community but the process for developing the blueprint and enabling it to be an evolving resource will be even more critical. Many current activities already contribute to community engagement on this issue, from community walks to on ground works on properties, Landcare plantings to Field Naturalist Club activities. These form a magnificent network of opportunities for building the blueprint. The blueprint acts as a central point where knowledge and community decision-making can come together.

The blueprint will help develop conservation priorities and show how biodiversity helps provide ecosystem services. It also provides an opportunity to make the case for significantly greater investment in biodiversity conservation through agencies such as the North Central CMA, DSE, Local Government, NGO's (eg Trust for Nature, Greening Australia) and the philanthropic sector. The blueprint will be used as a communication tool with a number of audiences.