

Sunshine Coast Council
Environment Levy
Annual Report
2023-24



ENVIRONMENT LEVY FUNDED

Edition November 2024

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Acknowledgements

Council wishes to thank all contributors and stakeholders involved in the development of this document.

Reference document

This document should be cited as follows:

Sunshine Coast Council Environment Levy Annual Report 2023-24.

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Traditional acknowledgement

Sunshine Coast Council acknowledges the Sunshine Coast Country, home of the Kabi Kabi peoples and the Jinibara peoples, the Traditional Custodians, whose lands and waters we all now share.

We recognise that these have always been places of cultural, spiritual, social and economic significance. The Traditional Custodians' unique values, and ancient and enduring cultures, deepen and enrich the life of our community.

We commit to working in partnership with the Traditional Custodians and the broader First Nations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) communities to support self-determination through economic and community development.

Truth telling is a significant part of our journey. We are committed to better understanding the collective histories of the Sunshine Coast and the experiences of First Nations peoples. Legacy issues resulting from colonisation are still experienced by Traditional Custodians and First Nations peoples.

We recognise our shared history and will continue to work in partnership to provide a foundation for building a shared future with the Kabi Kabi peoples and the Jinibara peoples.

We wish to pay respect to their Elders – past, present and emerging, and acknowledge the important role First Nations peoples continue to play within the Sunshine Coast community.

Together, we are all stronger.



Message from our Mayor and Environment and Liveability Portfolio Councillors

Our community values our region's outstanding natural environment and its importance to everyday lives, now and into the future.

Preserving and enhancing our natural environment is a major priority for Council. It is a key part of what makes our region a great place to live.

The Environment Levy Program supports Council's vision to be Australia's most sustainable region, while creating a legacy of a healthy environment for future generations to enjoy.

The Environment Levy allows Council to invest in a range of environmental programs and projects.

A cornerstone of our Environment Levy Program is Council's land acquisition program, which purchases land for conservation to restore and protect natural ecosystems, supporting our native plants and animals.

The Levy also supports a range of programs that educate our community and foster stewardship. Our community members and groups are important drivers in the protection of our natural areas and biodiversity.

We are proud to support our environmental community partners across so many Environment Levy projects and programs.

We would like to acknowledge the efforts of students, landholders, community groups and volunteers who dedicate their time and energy in protecting our environment. These actions are making a real difference in supporting our biodiversity and natural places as well as our region's liveability.

Council is pleased to showcase many initiatives and outcomes the Environment Levy delivered in 2023-24.

As you read, we encourage you to consider how you can contribute to a stronger environment and a more sustainable Sunshine Coast Biosphere, in ways big or small.

Mayor Rosanna Natoli
Councillor Maria Suarez
Councillor Tim Burns



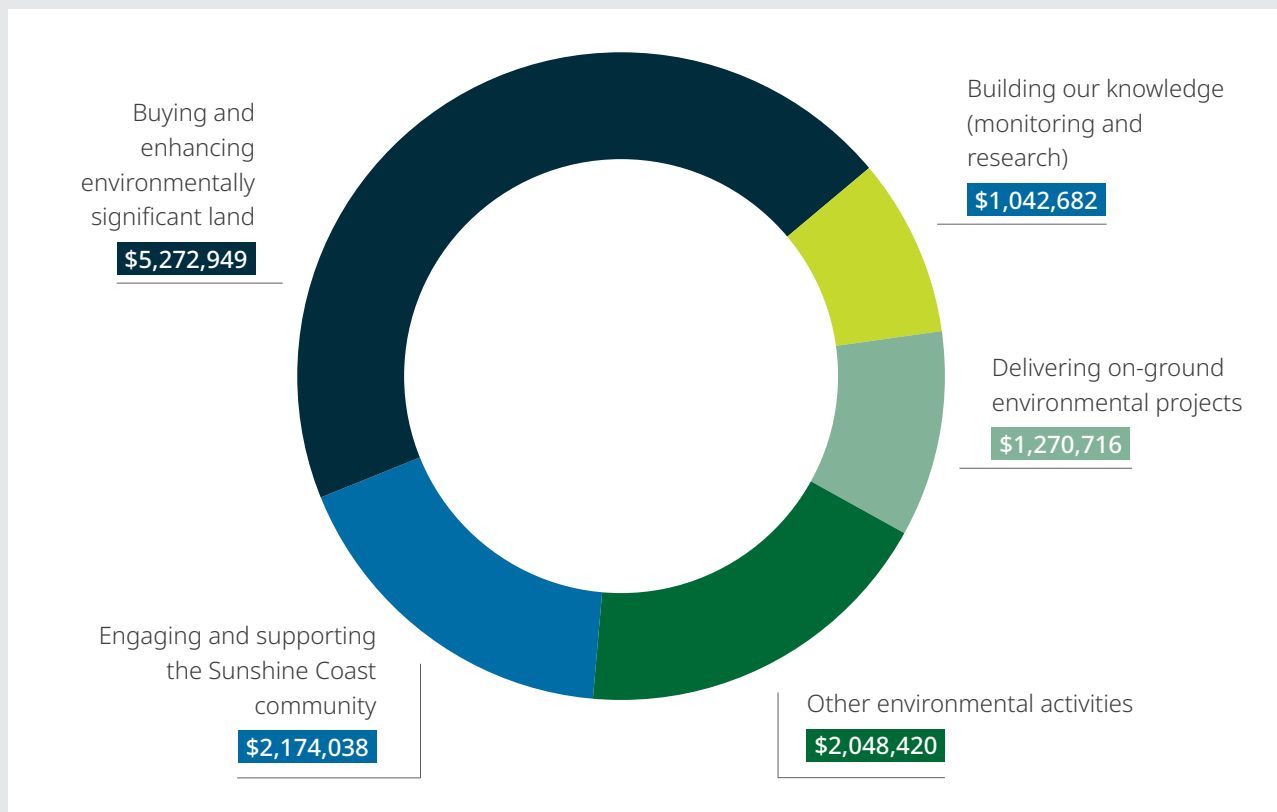
Where did your Environment Levy go in 2023-24?

The Environment Levy has continued to work towards safeguarding our region’s natural assets through the delivery of a range of projects and programs.

The natural beauty of our region is a defining feature of the Sunshine Coast and the health of our environment is fundamental to our region’s recognition as a UNESCO Biosphere.

Conserving, maintaining, and enhancing our natural areas – from the hinterland to the coast – is essential in preserving the health of our ecosystems to support our special biodiversity. This is critical to building resilience in the natural systems that support life, as well as maintaining the much-loved way of life the Sunshine Coast is known for.

The Environment Levy remains a key funding source supporting the delivery of our Environment and Liveability Strategy. The strategy provides long-term direction to guide growth and shape the Sunshine Coast for future generations by delivering a healthy environment and liveable Sunshine Coast.



In 2023-24 the Environment Levy was **\$82** per annum per rateable property

The total Environment Levy investment in 2023-24 was **\$11,808,805**

\$3.74 million invested. Three properties purchased, 185 hectares.

\$1.1 million in invasive species research, action and community engagement.

Over \$1 million in coastal protection works and dune rehabilitation.

\$610,000 to 19 partnership community environmental groups.

\$282,000 in Landholder Environment Grants to support landholders to undertake on-ground projects.

\$229,000 invested in erosion and sediment control education and waterway protection.

\$155,000 involving young people in the Kids in Action program.

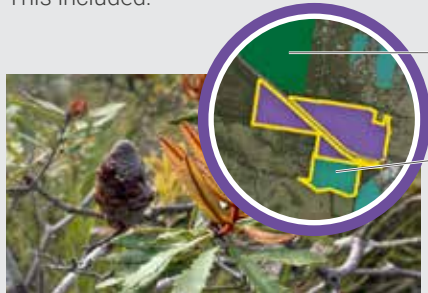
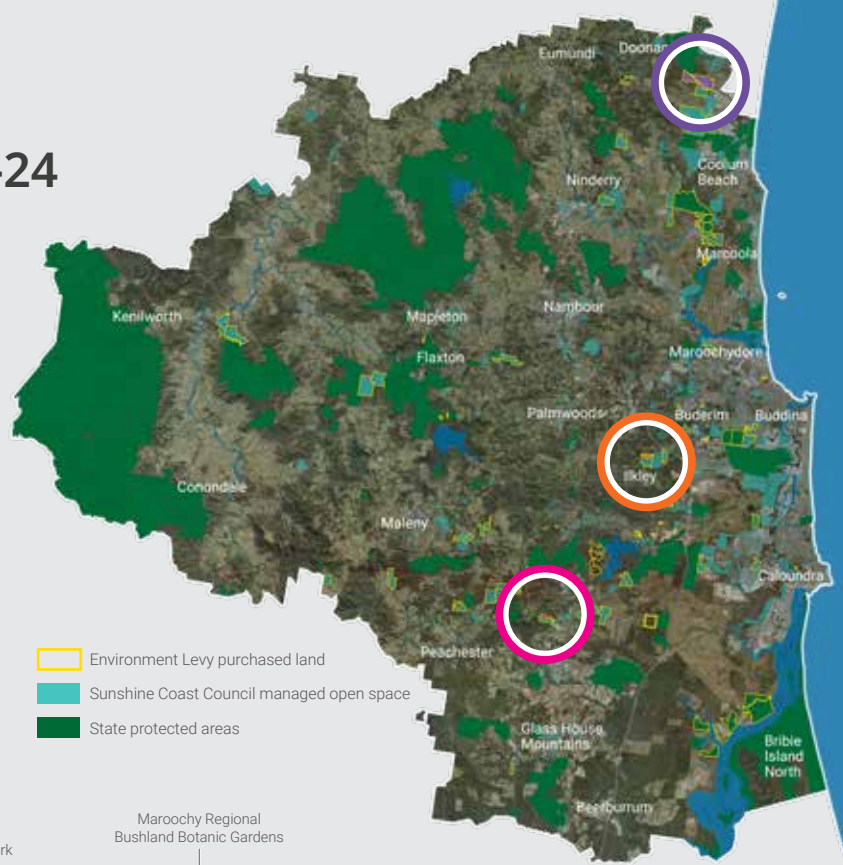
Environment Levy 2023-24 Program Snapshot

Strategic Land Acquisition Program

The Environment Levy supports the acquisition of environmentally significant land to protect and enhance habitat areas and biodiversity corridors. To date 113 properties, totalling 4,235 hectares, have been purchased through the levy.

In 2023-24, the Sunshine Coast conservation estate was expanded by a further 185 hectares with the purchase of three additional properties containing high value habitat for our region's threatened species.

This included:



154 hectares at Peregian Beach*

- Protecting a critical link between Noosa National Park and Doonan Wetland Nature Refuge and conserving a diverse range of threatened regional ecosystems including eucalypt, lowland rainforest, coastal swamp forest and wetlands
- Protecting significant habitat for threatened fauna species such as the ground parrot (*Pezoporus wallicus*), central greater glider (*Petauroides armillatus*) and wallum sedgefrog (*Litoria olongburensis*)
- Conserving habitat for the threatened Emu Mountain she-oak (*Allocasuarina emuina*), a rare flora species found only in a limited area between Noosa and Beerburrum

* Purchased in partnership with the State Government.



17 hectares at Ilkley

- Expanding the levy-acquired Tall Gums Environment Reserve (adjoining the Maroochy Regional Bushland Botanic Gardens) to more than 76 hectares
- Further consolidating a broader core habitat area within a significant biodiversity corridor with more than 185 hectares now protected
- Protecting habitat for a range of threatened fauna species such as the tusked frog (*Adelotus brevis*) and the Richmond birdwing butterfly (*Ornithoptera richmondia*) as well as threatened flora species such as rusty oak (*Helicia ferruginea*).



14 hectares at Mount Mellum

- Further expanding the levy-acquired East Mount Mellum Nature Refuge – first established in 1999 and expanded in 2004 – to now protect more than 52 hectares
- Contributing to improved ecological connectivity in Mount Mellum and surrounding protected areas
- Protecting habitat supporting threatened species such as the vulnerable glossy black cockatoo (*Calyptorhynchus lathamii*), scrub turpentine (*Rhodamnia rubescens*) and the endangered koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*).

Supporting a collaborative effort

Supporting community groups and landholders to undertake environmental protection and restoration activities remains a central focus of the Environment Levy. Through collaborative efforts in caring for our natural areas, we can collectively achieve greater efficiency and success.

Levy funds were invested across a number of partnerships and grants programs with 2023-24 highlights including:



34,000 seedlings planted and 87 nest boxes installed on Land for Wildlife properties



\$282,000 provided through Landholder Environment Grants



19 community partnerships supported with \$610,000 invested



More than \$13,000 invested in Environment Levy Grants

Fostering environmental stewardship

The Environment Levy supported a number of events and programs that engaged the community in environmental education and citizen science, to foster a sense of responsibility and empower community members to take action. This is fundamental in ensuring future generations are equipped with the knowledge and values needed to protect our environment.

Highlights in 2023-2024 include:



300+ students from 23 schools participating in the Kids in Action Program 2023



6000+ visitors to the Coastal Discovery Van



\$43,000 invested in developing NatureWatch Sunshine Coast



300+ attendees at the Sunshine Coast Our Environment Forum



Bats in Backyards citizen science program developed



600+ attendees at the Welcome the Shorebird Festival 2023



900+ attendees at the Australasian Bat Night 2023



11,000+ trees planted in reserves by community and corporate partners.

Caring for our coast

Environment Levy funding has continued to support the delivery of on-ground activities to protect and enhance our coastal areas within the coastal reserve network. This includes works to enhance habitats, mitigate erosion, protect coastal assets and improve amenity.



In 2023-24 more than \$1 million was invested into the protection of dune and rocky headland areas through revegetation and restoration activities as well as the control of invasive plants.

Protecting the health of our coastal areas is critical to supporting biodiversity, maintaining amenity and building resilience.

Conserving our key animal species

From our hinterland forests to the rocky and sandy shores, the Sunshine Coast is home to a diverse range of fauna species such as koalas, kangaroos and other macropods, flying foxes and shorebirds. The Environment Levy continues to support the protection, conservation and management of these species and is a key funding source for the implementation of several of Council's conservation and management plans. Outcomes for 2023-24 include:



Koalas

- Restoration of key habitat sites
- Collection of data through drone and detection dog surveys
- Supported knowledge sharing and collaboration through the Sunshine Coast Koala Forum.



Kangaroos and other macropods

- Signage at wildlife collision hotspots installed and improvements to fauna crossing infrastructure
- Community education and engagement on the Macropod Conservation Plan was undertaken
- Partnered with research organisations to build knowledge to inform action.



Flying foxes

- Community education and engagement events held
- Supported citizen science activities through the Bats in Backyards Program
- Interpretive signage at key flying fox roost sites installed.



Shorebirds

- Resources developed and events held to raise awareness on the shorebirds of our region
- Education campaigns to encourage responsible dog management close to shorebird breeding areas delivered
- Supported long-term monitoring of migratory and resident shorebirds.

The Environment Levy Partnerships Program provided funding to a number of environmental community groups who provide critical care and support to sick and injured wildlife.

These include Australia Zoo Wildlife Hospital, Bat Rescue Inc, Glasshouse Mountains Advancement Network, Twinnies Pelican and Seabird Rescue Inc, Wildcare SEQ Inc and Wildlife Volunteers Association Inc (WILVOS).

With support through the levy these groups are able to continue their vital work in protecting our region's biodiversity.





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