



Sunshine Coast Council  
Environment Levy Annual Report  
2022/23

Edition October 2023

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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 2022/23.

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#### Cover image

Maroochy Wetlands Sanctuary,  
Bli Bli

## 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 Councillors

We live in an amazing place where our outstanding natural environment is celebrated and enjoyed by our community. We also recognise the significant role our environment plays in the health and wellbeing of our residents and the liveability of the Sunshine Coast.

Your Environment Levy provides funding to ensure we continue to protect and enhance our environment as Australia's most sustainable region. Healthy. Smart. Creative.

In 2022/23, we continued our collaborative approach to achieve outstanding environmental outcomes. Our community provided more than 360,000 volunteer hours across our environmental programs and more than 1300 properties are now working with Council in the Land for Wildlife Program, illustrating the power of partnerships in diversifying and strengthening our protected areas across the region.

The Environment Levy Program supports the implementation of Council's award-winning the Environment and Liveability Strategy, which guides our pathway towards a healthy environment and liveable Sunshine Coast in 2041. Transformational Actions in the Strategy continue to be a high priority for our Council.

We are thrilled to present to you this Environment Levy Annual Report for 2022/23.



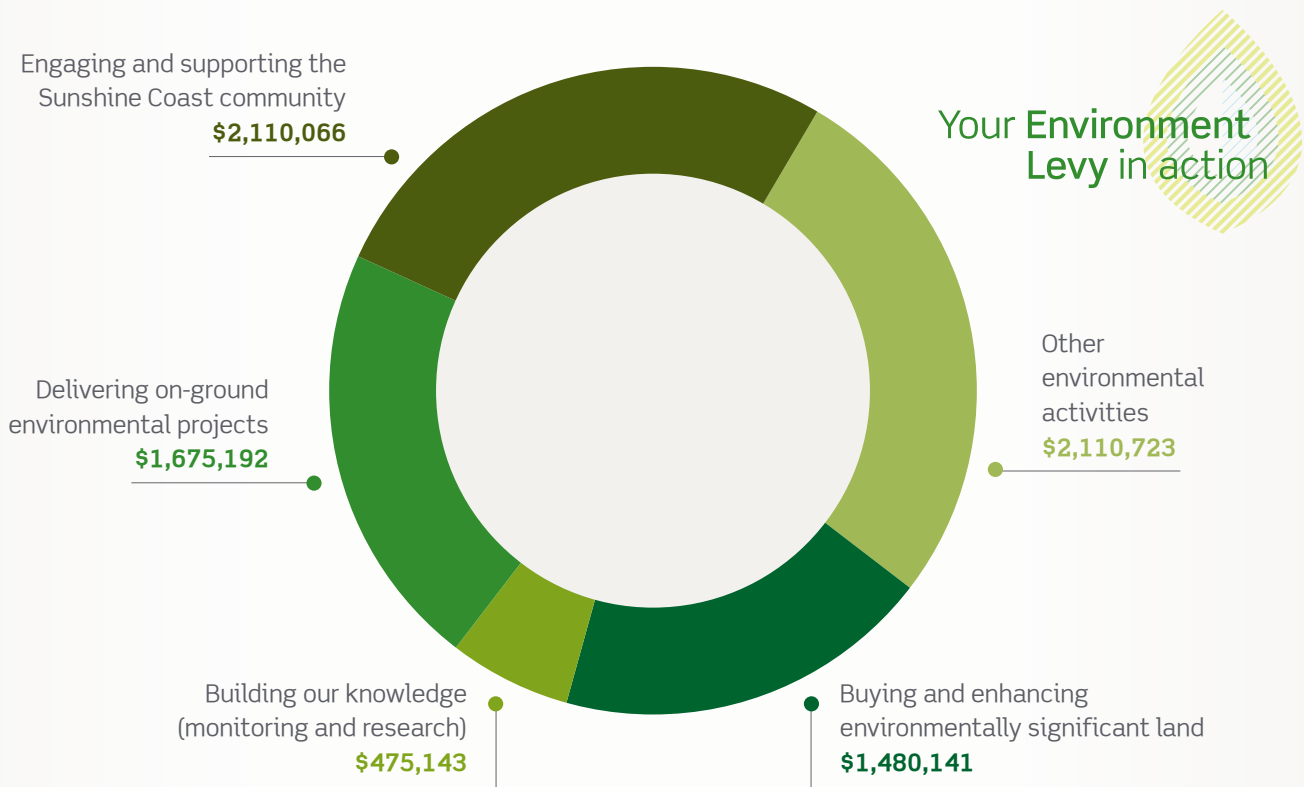
Councillor Peter Cox  
Mayor Mark Jamieson  
Councillor Maria Suarez

## Where did your Environment Levy go in 2022/23?

The health of our environment is critical to supporting our diverse plants and animals and is fundamental to the Sunshine Coast way of life.

Maintaining the health of our natural areas is a priority for Council as we realise our vision for the Sunshine Coast: Australia's most sustainable region – healthy, smart, creative.

The Environment Levy Program is a key funding source supporting the delivery of our Environment and Liveability Strategy – providing the long-term strategic direction to guide growth and shape the Sunshine Coast for future generations, by delivering a healthy environment and liveable Sunshine Coast.



- \$967,000** spent in coastal protection works and dune rehabilitation
- \$739,000** invested in invasive species research, action and community engagement
- \$610,000** provided to 19 partnership community environmental groups
- \$325,000** for Landholder Environment Grants to 83 landholders to undertake on-ground projects
- \$206,000** invested in erosion and sediment control and waterway protection
- \$166,000** to support flying-fox education and communities living with flying foxes
- \$130,000** involving young people in the Kids in Action program
- \$90,000** to support implementation of the Shorebird Conservation Action Plan

IN 2022/23 THE ENVIRONMENT LEVY WAS **\$80** PER ANNUM PER RATEABLE PROPERTY

THE TOTAL ENVIRONMENT LEVY INVESTMENT IN 2022/23 WAS **\$7,851,305**



Kids in Action activities engage with students and future environmental custodians

## Environment Levy 2022/23 program snapshot

### Kids in Action

Kids in Action is a unique and innovative environmental education program which promotes environmental responsibility and stewardship.

The Council program is a true legacy initiative, connecting schools with local environment groups, and promoting learning exchanges between future and current environmental custodians. The program reaches far into the community and includes local environmental education providers, community groups, businesses, First Nations Peoples, pre-service teachers, volunteers and other Council groups.

The theme of the 2022 Kids in Action program was Catchment Connections: Mountains to the Sea. Over the course of the year our school communities explored the movement pathways and journeys that flow across the landscape catchments of Kabi Kabi and Jinibara Country with local community mentors.

On the 9 September 2022, 250 primary school students from 20 different schools came together to share their dreams, ideas and passion for the environment at the Kids in Action Conference. The Conference was a student led peer-to-peer learning experience delivered through presentations, workshops and interactive displays showcasing the student generated environmental projects.

Kids in Action is not only shaping the Sunshine Coast community, it's transforming it. The Kids in Action program was the **Winner of the Local Government Awards for Excellence 2023 — Excellence in Community Shaping.**



Students are encouraged to interact and share knowledge



**20** SCHOOLS  
**252** STUDENTS  
ATTENDED  
**KIDS IN ACTION**



**4647** PEOPLE  
ENGAGED BY  
**COASTAL DISCOVERY  
VAN** AT SCHOOLS AND  
COMMUNITY EVENTS



**830** PARTICIPANTS IN  
**8TH ANNUAL  
AUSTRALASIAN BAT  
NIGHT**

## Landholder Environment Grants

The Environment Levy Landholder Environment Grants support private landholders to protect and enhance natural assets and biodiversity on their properties.

Funding is allocated to high priority on-ground projects, with landholders and community groups investing significant in-kind time and labour.

In 2022/23, the program awarded \$325,000 to 83 landholders to support a range of transformational projects. Co-investment through landholder in-kind labour and direct cash investment, as well as external funding, has grown this seed funding to deliver project outcomes valued at over \$1 million, more than tripling the initial investment.

Additionally, the projects have delivered the following on-ground environmental benefits:

- more than 12,000 native trees, shrubs and groundcovers planted
- 19.1 hectares of land revegetated
- 3.7 kilometres of waterway fenced to exclude livestock and a further 2.1 kilometres of waterway banks revegetated.

A landholder near Peachester has received funding through the Landholder Environment Grant program over the last two years to support them to exclude stock from the creek on their 80 hectare grazing property. The owners were keen to see the significant riparian vegetation protected and have also committed to managing the weeds in the fenced areas. Fencing the waterways, installing hardened cattle crossings, and creating off-stream watering points were all important components of their long-term property plan to establish a rotational grazing system for their herd of beef cattle. Previously the cattle would drink from the creeks and shelter under the trees along the creek, causing bank erosion and fouling the water. This project is contributing to improved water quality and has ensured the protection of threatened rainforest plants and animals that were recorded along the creek.



Fencing protecting riparian environments through livestock control



A significant population of the vulnerable red lilli-pilli (*Syzgium hodgkinsoniae*) have been protected through this project.

## BatPod

This new education podcast sends students on a conservation mission with a twist, an innovative way to learn about the importance of flying-foxes to our local environment, as well as some of the challenges they create when they become our neighbours.

BatPod is a choose-your-own-adventure journey where listeners tackle a challenge of trying to balance the wellbeing of our community with local flying fox roosts.

The podcast is a great way to understand some of the challenges we face in managing our native species in an urban environment and episodes are available on Spotify and Apple podcasts, as well as the Sunshine Coast Council website.



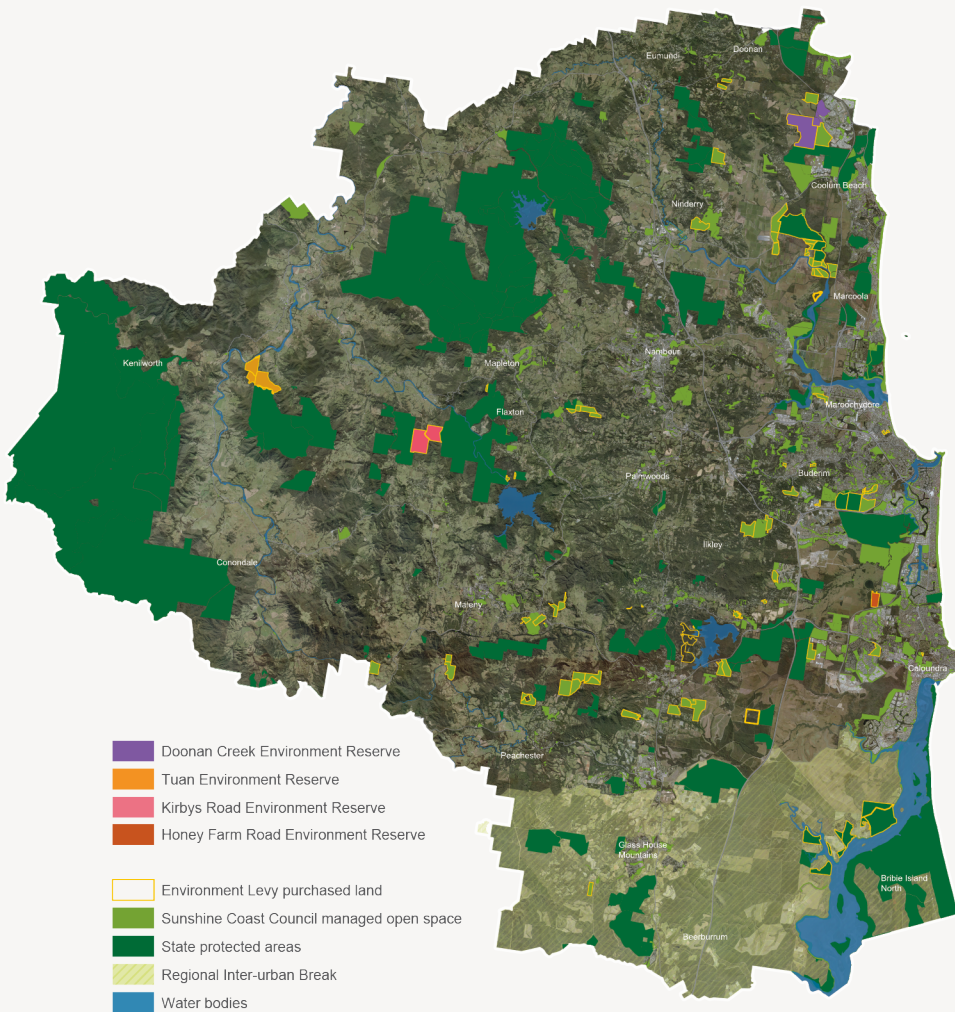
Bat Night is always popular and engages with residents about flying-fox education

## Environment Levy 2022/23 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, 110 properties, totalling 4050 hectares have been purchased through the Environment Levy with a total investment of more than \$60 million since the early 1990s.

The Levy funds the acquisition, the establishment of the property including initial restoration activities and the ongoing management of the site.



The acquisition program has supported the embellishment of:

- **Doonan Creek Environment Reserve, Verrierdale** — now totalling 450 hectares and our largest environment reserve, protecting the Maroochy-Noosa Wallum Corridor and the species living within it
- **Tuan Environment Reserve, Cambronn** — connecting the Maleny National Park right down to the banks of the Mary River
- **Kirby's Road Environment Reserve, Obi Obi** — 280 hectares of forest connecting the Maleny and Kondalilla National Parks
- **Honey Farm Road Environment Reserve, Meridan Plains** — 75 hectares in the important Lower Mooloolah area and one of Council's Major Green Spaces for future expansion.

Landowner negotiations to progress several acquisitions in 2022/23 have occurred, with none finalised.



**19.1** HECTARES OF LAND REVEGETATED THROUGH THE LANDHOLDER ENVIRONMENT GRANTS



**1308** REGISTERED LAND FOR WILDLIFE PROPERTIES



**19** LAND FOR WILDLIFE WORKSHOPS AND FIELD DAYS



Invasive species management programs use drone technology and artificial intelligence to recognise the invasive species

## Managing coastal weeds with drones

As part of developing new ways to deal with ongoing and emerging invasive species threats, the Environment Levy has funded a multi-year project that has led to weed management demonstration sites at Maleny and Witta and investigations into the use of technology for invasive species management.

Broad-leaved pepper tree is a weed tree found along the foreshore of the Sunshine Coast that can devastate ecosystems by killing native plants and reducing the ecological values of natural areas. This innovative trial is testing the capability of mapping and artificial intelligence technology as part of conservation efforts to stop the spread of this weed.

The first stage of the trial involved capturing images using a drone and then gathering and cross-referencing data from the ground, while the second stage involves a partnership with Queensland University of Technology to train artificial intelligence to recognise the invasive species. The project aims to create detailed mapping of broad-leaved pepper tree along approximately eight kilometres of Sunshine Coast foreshore bushland reserves including Buddina, Warana, Bokarina and Wurtulla.

This trial will test the applicability of this technology in conservation settings and hopefully be trialled on other weed species in the future. Detailed mapping will then support our important on-ground management occurring within our coastal environments.



Broad-leaved pepper tree (*Schinus terebinthifolius*) is regarded as a significant environmental weed in Queensland



**27,900** NATIVE TREES IN THE GROUND AND **171** NEST BOXES INSTALLED ON LAND FOR WILDLIFE PROPERTIES



**362,062** VOLUNTEER HOURS ACROSS THE ENVIRONMENT LEVY PARTNERSHIP PROGRAMS



**7700** PLANTS IN THE GROUND AT INVASIVE SPECIES MANAGEMENT DEMONSTRATION SITES AT MALENY AND WITTA



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