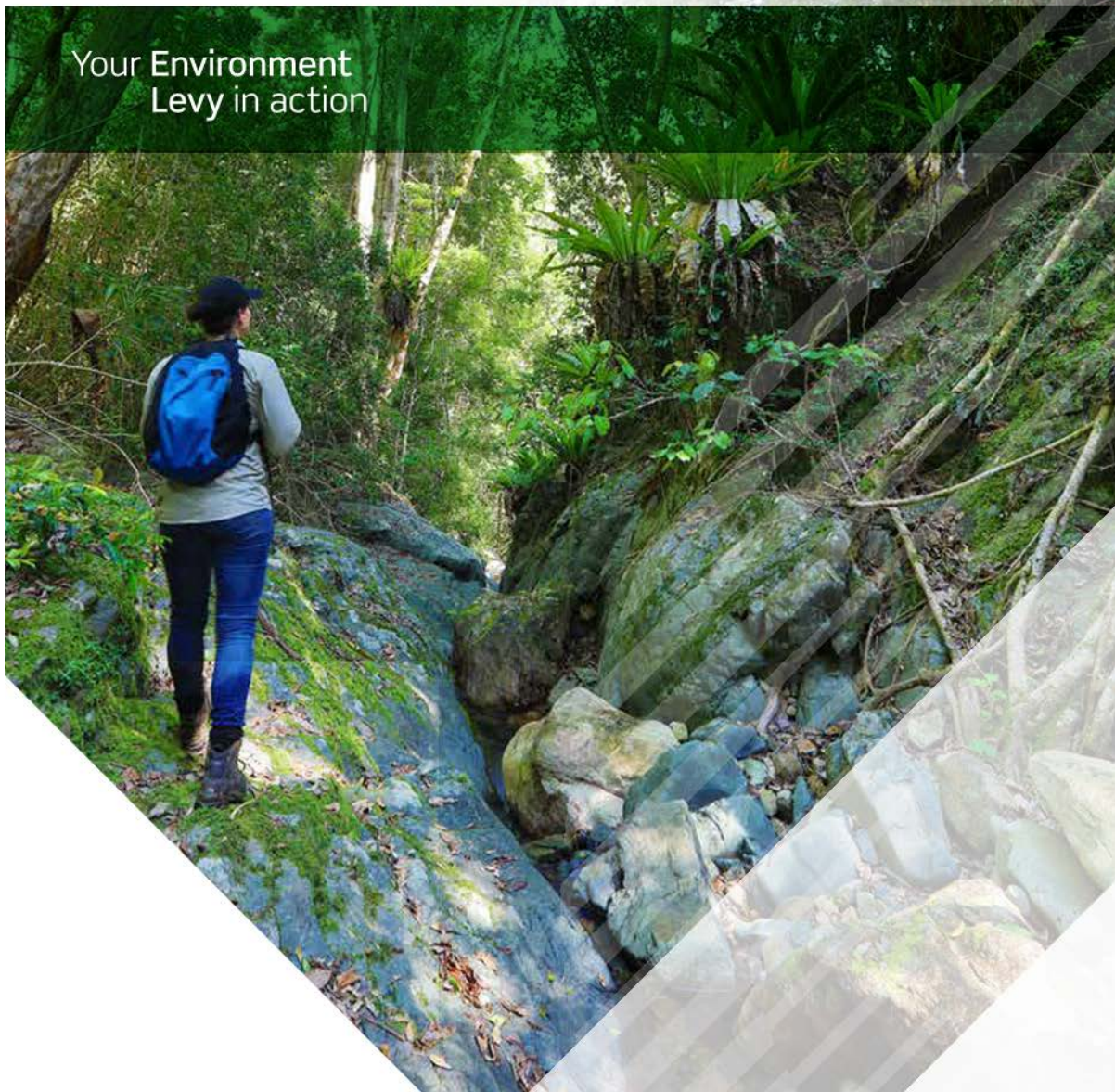
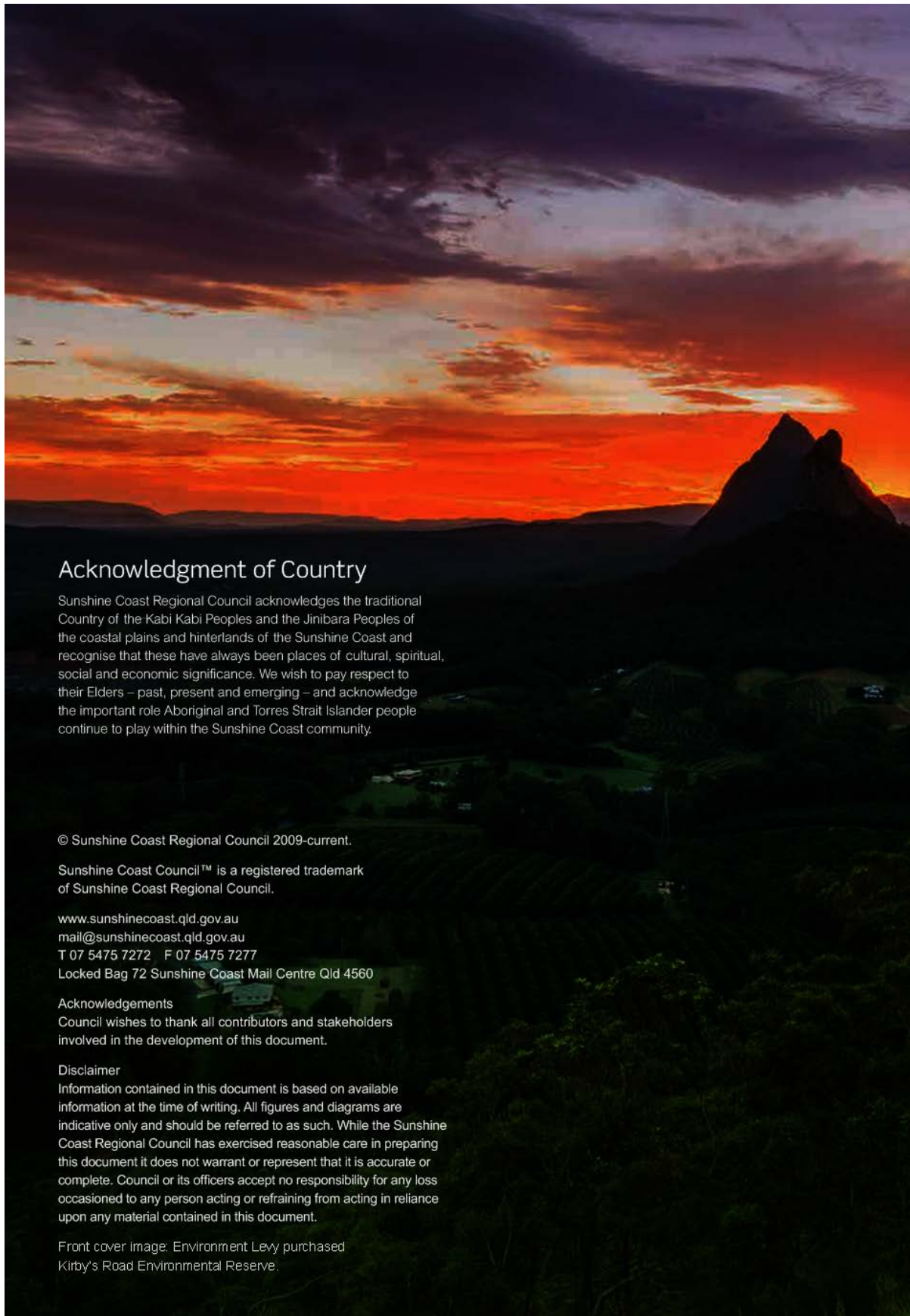




Environment Levy Annual Report 2015-2016

Your Environment
Levy in action





Acknowledgment of Country

Sunshine Coast Regional Council acknowledges the traditional Country of the Kabi Kabi Peoples and the Jinibara Peoples of the coastal plains and hinterlands of the Sunshine Coast and recognise that these have always been places of cultural, spiritual, social and economic significance. We wish to pay respect to their Elders – past, present and emerging – and acknowledge the important role Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to play within the Sunshine Coast community.

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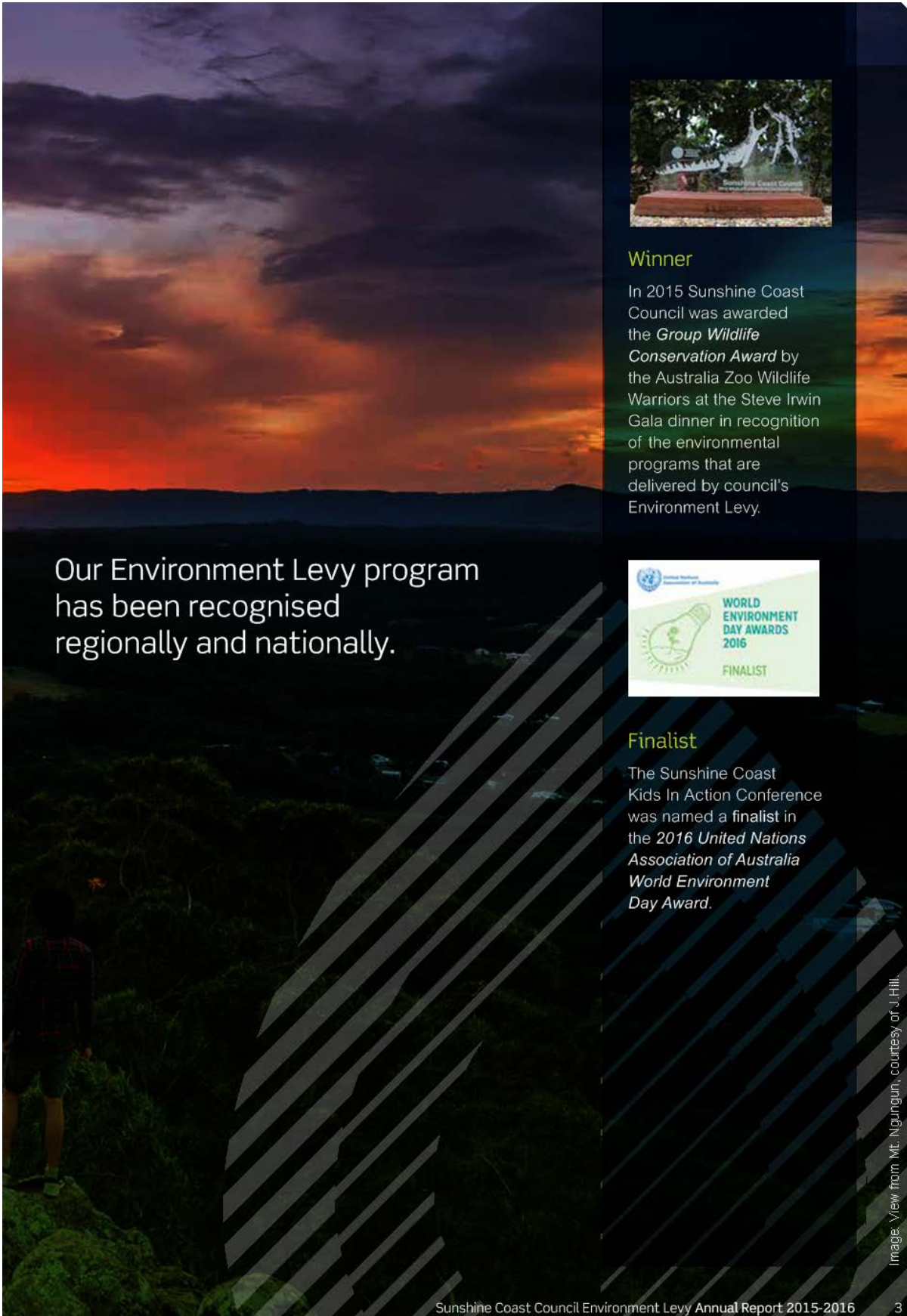
Acknowledgements

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


Disclaimer

Information contained in this document is based on available information at the time of writing. All figures and diagrams are indicative only and should be referred to as such. While the Sunshine Coast Regional Council has exercised reasonable care in preparing this document it does not warrant or represent that it is accurate or complete. Council or its officers accept no responsibility for any loss occasioned to any person acting or refraining from acting in reliance upon any material contained in this document.

Front cover image: Environment Levy purchased Kirby's Road Environmental Reserve.




Our Environment Levy program has been recognised regionally and nationally.



Winner

In 2015 Sunshine Coast Council was awarded the *Group Wildlife Conservation Award* by the Australia Zoo Wildlife Warriors at the Steve Irwin Gala dinner in recognition of the environmental programs that are delivered by council's Environment Levy.



Finalist

The Sunshine Coast Kids In Action Conference was named a finalist in the 2016 *United Nations Association of Australia World Environment Day Award*.

Image: View from Mt. Ngungun, courtesy of J. Hill.

Sunshine Coast Council Environment Levy Annual Report 2015-2016 3



Message from the Mayor

Sunshine Coast people are proud of their environmental credentials and feel a strong connection to their natural surrounds. We recognise that a healthy and functioning environment underpins the livelihoods and liveability of our community and the region's visitors.

The Environment Levy Program this year has delivered significant environmental outcomes across all of its major investment themes – buying, protecting and enhancing environmentally significant lands; delivering on-ground environmental projects; building our knowledge through research and monitoring; and importantly, continuing to engage and support the Sunshine Coast community.

All of our investments into the region's natural environment are guided by our long term planning tools including the *Sunshine Coast Biodiversity Strategy 2010-2020*, *Waterways and Coastal Management Strategy 2011-2021* and the *Local Government Pest Management Plan 2012-2016*.

Each year we look to build upon the learnings and successes of the previous years and this Annual Report is a great way to ensure you, the community are part of this journey.

Cr Mark Jamieson
Mayor

Message from your Environment Portfolio Councillor

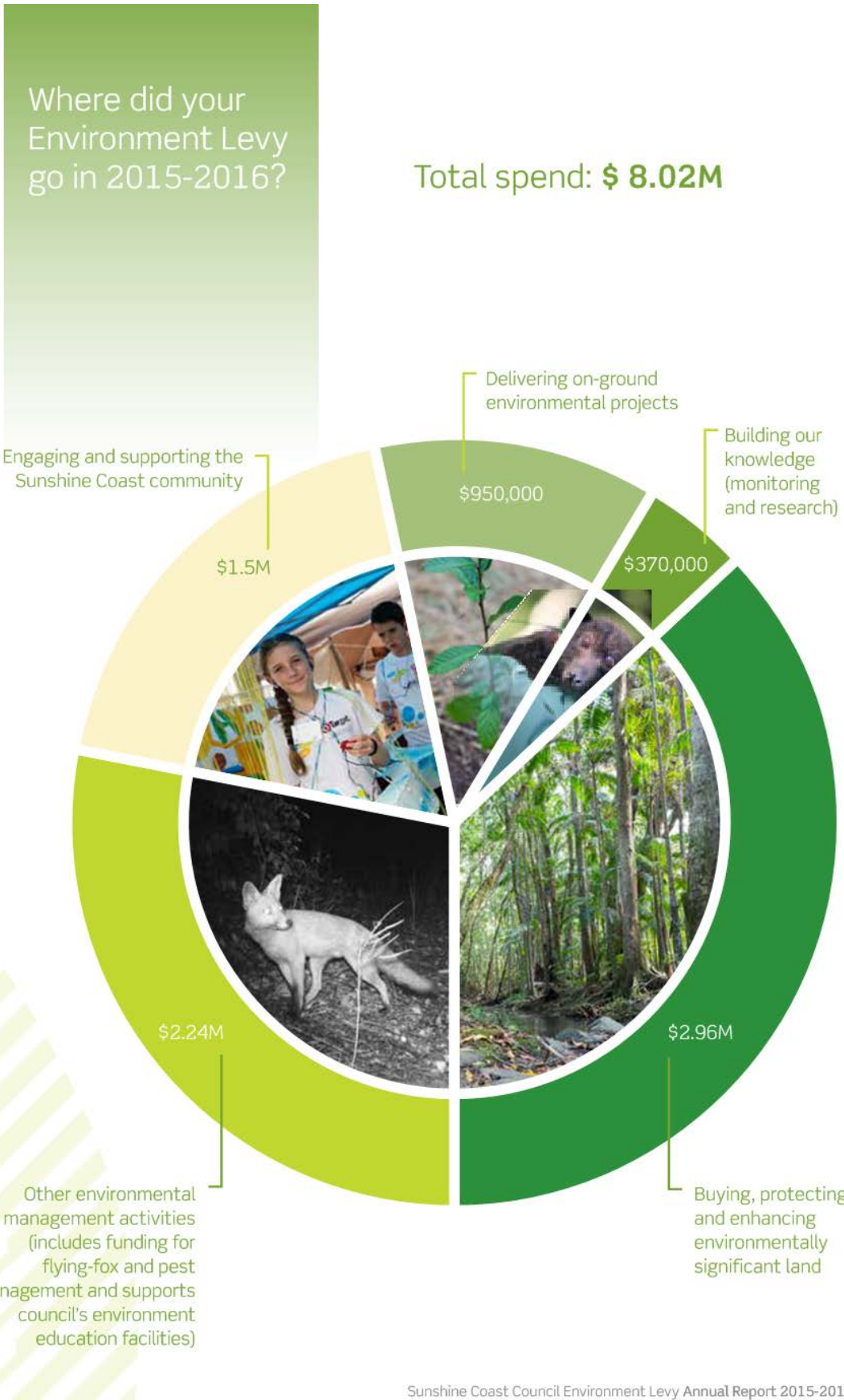
The protection of the Sunshine Coast natural environment is an important corner stone of council's vision to be **Australia's most sustainable region – vibrant, green, diverse**. As more people move to or visit the Coast, council and the community need to work together to ensure that the natural environments we care about continue to be valued, protected and maintained for current and future generations.

It has been another fantastic year of significant environmental achievements for the region.

Looking forward, our focus in 2016-2017 will be ensuring that our investments into the natural environment address priorities for the region.

I'd like to thank each and every rate payer for their contribution to the Environment Levy.

Cr Jenny McKay
Environment Portfolio



Environment Levy 2015-2016 Program snapshot

Buying, protecting and enhancing environmentally significant land

The Environment Levy Land Acquisition program allows council to expand the region's conservation network through purchasing environmentally significant land. Once acquired, these lands are managed by council to ensure the significant biodiversity values and landscape connections are protected and enhanced for today's community and future generations to enjoy and appreciate. Management planning allows council to determine the best conservation outcomes for these properties.



Delivering on-ground environmental projects

To assist with the enhancement of our natural environment, your Environment Levy funds major rehabilitation and on-ground environmental projects. These projects aim to achieve landscape scale outcomes for the region and focus on the rehabilitation of coastal dunes and reserves, removing woody weeds in road reserves and restoring waterway vegetation.



\$1.6M
 acquisition program

Two reserves
 76.9ha hectares
 Bald Knob and Maleny



\$158,000
 Maroochy River
 rehabilitation

11,000 native plants
 2nd year of project



Buddina, Alex
 and Mooloolaba
 foreshore planting

13,000
 native plants

\$80,000
 an enhanced
 Bells Creek

maintenance of
 6,500 native plants
 3rd year of project.



Building our knowledge

To improve our knowledge of the Sunshine Coast's natural environment and to continually improve and adapt our management, your Environment Levy invests in planning, monitoring and research projects. These projects provide scientific data and background information required to make informed decisions and to develop and improve educational material.

Engaging and supporting the Sunshine Coast community

Engaging with and supporting the Sunshine Coast's community is integral to achieving council's desired conservation outcomes. Funding provided to not-for-profit community groups assists these organisations to operate and engage with the broader community. Grants and partnerships with private landowners delivers on-ground outcomes which would not otherwise be achieved by council. Engagement with conservation volunteers and the younger generation builds a broader understanding and involvement in environmental activities.

Image: Juvenile tawny frogmouth's (Podargus strigoides) courtesy of A. Bell.

Koala Food Tree Incentive Program delivered
 3,300 trees
 107 LfW landholders

\$20,000 7 Environment Levy Grants
Total project value: \$94,175

Through Land for Wildlife program
 32 landholders received
 22,725 native plants
 239 nest boxes

115 landholders
\$329,600 of Landholder Environment Grants
22 not-for-profit community group partners
\$550,000 Environment Levy Partnerships

Sunshine Coast Council Environment Levy Annual Report 2015-2016

7



Buying, protecting and enhancing environmentally significant land

Managing our reserves
\$657,000 
managing Environment Levy Conservation Estate

\$309,000
was spent on establishing 
12 reserves
1,081 hectares

The Environment Levy Land Acquisition program allows council to expand the region's conservation network through purchasing environmentally significant land. Once acquired, these lands are managed by council to ensure the significant biodiversity values and landscape connections are protected and enhanced for today's community and future generations to enjoy and appreciate. Management planning allows council to determine the best conservation outcomes for these properties.

Investments into the network are guided by the *Sunshine Coast Biodiversity Strategy 2010-2020* which aims to:

- preserve, protect and enhance our natural environment
- expand and consolidate on council's conservation reserve network
- preserve native plants and animals.

Biodiversity management
(including planning and knowledge building)
\$121,000

Infrastructure management
\$47,000

Bush regeneration and weed control
\$141,000



Two new
environmental
reserves
76.9ha
\$1.6M

Environment Levy land
purchased since early 1990's
= **2,830** hectares



Expanding Mary Cairncross Scenic Reserve

71 Burgess Avenue, Maleny
13.4 hectares
Mary River Catchment

- Located on the north western boundary of the Mary Cairncross Scenic Reserve (MCSR).
- Assists to protect and expand the existing habitat of the MCSR, including the subtropical rainforest.
- Protects a number of habitat trees and patches of remnant vegetation.
- Future rehabilitation and offsetting activities will enhance landscape connectivity and improve condition.
- Provides opportunities to facilitate a range of complementary social and economic outcomes.



Expanding London Creek Environmental Reserve to over 200 hectares

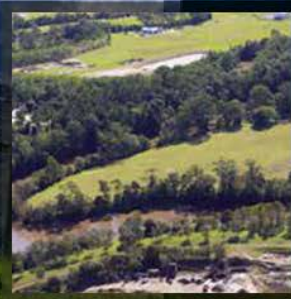
183 MacDonalds Road, Bald Knob
63.5 hectares
Stanley River Catchment

- Protects a diversity of ecosystems found in the upper Stanley River Catchment area.
- Assists to protect water quality of London Creek, which supports endangered and significant species, including the giant barred frog (*Mixophyes iterates*) and the Mountain freshwater crayfish (*Euastacus urospinosus*).
- Protects additional habitat including priority eucalypt and rainforest communities that support native wildlife populations, such as the koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*).

Image: Mary Cairncross Scenic Reserve courtesy of B.Hettick.

Delivering on-ground environmental projects

To assist with the enhancement of our natural environment, your Environment Levy funds major rehabilitation and on-ground environmental projects. These projects aim to achieve landscape scale outcomes for the region and focus on the rehabilitation of coastal dunes and reserves, removing woody weeds in road reserves and restoring waterway vegetation.



Maroochy River Rehabilitation Project

Implementation phase
Commenced 2014
4 year project – 2nd year

\$240,000 total funding available
3km

of riparian habitat rehabilitated

11,000
native tubestock established
Large scale control of
camphor laurel trees



Pumicestone Passage Rehabilitation Project

Maintenance phase
Commenced 2013
4 year project – 3rd year

\$450,000 total funding available
6km of riparian habitat rehabilitated

6,500 native tubestock established
Good neighbour partnerships





\$950,000
total on-ground
environmental
projects

**Projects caring for our
beaches and dunes**

Together the Shoreline Erosion Management and the Coastal Dunal Rehabilitation project have spent **\$618,000** to protect and enhance our coastal foreshores.

13,000 native plants established within foreshore areas

120 hectares targeted for weed removal

**Mary River
Rehabilitation Project**

Planning phase
Commenced 2015

Planning has been finalised for this 4 year project and the next steps will involve:

- Planting native tubestock
- Rehabilitating riparian habitat
- Partnering with landholders

Image: Mary River courtesy of D.Dicker.

Taking action Reducing pest plants and animals in our environment

To complement council's existing environmental management activities, your Environment Levy contributes towards the management of pest plants and animals in the region in accordance with the *Sunshine Coast Local Government Area Pest Management Plan 2012-2016*.

\$350,000
to coordinate delivery
of initiatives such as:

- Environmental Reserve Feral Animal Control Plan
- The Reactive Invasive Predator Program
- Feral Deer Control Program
- Feral Animal Control Program
- Liaison with Land for Wildlife and Voluntary Conservation Agreement landholders and pest control support
- Education and engagement opportunities at community events.

Motion sensing cameras capture how pest species can impact our native wildlife:



\$75,000
Pest Action and
Engagement Program

- Weed deck (identification tool) distribution to targeted property owners
- Landholders are now able to treat giant rats tail grass and other pest plants by utilising council hire equipment for pest control, this includes a constructed trailer for wick wiper systems
- Community education and engagement at the Queensland Garden Expo, Maleny Wood Expo, Maleny Show and the Conondale Pest Plant and Animals Field Day.



Giant rats tall grass (*Sporobolus sp.*)



Coastal Fox Control Program

Protecting our valued native fauna species

8 week period

32 foxes and
2 wild dogs removed from valuable dunal environments

Partnerships
with Coolum and North Shore Coast Care, Biosecurity Queensland and Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service

Monitoring
is carried out across private, council and State lands to improve our understanding of pest species movements and their affect on native wildlife.

\$74,000
Removing woody weeds in road reserves adjoining environmental reserves

250
sites surveyed for weed tree impacts

28
weed tree removal projects completed



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Image: European red fox (Vulpes vulpes) courtesy of J. O'Connor.

Building our Knowledge

To improve our knowledge of the Sunshine Coast natural environment and to continually improve and adapt our management, your Environment Levy invests in planning, monitoring and research projects. These projects provide scientific data and background information required to make informed decisions and to develop improved educational material.

Flying fox Management Project

The Sunshine Coast Regional flying fox Management Plan received federal endorsement as a conservation agreement in April 2016 (available at the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection and council's websites).

Tracking our flying foxes

The flying fox satellite tracking project has its data featured on the 'Animal Tracker' App which can be downloaded from iTunes and Google Play. Residents can download the App and view the animal profiles, photographs and real time animated tracking maps of the 10 flying foxes tracked for this project

Monitoring continues at six urban flying fox roosts to guide management and community education.

Species found through the Fauna Monitoring Project

- In partnership with the University of the Sunshine Coast, monitoring at the Environment Levy purchased Tuan Environmental Reserve provided confirmation of local residents sightings of the brush-tailed phascogale (*Phascogale tapoatafa*). This is the first sighting on any council reserve of this carnivorous marsupial, known also by its Aboriginal name 'Tuan'. This species has not been seen in the local area until recently and it is thought to be returning to areas where forests are now growing back.
- Through this project, 20 mammal species have been found which are new to council records. Including the eastern blossom bat (*Syconycteris australis*), Australia's smallest nectar eating bat), the yellow-footed antechinus (*Antechinus flavipes*), the chestnut mouse (*Pseudomys gracilicaudatus*), planigale (*Planigale maculata*) and 15 different microbat species.
- This project has assisted council to develop more effective methods for locating fauna within reserves.





Koala Food Tree Incentive Program delivered



Koala Conservation Plan

The Koala Conservation Plan provides a framework to guide management actions for retaining a viable koala population, as well as preserving and enhancing suitable habitat in the sunshine coast local government area.

3,300 trees
107 LfW landholders
\$4,200
2 workshops



The Koala Conservation Plan includes **34 actions** that all contribute to a landscape conservation approach, and support broader environmental protection in addition to, specific koala conservation outcomes.

Partnership with University of Sunshine Coast for **koala disease research** and field work underway.

Engagement with the University of Queensland to undertake the **Koala Habitat Use Investigation Project** which involves collaring up to 10 koalas from the Tanawha/Buderim, Witta/Reesville and



Courtesy of S.Jarman

Established procedure with waste management to collect **koala mortality data** from roadkill (sunshine coast local government area only) collated for 2010-2015.



Koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*)

2016 inaugural Annual Koala Spotting Day held

76 volunteers
3 previously collared koalas located
228 volunteer hours

Ongoing koala monitoring

5 volunteers
15 hours a week

Image: Grey-headed flying fox (*Pteropus poliocephalus*)

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Engaging and supporting our community

Engaging with and supporting the Sunshine Coast community is integral to achieving council's desired conservation outcomes. Funding provided to not-for-profit community groups assists these organisations to operate and engage with the broader community. Grants and partnerships with private landowners delivers on-ground outcomes which would not otherwise be achieved by council. Engagement with conservation volunteers and the younger generation builds a broader understanding and involvement in environmental activities.

Environment Levy Partnerships

\$550,000

22 not-for-profit groups

Return on investment

In one year, the Environment Levy's partnership funding of approximately \$550,000 contributes to the services of up to 24 not-for-profit community environmental groups with a total operational cost of approximately \$3.6M.

Collectively these organisations engaged with more than 5,000 registered members and 4,000 volunteers who provided 190,000 volunteer hours valued at \$5.73M.

Flying fox education

- Community library talks
- Education workshop – reviewed long term research needs and key messages (input from residents, scientists and key groups)
- Landcare partnership training for bush regenerators working under roosts
- Australasian Bat Night
- Partnership with Education Queensland and approval of curriculum material for years 5-6 students.

The Environment Levy supported:

- 7 projects** through Environment Levy Grants
- \$20,000**
- Total project value: **\$94,175**
- 115 landholders**
- \$329,600** of Landholder Environment Grants
- 68** Voluntary Conservation
- protecting **1,094 hectares** of habitat for flora and fauna
- 842** registered Land for Wildlife members and
- 249** working towards full registration managing
- 9,610 hectares** of retained habitat and restoring a further
- 1,098 hectares**
- Events supporting our community
- Engaging future generations
- 2015** Kids In Action forum
- 24** schools
- 320** students and teachers participated in this successful event
- Conservation Forum 2015
- 9** speakers
- 200** attendees
- It was an inspiring day and a great way to highlight and acknowledge the commitment and dedication of our volunteers in protecting the region's environmental assets.
- Lyndon Davis at the official Welcome to Country by Kabi Kabi First Nation Peoples
- This year the Land for Wildlife program has
- planted **22,725** native plants
- installed **239** nest boxes and
- 32** landholders received training and materials to assist with weed management.

Private Conservation Area
 All native animals and plants protected

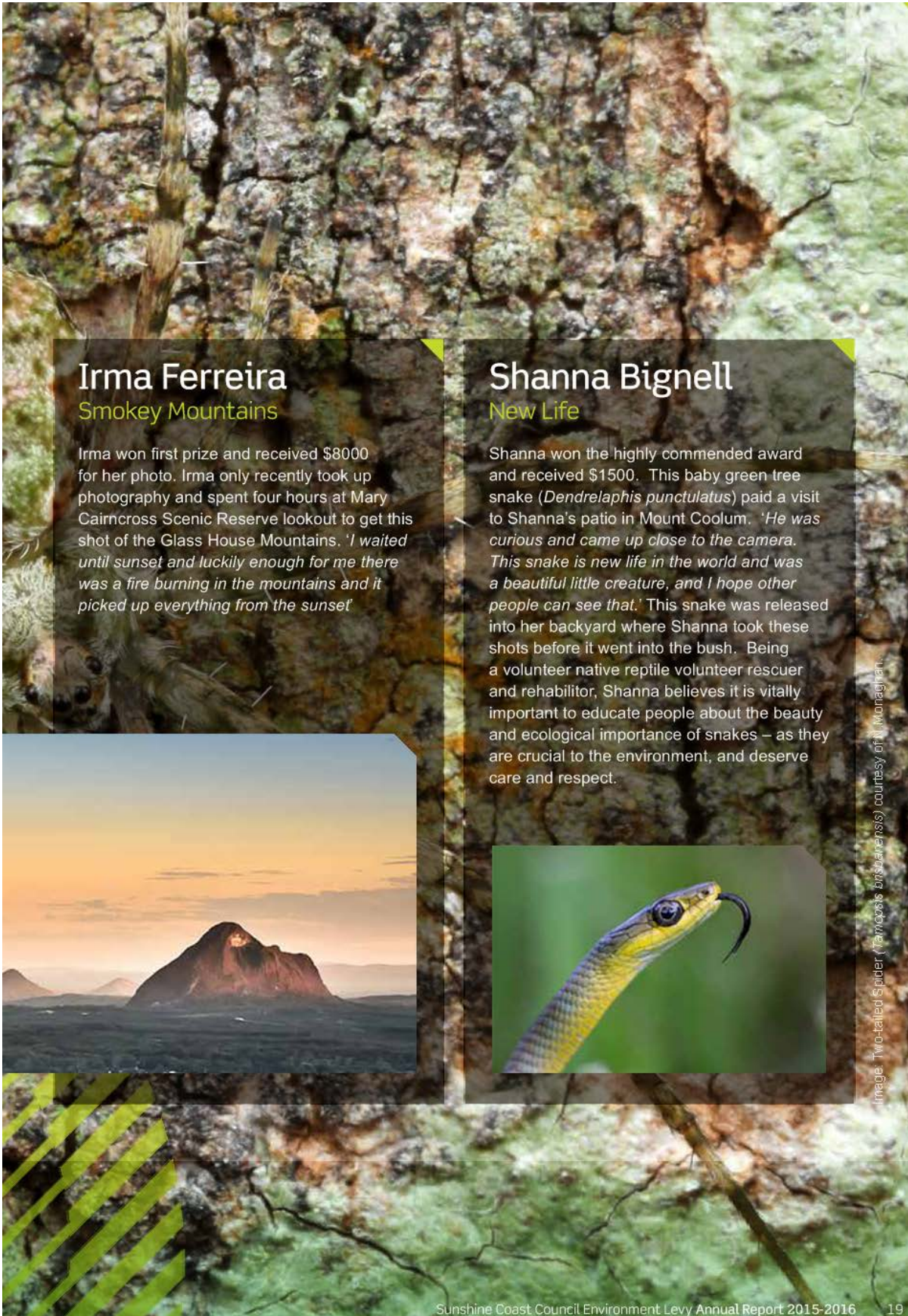
LAND FOR WILDLIFE
 RESTORATION RESEARCH & EDUCATION

Sunshine Coast Landscape and Wildlife Photography Award 2015

The 2015 inaugural Sunshine Coast Landscape and Wildlife Photography Award was launched as part of the Sunshine Coast Art Prize's 10th year anniversary and was supported by Sunshine Coast Council's Environment Levy.

The award celebrated Sunshine Coast flora, fauna, landscapes and the connection between people and the natural environment. The Sunshine Coast is valued for its natural landscape, which includes waterways, coast, rainforests and a rich diversity of plant and animal species. Through this award, the Environment Levy has raised awareness of the beauty and significance of the environment which assists the broader community to take ownership of the natural values which support their lifestyles and livelihoods.





Irma Ferreira
Smokey Mountains

Irma won first prize and received \$8000 for her photo. Irma only recently took up photography and spent four hours at Mary Cairncross Scenic Reserve lookout to get this shot of the Glass House Mountains. 'I waited until sunset and luckily enough for me there was a fire burning in the mountains and it picked up everything from the sunset'

Shanna Bignell
New Life

Shanna won the highly commended award and received \$1500. This baby green tree snake (*Dendrelaphis punctulatus*) paid a visit to Shanna's patio in Mount Coolum. 'He was curious and came up close to the camera. This snake is new life in the world and was a beautiful little creature, and I hope other people can see that.' This snake was released into her backyard where Shanna took these shots before it went into the bush. Being a volunteer native reptile volunteer rescuer and rehabilitator, Shanna believes it is vitally important to educate people about the beauty and ecological importance of snakes – as they are crucial to the environment, and deserve care and respect.





Image: Two-tailed Spider (*Parramotus unicolor*) courtesy of N. Monaghan.

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