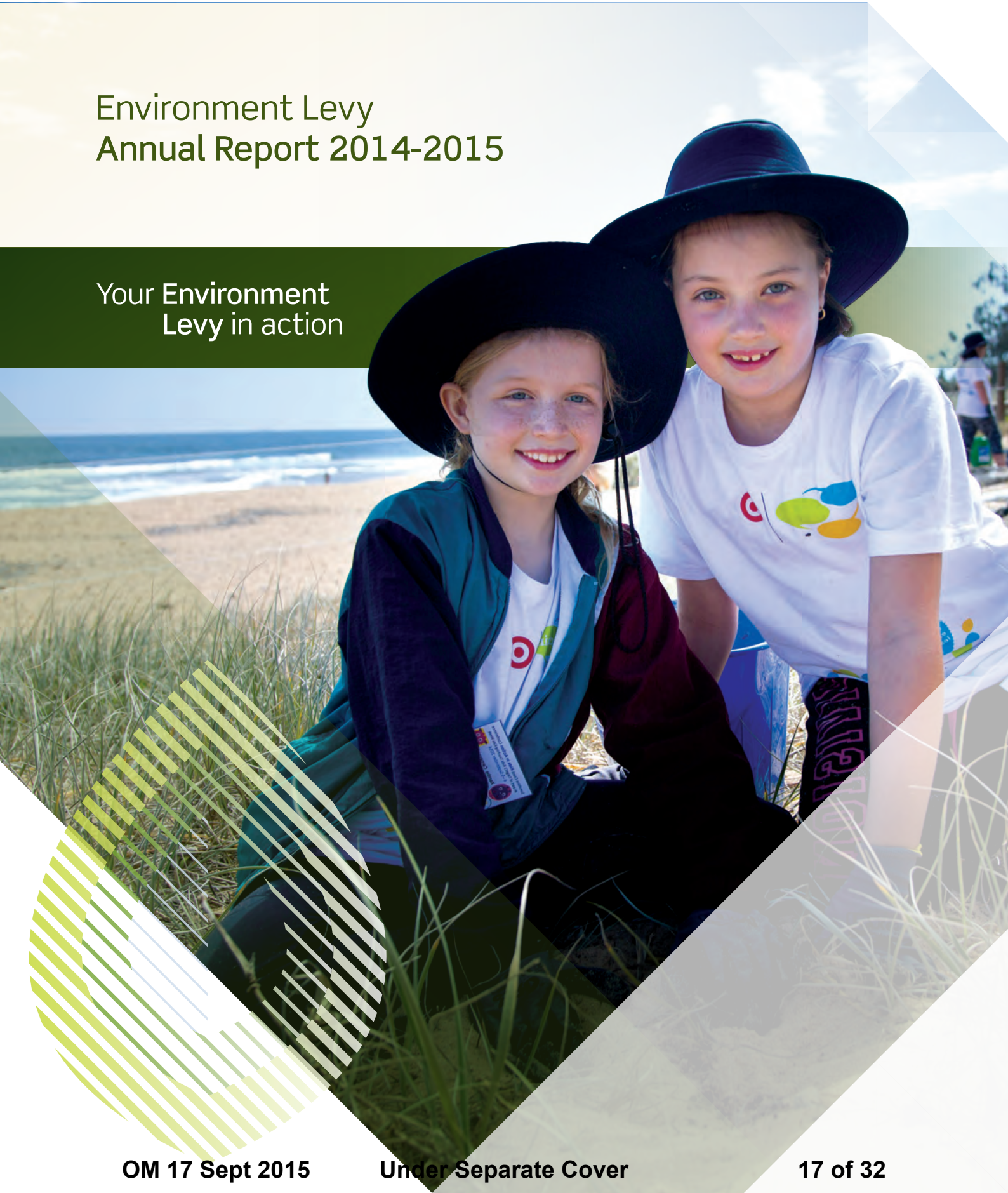




Environment Levy Annual Report 2014-2015

Your Environment
Levy in action



Message from the Mayor



Your Environment Levy in action for 2014-2015

The Sunshine Coast is without question a unique and special place and our region's natural advantage is clear for anyone to see.

The Sunshine Coast Council delivers one of the most successful and progressive environmental programs administered by any local government in Australia.

2014-15 has proven to be another year of action for Council's Environment Levy Program. Ongoing investments have been made into the management of our waterways and coastal foreshores and maintaining our diversity of native vegetation and animals.

The \$60 contribution each ratepayer makes to the Environment Levy enables Council to invest in projects that wouldn't otherwise be possible.

Pioneering research projects such as satellite tracking of flying foxes gives us the localised scientific data we need to make the best environmental management decisions for the Sunshine Coast.

The successful protection and enhancement of our environment requires ongoing investment of time, money and a strategic approach. This approach is guided by our long-term planning tools including the *Biodiversity Strategy 2010-2020*, *Waterways and Coastal Management Strategy 2011-2021* and the *Local Government Area Pest Management Plan 2012-2016*.

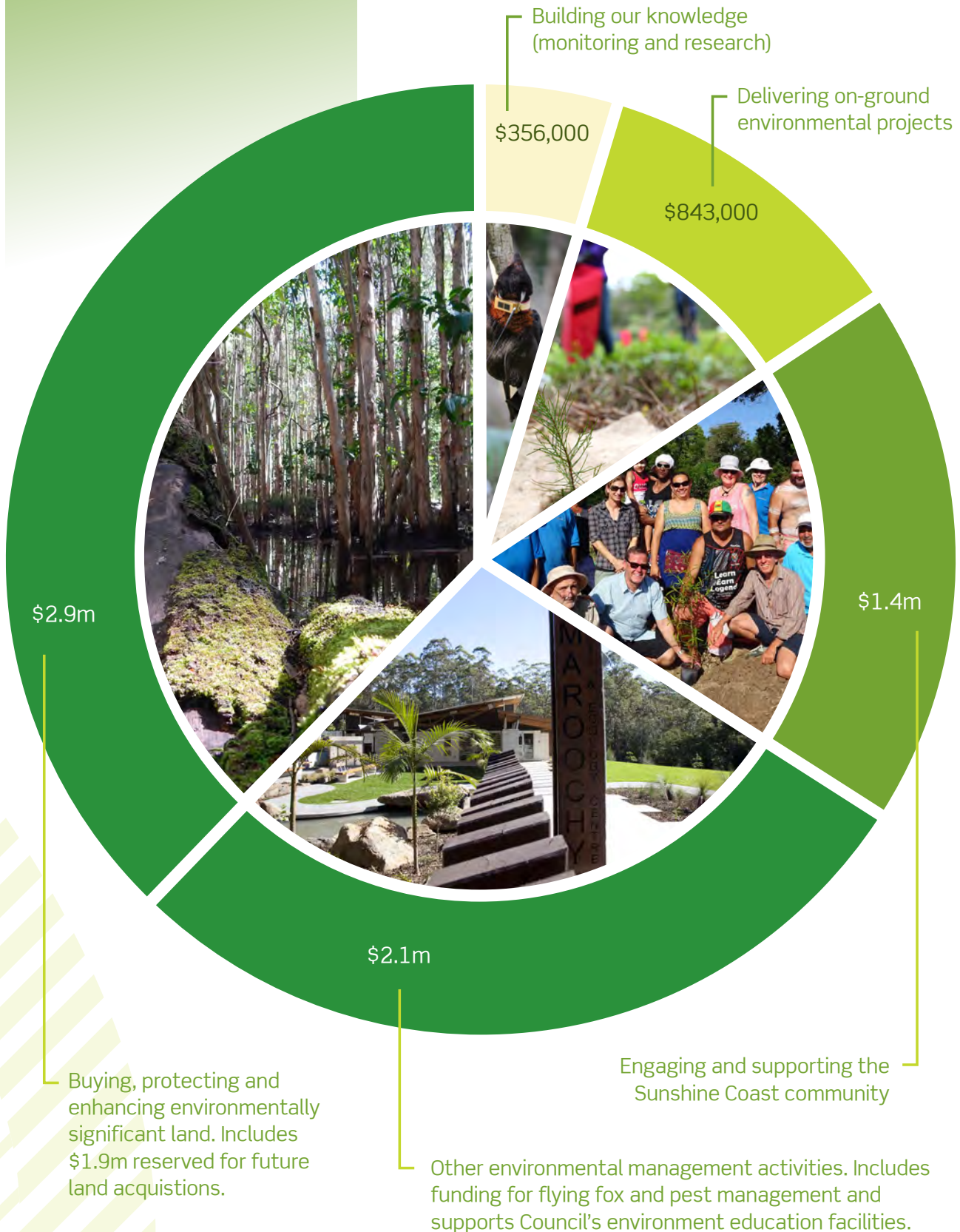
I am very proud of the achievements made in 2014-15 and look forward to Council's ongoing partnership with the community as we continue on our journey to be *Australia's most sustainable region – vibrant, green, diverse*.

Cr Mark Jamieson
Mayor

8.1.3 App A Environment Levy Annual Report

Where did your Environment Levy go in 2014-15?

Total revenue 2014-15: **\$7.6m**





Environment Levy 2014-2015 Program snapshot

Buying, protecting and enhancing environmentally significant land

When land is acquired through the Environment Levy, establishment works are undertaken to address immediate and short-term management issues.

In 2014-15 Council continued to invest in the establishment of environmentally significant land.

This includes creating access, fire trail management, rehabilitation of vegetation and pest control in preparation for its long-term management as part of Council's expanding conservation network.

Establishing and managing each reserve protects and enhances the region's biodiversity values for the Sunshine Coast community to enjoy and appreciate.



Delivering on-ground environmental projects

The Environment Levy funds major on-ground environmental projects that aim to maintain, enhance and reconnect our natural environment on the Sunshine Coast.

Projects undertaken in 2014-15 include the ongoing rehabilitation of coastal dunes and reserves, removing weeds in road reserves, and planning for, and restoring waterway vegetation in two of our major catchments the Pumicestone Passage and the Maroochy River.



\$310,000

Establishment program

12 reserves

922 hectares

\$657,000

maintenance of Environment Levy conservation estate



\$140,000

an enhanced
Bells Creek

Three years (2014-2017)

6,500 native plants so far

8,970

native plants established with the help of the community through the **Shoreline Erosion Management Project** and the **Coastal Rehabilitation Project**



16,600

native plants and **110 nest boxes** distributed to landholders through the Land for Wildlife incentive program

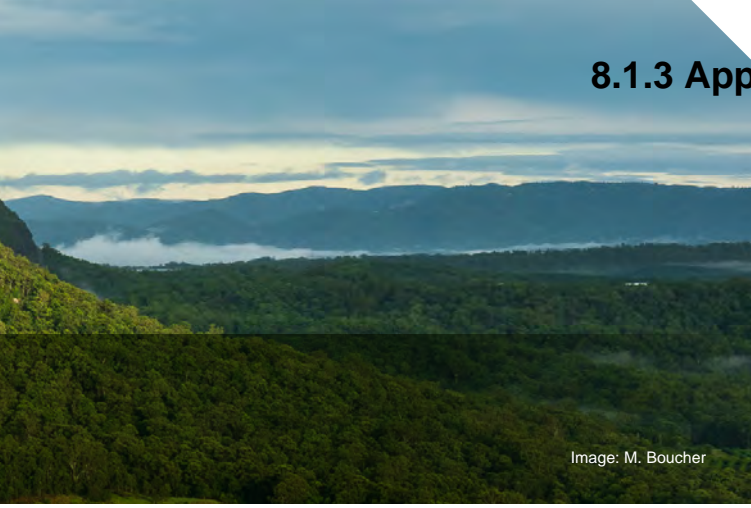


Image: M. Boucher



118 landholders received

\$341,000 of **Landholder Environment Grants**



\$115,000

Healthy Waterways partnership

Building our knowledge

The Levy funds planning, monitoring and research projects which assist Council to plan and make informed decisions in managing the natural environments on the Sunshine Coast.

This year the focus has been on gaining important koala habitat information, improving our knowledge on the movement of flying foxes and continued investment into the four year fauna monitoring project to better understand and manage the animals living in our reserves.

Engaging and supporting the Sunshine Coast community

Council works in partnership with the community to achieve better conservation outcomes for the region's beautiful rivers, beaches and extensive bushlands.

The Environment Levy invests in not-for-profit community groups and private landowners, supports conservation volunteers and educates the younger generation as our environmental stewards of the future.

Coastal rehabilitation

\$497,000

10 coastal reserve areas
120 hectares



\$570,000

fauna monitoring
Four years (2013-2017)
10 reserves

Exciting finds

the uncommon **eastern chestnut mouse** and the vulnerable **grey headed flying fox**

24 not-for-profit

community group partners funded

\$550,000



8.1.3 App A Environment Levy Annual Report

Buying, protecting and enhancing environmentally significant land

Following the purchase of environmentally significant land, the Environment Levy helps to establish and manage these new reserves. As part of a staged approach, Council undertakes establishment planning and activities to identify and confirm the reserve's unique ecological and cultural values and respond to immediate and short-term management issues.

Establishment works are undertaken to restore the natural resilience of bushland areas and build partnerships with local community groups and adjacent landholders, so that each new reserve is in a condition that requires minimal ongoing management into the future.

Council's Environment Levy establishment program aims to demonstrate environmental best practice to ensure sustainable management outcomes are delivered.

Council is in the process of establishing 12 reserves. Four of these are in their final year before being transferred to operational maintenance as part of Council's broader conservation reserve network.

18 kilometres
of fire trails maintained in 12
establishment reserves

460m stretch
of mature exotic pine removed
from **Racemosa Environmental
Reserve**

18 ha of
**bushland regeneration
works** undertaken within
**Racemosa Environmental
Reserve**



In 2014-15 approximately **\$310,000**
was spent on establishment activities across **922 hectares**



Biodiversity management
\$50,700

Infrastructure
management
\$77,600

Bush regeneration
and weed control
\$181,800

Establishing Doonan Creek Environmental Reserve

252 hectares,
Maroochy River catchment

Doonan Bridge Road, Verrierdale

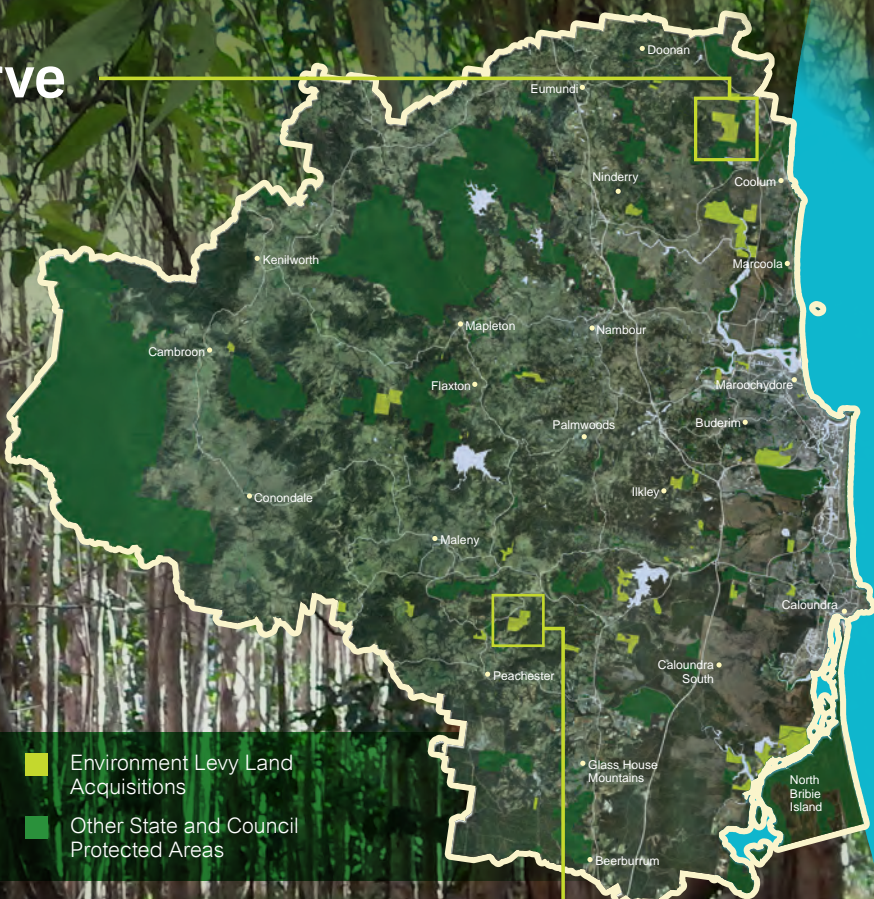
Partnering with the community

With all planning reports now complete for this site, Council has added a Public Involvement Plan to provide unique opportunities to build community partnerships at this reserve.

The community partnership will support the finalisation of a management plan, landscape design and future directions report for this reserve in 2015-16.

Understanding Doonan Creek

Actions such as extensive flora and fauna assessments, the creation of a regeneration works plan and bushland operational assessment, have been undertaken at Doonan Creek to collect background information on the reserve. This means further establishment works can now be undertaken.



Establishing London Creek Environmental Reserve

104 hectares,
Upper Stanley River catchment

MacDonalds Road, Peachester

Restoring ecological and cultural values using best practice

- A historical log bridge has been preserved in its original state and an alternative footbridge has been installed alongside this to maintain future pedestrian access
- Due to the sensitivity of this site a fauna spotter catcher and cultural heritage consultant (a Jinibara Elder) were on site during construction
- Old logging tracks have been converted to narrower pathways by regenerating the adjacent vegetation
- A fire management plan has been prepared in accordance with specific regional ecosystem guidelines
- A cultural heritage burn was conducted in cooperation with the Jinibara native title claimants for this area.

Delivering on-ground environmental projects

The Environment Levy invests in a range of on-ground rehabilitation and management projects that improve the health and sustainable use of our waterways and biodiversity.

Planning for the Maroochy

Planning for the Maroochy River Riparian Rehabilitation Project has identified the esplanade at the north and south Maroochy River confluence as the best area for action in 2015-16.

Council liaised with local landholders in the project planning stages with site visits and surveying, determining the intended biodiversity and waterway health outcomes. These will be delivered through native revegetation works, eradication of exotic grass and camphor laurel control.

Investing in the Pumicestone

Thanks to a strong partnership with adjoining property owners along a 6.5km stretch of Bells Creek, Council has been able to replace weeds such as pine wildings, lantana, asparagus fern, exotic grasses and vines with 6,500 native plants and even more native seeds.

The Pumicestone rehabilitation project is a key action of the *Pumicestone Passage and Catchment Action Plan 2013-2016* and will restore 30 hectares of riparian habitat.

Managing road reserves

Woody weeds compete with native trees for resources and can overtake areas, disturbing natural ecosystems.

The road reserve management project is a priority action identified in the *Sunshine Coast Local Government Area Pest Management Plan 2012 - 2016*. Key class 3 and locally recognised environmental weed species have been identified and mapped through the road reserve conservation strategy project for removal. Weed removal continued throughout 2014-15 on road reserves adjoining environmental reserves.

\$843,000

Total on-ground environmental projects



\$85,000
removing **woody weeds** in road reserves adjoining environmental reserves



\$140,000
Weed removal and native plant establishment
Bells Creek rehabilitation project



8,970
native **plants** established with the help of the community through the **Shoreline Erosion Management Project** and the **Coastal Dunal Rehabilitation project**



\$95,000
dune building and revegetation works through the **Shoreline Erosion Management Project**

8.1.3 App A Environment Levy Annual Report

Coastal rehabilitation project
continued through 2014-15

\$497,000

- 27 project sites
- 10 coastal reserve areas
- 120 hectares
- bush regeneration
- weed control

With strong coastcare volunteer support; this project also monitors pandanus health across the region's dunal and rocky headland systems.

Coastal Dunal Rehabilitation Project

The Coastal Dunal Rehabilitation Project focuses on weed removal and control.

Restoration areas include:

1. Stumers Creek foreshore
2. Yaroomba (south) – Coolum foreshore
3. Maroochy River – Marcoola foreshore
4. Mooloolaba – Cotton Tree foreshore
5. Point Cartwright - Warana foreshores
6. Bokarina – Currimundi foreshores
7. Moffat Beach to Dicky Beach foreshores
8. Kings to Shelley Beach
9. Happy Valley

Over the last 5 years
a total of

\$2.1m

has been spent on improving our dunes through both the **Coastal Dunal Rehabilitation Project** and the **Shoreline Erosion Management Project**.

Fauna monitoring continues

Snapshot of 2014-15 results

Building our knowledge

Council continues to invest the Environment Levy into the research and monitoring of our natural environment.

Improving koala habitat knowledge

'Maya' a trained border collie was used to detect koala scat (droppings) at 201 sites on 51 environmental reserves, Land for Wildlife and Voluntary Conservation Agreement properties. Koala scat was found at 41 of the 201 sites searched and the presence of koalas was confirmed on 20 properties. This information was used to inform the preparation of the *Draft Sunshine Coast Council Koala Conservation Plan* which was released for community consultation in June 2015. Workshops have been held with key koala and wildlife stakeholder groups as part of the broader engagement with the community.

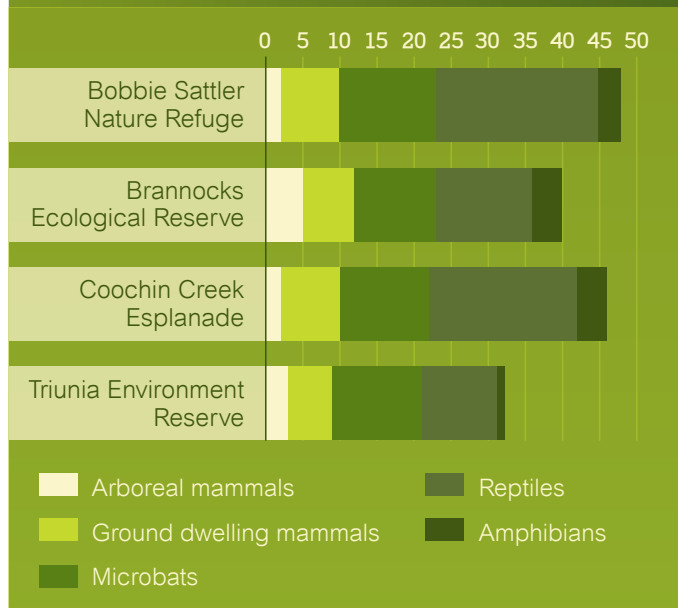
Flying fox research and education

Flying foxes play an essential role in our environment as bush pollinators and seed dispersers. In April 2015, Council, in partnership with CSIRO, became the first local government in Queensland to deploy satellite tracking technology to monitor 10 black flying foxes.

Council is following the flight paths of these animals to learn more about their movements. Understanding the movement of the species is crucial to allowing Council to proactively manage them into the future. Council will monitor the animals over the next nine months, using live mapping data provided by the trackers to find out how far they travel, relationships between roosts, feeding places and if management activities work.

Approximately 60% of flying foxes tracked have remained local, with the remaining 40% moving larger distances.

In addition, Council conducts monthly monitoring of six flying fox camps with results uploaded to Council's website. This study demonstrates the dynamic nature of flying fox movements and their response to availability of food resources in the region at any given time.



Some of the interesting sightings include:



Tiger snake (*Notechis scutatus*)

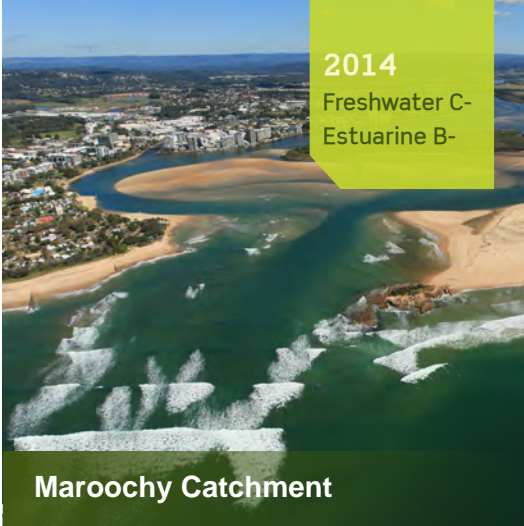
This spectacular looking venomous snake is confirmed as one of the only known populations for the species on the Sunshine Coast.



Grey headed flying fox (*Pteropus poliocephalus*)

This flying fox species is listed as vulnerable nationally (*Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*) and is ranked as a critical priority under the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection's Back on Track species prioritisation framework.

8.1.3 App A Environment Levy Annual Report



2014
Freshwater C-
Estuarine B-

Maroochy Catchment



2014
Freshwater C-
Estuarine B+

Mooloolah Catchment



2014
Freshwater C+
Marine C+

Pumicestone Catchment

Building our knowledge of waterway health

The Environment Levy funded \$115,000 towards Healthy Waterways Partnership in 2014-15

Council's annual contribution supports a regional monitoring program that assesses the health of our creeks and rivers. The program measures rates of plant and algal growth, the variety of fish and water bugs, the quality of streamside vegetation, temperature, water clarity, acidity, available oxygen, and nutrient concentrations.

Funding also supports communication, education and motivation programs to deliver healthy waterways on the Sunshine Coast.

Real Outcomes: Changes in the health of the Pumicestone Passage led to Sunshine Coast Council working together with Moreton Bay Regional Council and over 30 community, industry and government groups to create a three year action plan to improve the health of the Passage. The *Pumicestone Passage and Catchment Action Plan 2013-2016* is currently underway with most of the actions in progress and many already complete.

Healthy Waterways is a not-for-profit, non-government organisation which works collaboratively with its members to protect and improve waterways for future generations to enjoy.



Healthy Waterways
ONE CLEAR VISION

Building our knowledge of pest species on the coast



Motion sensing cameras monitor pest animals



Scent detection dogs identify fox dens

The Environment Levy contributes to the implementation of Council's Pest Management Program. This includes:

- provision of information and education to the community
- supporting community partnerships for proactive pest management programs
- monitoring of pest plants and animals
- providing reactive trapping, baiting, and destruction programs to reduce impacts on the community and our environment.

By using remote monitoring cameras deployed on private properties, in partnership with landowners, Council is able to monitor pest animals including wild dogs.

Scent detection dogs are trained to locate fox dens to allow control at identified locations. Council has partnered with Coolum Coast Care volunteers and their dogs to enable community action on these pest animals.

Partnerships in action



Coolum & North Shore Coast Care

- \$23,950
 - 3 years
- Coordinate and manage environmental activities and events



Bunya Bunya Country Aboriginal Corporation

- \$5,000
 - 3 years
- Caring for salt water country on the Sunshine Coast



Wildlife Volunteers Association Inc.

- \$10,000
 - 3 years
- Rescue and rehabilitate Australian native wildlife



Barung Landcare Association

- \$47,000
 - 3 years
- Community Landcare in the Mary River catchment

Engaging and supporting the Sunshine Coast community

The Environment Levy funds a variety of partnership, grants and incentive based programs that support the community in the ongoing delivery of their conservation outcomes.

Investing in the community

The Environment Levy Partnerships Program supports the ongoing operation of community-based environmental organisations. These groups deliver numerous projects and services including rehabilitation of degraded areas, monitoring of various animal species and waterways, removing weeds, litter collection, education and caring for our native wildlife.

In 2014-15, \$550,000 was distributed to 24 not-for-profit groups under this program, including:



8.1.3 App A Environment Levy Annual Report

The Environment Levy supports:

66 Voluntary Conservation Agreement Partners

who together are protecting

1,056 hectares of habitat for flora and fauna

857 registered Land for Wildlife members

who are managing **6,734 ha** of retained habitat and restoring a further 596 hectares



16,600 seedlings were distributed and **110 nest boxes** installed through the Land for Wildlife incentives program for private landholders

\$23,000

Environment Levy Grants awarded to six projects including a creek rehabilitation project at **Mapleton State School**

118 landholders received **\$341,000** of Landholder Environment Grants

Upskilling landholders and the community to identify weeds with

1,500 Weedecks produced



The **Australasian Bat Night** was held at Mary Cairncross Scenic Reserve in April. Approximately 100 people attended this event which educated people of all ages about local flying fox and bat species.

The Kids in Action Forum

4 - 5 September 2014

25 schools, 270 students, 61 teachers, 2 days

Real outcomes

Valued learning process – 85% of respondents felt the kids teaching kids method helped to improve their learning about the environment.

Increasing knowledge and awareness – 90% of responses reported having more awareness of the environment from participating in Kids in Action

Promoting protection and responsibility – Developing a deeper sense of care and protection from participating in Kids in Action was evident in children's responses.

Making changes in actions – 70% reported a change in actions post conference. In particular- being responsible for rubbish.



Conservation Volunteering

If you have enjoyed reading about Council's Environment Levy 2014-15 achievements, perhaps you'd be interested in becoming a conservation volunteer and playing your part to protect and manage our Sunshine Coast environment.

Council's Community Nature Conservation Program is a great way to get involved by becoming an environmental steward and making a real difference to your local community.

Groups hold regular working bees throughout the year and it is up to you how often you attend. The program suits all ages and activities range from planning, monitoring and nest box building to planting and weeding.

Check out the map on Council's website to find your local group and get started or why not start your own.



The Environment Levy achieves so much for the Sunshine Coast, funding projects that take us further towards our vision to become Australia's most sustainable region – vibrant, green, diverse.

Message from your Environment Portfolio Councillor

Our commitment to the environment will continue in 2015-16 with \$2.3 million allocated to buying, protecting and enhancing environmentally significant land to add to our conservation estate.

We've allocated \$450,000 towards monitoring and research projects that will build our knowledge and help us protect and enhance biodiversity. Community groups who deliver tirelessly for the environment can continue their valuable work with an \$845,000 investment through partnership and grant programs.

Healthy waterways continue to be a theme with \$620,000 allocated to coastal rehabilitation and \$300,000 towards the Maroochy River Rehabilitation Project, and finally, \$470,000 will be invested into pest management projects.

The Levy also enables our investment in the next generation, our environmental champions of the future, through programs such as Kids in Action.

I'd like to thank each and every ratepayer who contributes to the Environment Levy.

Cr Jenny McKay
Environment Portfolio

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Acknowledgements

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Disclaimer

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