



## Environment Levy Annual Report 2013-2014

*your environment levy  
your habitat*





## Message from the Mayor

### Your Environment Levy in action for 2013-2014

The Sunshine Coast is renowned for its environmental values, including its waterways and coastal foreshores and its diversity of native vegetation and animals—all of which help support the lifestyles and livelihoods of the region.

Sunshine Coast Council's vision is to be **Australia's most sustainable region – vibrant, green, diverse**. We are committed to protecting and enhancing the environment and providing an enviable lifestyle for the Sunshine Coast community and its visitors.

The \$60 Sunshine Coast Environment Levy, contributed by all rateable properties, enables us to invest further in the region's biodiversity, waterways and foreshores, and to strengthen partnerships with the community.

To make sure we are investing the Levy where it matters most, we refer to our long-term planning tools, Council's *Biodiversity Strategy 2010-2020*, *Waterways and Coastal Management Strategy 2011-2021* and the *Local Government Area Pest Management Plan 2012-2016*.

Protecting the Sunshine Coast environment is an important foundation of this community and your Environment Levy helps us achieve that aim.

We have committed to building impressive environmental and sustainability credentials and we want to build on these to reflect our community's strong desire to maintain and enhance our natural assets, biodiversity, pristine landscapes and outstanding liveability.

I am very proud of the significant outcomes we achieved in 2013-14 and look forward to continuing that success as we strive to become the most sustainable region in Australia.

**Cr Mark Jamieson**  
**Mayor**

COVER IMAGE: Kirbys Road Environmental Reserve  
Community Planting Day, June 2014

LEFT: Mayor Jamieson assisting with offset rehabilitation  
at Doonan Creek Environmental Reserve, August 2014



## Where did your Environment Levy go in 2013-2014?

Total spend 2013-14  
\$11.27M



## Environment Levy 2013-2014 Program snapshot

Buying, protecting and enhancing  
environmentally significant land



Your Environment Levy funds are helping Council to purchase environmentally significant land to expand its conservation network. By managing these lands, Council is contributing to the protection and enhancement of the region's biodiversity values for today's community and future generations to enjoy and appreciate.

**\$6.13M**  
acquisition program

Four new reserves  
398 hectares

**38 hectares**

of land being **revegetated**  
and **rehabilitated** at  
**Doonan Creek** and **London  
Creek Environmental  
Reserves** through offset  
agreements with Energex and  
Department of Transport and  
Main Roads

**\$480,000**  
establishing our  
new reserves

Delivering on-ground environmental projects



The Environment Levy invests in major rehabilitation and on-ground management projects such as removing weeds in coastal foreshores and road reserves and restoring native vegetation along our waterway corridors. These projects are targeted at maintaining, enhancing and reconnecting our natural environment.

**\$1.1M**

an enhanced  
**Mooloolah River**  
Four years (2010-2014)  
34,000 native plants

**15,000**  
native **plants** established  
along **Maroochydore/Alexandra  
Beach** with the help of the  
community through the Shoreline  
Erosion Management Project

Coastal rehabilitation  
**\$454,000**  
10 coastal reserve areas  
120 hectares

## Building our knowledge



Council improves and adapts its management practices based on increased knowledge of our environment. The Levy funds planning, monitoring and research projects that provide the scientific data and background information required to increase our knowledge.

## Engaging and supporting the Sunshine Coast community



With over 50% of the region's remnant vegetation occurring on private lands, partnering with not-for-profit community groups and landowners, supporting conservation volunteers and educating the younger generation is integral to achieving Council's desired conservation outcomes for the region.

**\$570,000**  
**fauna monitoring**

Four years (2013-2017)  
 10 reserves

### Exciting finds

Australia's rarest native rodent, the vulnerable **water mouse** and the elusive, endangered **Coxen's fig-parrot**

**\$161,920**

**Healthy Waterways**  
 partnership

**21,750**

**native plants** and **190 nest boxes** distributed to landholders through the Land for Wildlife incentive program



**111** landholders received

**\$384,000**

**of Landholder Environment Grants**



**26** not-for-profit community group partners funded

**\$869,730**



## Buying, protecting and enhancing environmentally significant land



*Levy reserves are a valuable asset for the community. They provide scenic amenity and enable widespread public access for nature based recreation.*

*These reserves are an investment into the future of this region where opportunities and awareness in education, eco-recreation and ecosystem services are likely to grow.*

**Cr Jenny McKay**  
Environment Portfolio

Your Environment Levy funds are helping Council to purchase environmentally significant land to expand its conservation network. By managing these lands, Council is contributing to the protection and enhancement of the region's biodiversity values for today's community and future generations to enjoy and appreciate.

The Environment Levy Land Acquisition Program is a key strategic action of the *Sunshine Coast Biodiversity Strategy 2010-2020* which aims to:

- protect and enhance our natural environment
- expand on Council's conservation reserve network
- preserve native plants and animals
- protect and enhance wildlife corridors.

In 2013-14 Council spent \$6.13M on the acquisition program and acquired four new reserves totalling 398 hectares. Since 2009, Sunshine Coast Council has bought approximately 945 hectares of land for conservation. This brings the total to over 2,761 hectares of land purchased by the Environment Levy since it began in the early 90's.

12 

endangered, vulnerable or threatened **animal species found** in our four new Levy reserves and other reserves

**Nine** endangered, vulnerable or threatened **plant species found** in the **four new reserves**, including five commonwealth endangered species 

**\$480,000** Establishing our **new reserves**

spent on flora, fauna and cultural heritage surveys, access tracks and fire trails, management plans and vegetation condition assessments, weed control and bush regeneration, signage, gates, fencing and clean-up operations

Establishing partnerships with **local indigenous groups**

**900** plants  established through **community volunteer days** at Kirbys Road and Tuan Environmental Reserve

**38** hectares 

of land being **revegetated and rehabilitated** at **Doonan Creek and London Creek Environmental Reserves** through offset agreements with Energex and Department of Transport and Main Roads

## Four new reserves Acquisition program



### Doonan Creek Environmental Reserve



Doonan Bridge Road, Verrierdale  
 252 hectares

- Maroochy River catchment
- contains under represented and endangered vegetation communities including critically endangered lowland rainforest

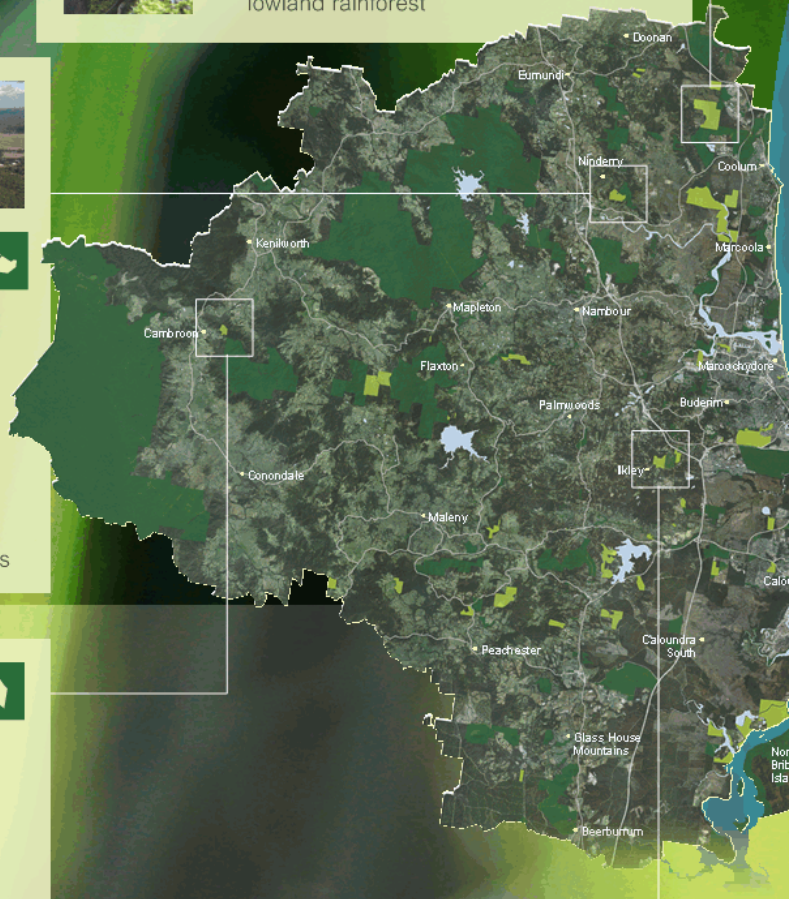


### Mount Ninderry Environmental Reserve



Mountain View Court, Ninderry  
 60 hectares

- Maroochy River catchment
- Indigenous and community significance
- contains threatened and under represented rainforest and eucalypt vegetation communities



### Tuan Environmental Reserve



Chinaman Creek Road, Cambroon  
 27.3 hectares

- Mary River catchment
- contains under represented melaleuca, eucalypt and rainforest vegetation communities including the critically endangered lowland rainforest
- 'Tuan' is the common name for brush-tailed phascogale which is a significant species found on the reserve.



### Tall Gums Environmental Reserve



Wilsons Road, Ickley  
 59.5 hectares

- Mooloolah River catchment
- contains threatened rainforest and eucalypt vegetation communities

 Environment Levy Land Acquisitions  
 Other State and Council Protected Areas



## Delivering on-ground environmental projects

### Coastal rehabilitation

**\$454,000**

10 coastal reserve areas  
120 hectares

The Environment Levy invests in major rehabilitation and on-ground management projects such as removing weeds in coastal foreshores and road reserves and restoring native vegetation along our waterway corridors. These projects are targeted at maintaining, enhancing and reconnecting our natural environment.

**\$80,000**

removing  
**woody weeds**

in road reserves adjoining  
environmental reserves



### Plan before we plant

Community, industry and government stakeholders involved in the development of the *Pumicestone Passage and Catchment Action Plan 2013-2016* have identified a 6.5km reach of Bells Creek in need of rehabilitation. An important first step in planning for the delivery of this large scale rehabilitation project has been to build strong partnerships with the local landholders and to undertake site preparation works including surveying and creating site access points. Rehabilitation works will commence in 2014-15.

**\$1.68M**

other **environment activities**

### Rehabilitation of your coastal reserves

Native coastal rehabilitation activities provide social, economic and biodiversity outcomes. Council has continued to invest your Levy funds into the management and maintenance of coastal foreshore reserves, including revegetation, fencing and the control of pest plants.

**Coastal weed species targeted:**  
**easter cassia, glory lilly and asparagus fern**



### Valuing our road reserves

Vegetation on rural road reserves has an important role to play in linking tracts of native vegetation, providing habitat and corridors for movement and dispersal for animals and plants. A three year Road Reserve Conservation Strategy project has been completed identifying and mapping the values of our Council managed road reserves to ensure a more considered approach is taken towards road design and management.

**15,000**

native **plants** established  
along **Maroochydore/Alexandra Beach** with the help of the community through the Shoreline Erosion Management Project









## Building our knowledge

### \$161,920 towards Healthy Waterways partnership

*Sunshine Coast Council is a highly valued member of Healthy Waterways and we acknowledge their commitment to protecting local waterways. Council's membership supports the Healthy Waterways Monitoring Program enabling us to understand and communicate the condition of waterways on the Sunshine Coast. Healthy Waterways also works with Council on programs to drive and influence actions which improve waterway health.*

**Julie McLellan**  
CEO Healthy Waterways



Council improves and adapts its management practices based on increased knowledge of our environment. The Levy funds planning, monitoring and research projects that provide the scientific data and background information required to increase our knowledge.

### The iconic koalas

Council has mapped suitable koala habitat within the local government area as a first step towards developing the Sunshine Coast's first Koala Conservation Plan. A further on-ground investigation of environmental reserves and select private properties, which contain evidence of koala inhabitants, will commence in 2014-15.

### Flying fox management and education

Council is working with residents whose properties directly adjoin local flying fox camps and has undertaken management at a number of sites. This work was coupled with a monthly monitoring program of five local flying fox camps, which provided Council with reliable and accurate population numbers, species composition and biological data for each camp. An education campaign aimed at improving the community's understanding of the ecological importance of these species and to provide tips on how to live near them will continue in 2014-15.

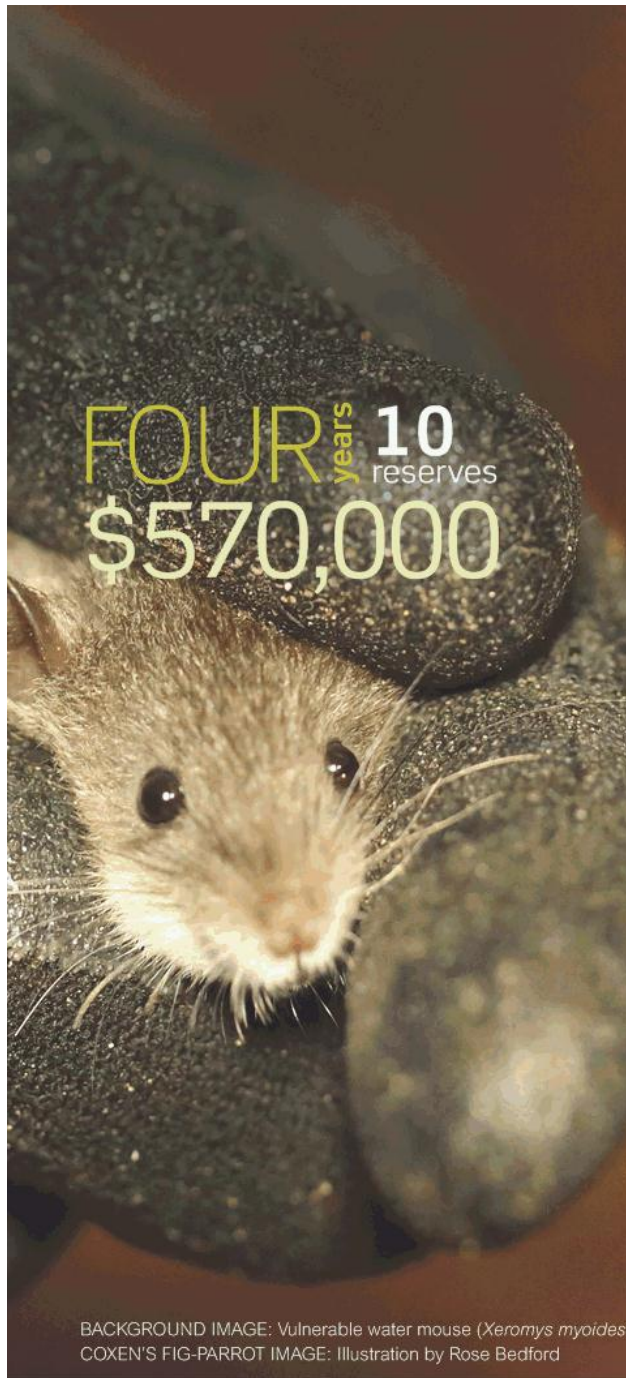
### Recreational water quality

Council has finalised a two-year water quality monitoring program in partnership with Unitywater. This involved undertaking weekly samples at popular beach and coastal recreation locations and creek and river inflow sites on major waterways across the coast. A review of monitoring results has been undertaken by the Queensland University of Technology. This information will assist Council to better understand water quality to inform decisions associated with providing and managing healthy waterways and foreshores.

### Understanding the Coast's biodiversity

Council has developed a monitoring and evaluation framework known as the *Sunshine Coast Local Government Area Biodiversity Report* - a key deliverable of the *Sunshine Coast Biodiversity Strategy 2010-2020*. This tool improves Council's understanding of the Sunshine Coast's biodiversity health and provides a benchmark against which Council and the community's biodiversity protection and enhancement efforts can be measured and periodically reported on. The report is being updated to reflect the new local government boundary and other available biodiversity data prior to its release.





### Interesting finds



The first confirmed record of one of Australia's rarest native rodent, the vulnerable water mouse (*Xeromys myoides*) at Bells Creek Environmental Reserve.



13 species of micro-bats have been found in the Bells Creek area which were previously unrecorded in this location.



A high density and abundance of ground dwelling mammals have been found in Ben Bennett Bushland Park including the yellow-footed antechinus (*Antechinus flavipes*). This species is susceptible to habitat fragmentation yet interestingly has been found in this relatively small, highly isolated reserve surrounded by urban development. This suggests the reserve is even more ecologically significant than previously thought.



Mooloolah River Nature Refuge, Glenview contains at least 17 bat species; this is a very high diversity for south east Queensland and represents the highest recorded diversity of bats in Council's bushland reserves.



The endangered Coxen's fig-parrot (*Cyclopsitta diophthalma coxeni*) was observed at Upper Mooloolah Nature Refuge, Bald Knob. This is the first sighting of this species on the Sunshine Coast since 2006.



In total five endangered, vulnerable or near-threatened species have been identified including: the giant barred frog (*Mixophyes iteratus*), elf skink (*Eroticoscincus graciloides*) and grey-headed flying fox (*Pteropus poliocephalus*).

### Fauna monitoring project

Council commenced the largest fauna monitoring project to be undertaken in its environmental reserves in 2013.

The 2013-2014 surveys on four environmental reserves contributes to stage 1 of the project which is the preliminary inventory assessment of fauna in the reserve network. The aim is to build sufficient fauna records to develop an effective long-term monitoring program. Council will use this monitoring program to improve reserve management practices, which aim to maintain and enhance the site's ecological values and to better conserve native flora and fauna.



## Engaging and supporting the Sunshine Coast community

*We all have an important role to play in caring for our environment and the Environment Levy provides fantastic support to the community to deliver conservation outcomes.*

**Susie Duncan, Coordinator  
Hinterland Bushlinks**



With over 50% of the region's remnant vegetation occurring on private lands, partnering with not-for-profit community groups and landowners, supporting conservation volunteers and educating the younger generation is integral to achieving Council's desired conservation outcomes for the region.

### Community partnerships

The Environment Levy funds a variety of not-for-profit community environmental groups that demonstrate a benefit to the community and Council through the ongoing delivery of their environmental projects, initiatives and programs. These groups provide services ranging from wildlife caring and turtle monitoring to litter collection and community engagement and education. The Community Partnerships Program supports the ongoing operation of these community-based, volunteer driven organisations by assisting with their operational and administrative costs.

### Engaging future generations

27 schools, 267 students and 61 teachers participated in the 2013 Annual Kids in Action Forum. This event aims to inspire the region's future environmental leaders, growing a culture that values caring for the natural environment. The successful delivery of this event involved a further 27 community volunteers, 13 community partnerships organisations and four corporate sponsors.



IMAGE: 2013 Kids in Action Forum

### Recognition for volunteers

Over 350 volunteers attended the Conservation Forum held in September 2013. The event theme was 'resilience' and attracted guest speakers such as Professor Tim Flannery, Australian mammalogist, palaeontologist, environmentalist and global warming activist. The event provided capacity building and networking opportunities for conservation volunteers through presentations and workshops.

**26** not-for-profit  
community group  
partners funded  
**\$869,730**



**111** landholders  
received  
**\$384,000**  
of Landholder  
Environment Grants





The Environment Levy supports:

**58** Voluntary Conservation Agreement Partners who together are protecting **918 hectares** of habitat for flora and fauna

**649** registered Land for Wildlife members who are managing **6,653 hectares** of retained habitat and restoring a further 609 hectares



**181** landholders working towards full Land for Wildlife registration

**21,750** native plants and **190 nest boxes** distributed to landholders through the Land for Wildlife incentive program

Private landholder engagement is an integral component of the Environment Levy Program. Landholders are engaged and assisted through the Conservation Partnership Program.

The Land for Wildlife and Voluntary Conservation Agreement Program are the main tools of engagement. These programs are voluntary and provide landholders with invaluable information on the biodiversity values of their property as well as access to incentives such as workshops, free plants and nest boxes.

IMAGE: Susie Duncan, Coordinator Hinterland Bushlinks participating at Kirbys Road Environmental Reserve community planting day, June 2014





*So much good has come from this levy. We are lucky to live in such a pretty area, one that is not 90% housing. Trying to save some of our iconic bushland for the future is a must.*

**Pat from Montville  
Community Member**

IMAGE: Koala (*Phascolarctos cinereus*)



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#### Acknowledgements

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#### Disclaimer

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#### Note

2013-2014 Environment Levy revenue/expenditure to 31 December 2013 included areas now within the Noosa Council local government area.

