

# Roadside vegetation

**COUNCIL NAME**

Penrith City Council

**WEB ADDRESS**

[penrithcity.nsw.gov.au](http://penrithcity.nsw.gov.au)

**SIZE**

405 square kilometres

**POPULATION**

209,210

## Overview

In 2018, Penrith City Council developed a Roadside Vegetation Management Plan (RVMP) to address requirements to protect threatened vegetation species along roadsides within the Penrith LGA. Subsequently, the Roadside Vegetation Management Project was established to create a framework for Council to better manage its roadside vegetation and to assess and identify areas within the local government area that had been identified as having significant value in Councils' RVMP. This was achieved by reviewing the RVMP, creating a Review of Environmental Factors (REF) and Test of Significance template, implementing procedures to undertake REFs, employing a dedicated REF staff member, installing roadside markers and educating council staff.

## Background

Located on Sydney's Cumberland Plain, over 90% of Penrith's endemic vegetation is listed as threatened, including certain vegetation that is listed as critically endangered. Penrith is fortunate to have large areas of native bushland remaining, which supports approximately 17% of the remaining Cumberland Plain bushland in Western Sydney.

During the development of the RVMP, 567 kilometres of roadside vegetation was assessed within the peri-urban and rural areas of the LGA. These assessments were undertaken using the Roadside Assessment Method developed by Local Government NSW and Local Land Services. Results of the assessments showed that within Penrith there were 140.2 kilometres of high conservation value and 42.3 kilometres of moderate conservation value roadside vegetation.

This project was undertaken to implement several recommendations from the RVMP and aid operational staff to identify areas of significant conservation value, as well as to understand the importance of maintaining and regenerating these areas. During implementation, Council identified that a range of supporting systems, procedures and training were required to assist staff and to ensure that environment impacts were minimised.

## Implementation

In 2019, Council's Divisional Assurance Team were tasked with the responsibility of implementing the RVMP recommendations. The process involved:

- Establishing an internal working group.
- Implementing improved procedures for assessment and protection of roadside vegetation.
- Improving staff and community knowledge of the importance of roadside vegetation.
- Ground truthing the RVMP data.
- Resourcing to undertake required ground truthing, ongoing REF assessment, training, and compliance audits.

Following a review of the recommendations and the volume of work required, Council resourced a designated position to:

- Implement procedures to undertake REFs.
- Create templates to ensure a consistent approach to the assessment of significant vegetation.
- Develop an internal training package to deliver to staff and supervisors.
- Provide information on Councils' website for the community to educate and inform readers of the importance of protecting, maintaining and rehabilitating significant vegetation.

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## Outcomes

This project has ensured operational staff are aware of and can comply with the requirements of protecting and maintaining vegetation of significant value to the area.

The system improvements have provided an opportunity to create better working relationships between internal teams and provided an opportunity for stakeholders to better understand what services each department provides, which will also benefit future projects.

The development of a process for the biodiversity layer and BioNet layer to be updated in Council's GIS program every 90 days was also achieved. This will ensure information can be viewed in one location and is up to date.

The implementation of a restricted work tag on work orders issued to operational staff has provided an additional measure to identify where the significant vegetation is located and what maintenance work can be undertaken in and around the area.

The in-house development of a training package for operational staff and supervisors ensures staff are delivered consistent information and training relating to significant vegetation within the Penrith Local Government Area.

The longer-term outcomes are to enhance the significant areas by identifying areas with potential connectivity; and build greater knowledge and understanding of these areas and maintenance requirements with operational staff, major projects staff and the community.

## Key Learnings

Successful projects need to detail roles and responsibilities upfront to provide clear direction, ensuring effective and efficient delivery. Consistent and regular communication with internal stakeholders is also important. For example, keeping operational staff informed generated interest and conversations regarding the project, which in turn ensured the ongoing support for compliance from operational staff.

For future projects, Council identified the need to ensure that data is reviewed promptly to enable the early identification of stakeholders and subject matter experts, which will inform the creation of a project working group and ensure that input is received from those impacted by decisions, thus enabling Council to deliver the project on time.

## Contact

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This project was the 2021 winner of the Roadside Environmental Management Award at the LGNSW Excellence in the Environment Awards.

