

Developing a new Roadside Vegetation Management Plan for the Parkes Shire

COUNCIL NAME

Parkes Shire Council

WEB ADDRESS

www.parkes.nsw.gov.au

SIZE

5,958 square kilometres

POPULATION

14,608

Overview of the project

Parkes Shire Council received grant funding through the Council Roadside Reserves (CRR) Project to ensure best practice management and improve the long-term environmental value of all Parkes Shire's roadside reserve assets. This included a new Roadside Vegetation Management Plan (RVMP) and Review of Environmental Factors (REF) documents to improve their assessment and management of works being undertaken in the roadside reserve.



How the project was carried out

Parkes Shire Council had previously prepared and adopted a RVMP in 2001. This provided Council with good baseline information on the existing roadside vegetation and assisted in determining the management actions needed across the Shire's roadsides. The grant funding provided an opportunity to update the current RVMP and ensure all key roads were mapped and conservation values assessed with the assistance of a consultant. An updated RVMP ensures that best practice management techniques are detailed for roadside vegetation management and to ensure remnant vegetation within the Parkes Shire is managed sustainably and environmental conservation outcomes delivered.

The project assisted in the delivery of the following:

- An updated delivery program and operational plan which included issues identified in RVMP
- Identification of threatened species occurrence and sites
- Assessment of 2,300kms of roadside and the development of GIS layers for the assessed roads
- Data package prepared and available for the roadside areas
- The delivery of training in roadside vegetation best practice management to key Council operators
- Installation of 40 'Significant Roadside Environmental Area' signs at 20 new locations throughout the Parkes Shire to assist in raising the awareness of the value of the roadside reserves to both Council's roads crews and all community road users.



Outcomes now and in the future

The project has allowed council to continue to build on their expertise in managing their roadside reserves. The newly Council-endorsed RVMP informs and guides the Council's roadside works and facilitates conservation of native roadside vegetation into the future and enhances Council's capacity to manage these areas through:

- Updated GIS layers of roadsides assessed and their conservation rating including presence of threatened species and Endangered Ecological Communities
- Identification of roadside 'Priority Sites' for environmental rehabilitation within the Parkes Shire
- Newly trained staff to facilitate integration of best practice management techniques into all roadside works schedules, improving Council's roadside management practices using updated REFs
- Development of a 'Glovebox Guide' outlining main elements of best practice roadside vegetation management (including mapping) that staff can refer to as needed
- Community engagement resulting in a greater awareness of roadside environmental issues.

Benefits and lessons learned

All project elements were delivered to high standard as planned and within the agreed timeframe, however there were challenges along the way with delays to the delivery schedule. Council identified the need to schedule more regular meetings with the consultant to ensure project milestones are being met as expected. This learning will be applied to future consultancy projects.

Training has been identified as a key benefit to the project and essential in achieving operational staff buy-in. In doing so, the lessons learnt were to allow plenty of time for questions and exercises during training workshops and refer to the supporting materials, such as the Glovebox Guide as often as possible to reinforce that the guide is key to manage roadside vegetation management.

Another highlight of the project is having roadsides assessed and mapped for conservation value and providing these as a visual resource to be able to demonstrate the importance of roadside vegetation to operational staff. A visual representation of the objectives of particular roadsides is an effective way to engage staff as an initial step to identify the need for roadside maintenance activities particularly tailored to that area. These sites would have previously been undertaken as routine management, however are now managed to reflect the particular needs of the site.

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