

Case Study: Moree Plains Roadside Environmental Management Plan

COUNCIL NAME

Moree Plains Shire Council

WEBSITE

mpsc.nsw.gov.au

SIZE

17,906 square kilometres

POPULATION

14,053

Overview

The Moree Plains Roadside Environmental Management Plan (REMP) provides Council with a clear strategy for conserving and enhancing native vegetation and habitat in its roadside reserves. The REMP underpins the results of a roadside assessment survey of 1250 km of roads, the training of key council staff in identification of local fauna and flora, and the use of the REMP and associated documentation. The REMP includes best practice guidelines for routine road construction and maintenance.

Background

The majority of Council owned and managed roads have high conservation value with a high occurrence of threatened ecological communities or vegetation likely to support threatened plant or animal species. The REMP aimed to provide Council with a strategy for conserving and enhancing the native vegetation and habitat found in its roadside reserves. Council funded the \$50,000 project inclusive of \$21,000 support from the CMA (now Local Land Services).

The aim of the project was jointly decided by the CMA and Council, focusing on Council needs and why it was important to have a REMP. It was recognised that for the REMP to be effective Council staff needed to know how to use the REMP and its associated documents. Having a REMP that aligned to the NSW Roadside Environment Committee's work also meant that Council will be in better position to apply for funding for delivery of actions.

Implementation

The survey used a rapid assessment methodology to identify the type, condition and location of native vegetation within the Councils roadside reserves. During the survey the presence of any suspected cultural sites or artefacts were recorded, though further work is required to confirm authenticity.

Resources produced in conjunction with the REMP include:

- Roadside Management Reference Table (Microsoft Excel spreadsheet).
- GIS application of the survey results.
- Glovebox Management Guide.
- Roadside signage strategy.
- Staff training module.

Staff training on the REMP involved both theory work delivered in a training room and field work which involved visits local roadsides that were identified in the survey as significant.



Outcomes

The REMP was adopted by Council in July 2015. Initially the project was meant to be delivered within 6 months, but due to unforeseen circumstances took 2 years to complete (i.e. the consultant was engaged on other projects in the region). All milestones were achieved except for the installation of significant site signage. Signage is to be installed in 2016/17.

There was positive response from Council staff to receiving training with 10-12 staff trained including grader operators, engineers, trainees and works superintendents. There were mixed views about the actual training, some found it boring and difficult to link to actual work, whilst others found it extremely useful and were keen to apply what they learnt.

The outcomes from the project included:

- A Moree Plains Roadside Environmental Management Plan, based on principles and practices promoted by the NSW Roadside Environment Committee.
- Staff now have a better understanding of the types of fauna and flora found on our roadsides and why they are significant.
- Councillors have a great appreciation for our roadside environments.
- Staff have access to resources that are specific to Council's roadside environments.

The REMP now forms part of the Council's intergrated planning and reporting processes and is considered when completing all road projects. The mapping layer is easily accessed by all staff via desk computers and Council's Geographical Information System.

Key Learnings

There were two major challenges with the project:

- Councillors were hesitant to adopt the REMP, concerned that it would restrict Council's ability to do road construction, resulting in increased construction and maintenance costs. Council staff assured them that was not the case and explained that the REMP provides guidance for the management of roadsides through improved practices.
- The consultant engaged took longer to complete the plan than originally agreed but this did not result in any negative long term and financial impacts on the project.

In the future when updating the REMP a different approach may be taken such as working closer with the consultant on designing end products. For example, while the Glove Box Guide contains useful information it is not in a logical road hierarchy order familiar to road workers, making it difficult for them to find the information they want.

Contact

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This project was the 2016 winner of the Roadside Environmental Management Award at the LGNSW Excellence in the Environment Award