

Broulee Biocertification Project

COUNCIL NAME

Eurobodalla Shire
Council

WEB ADDRESS

www.esc.nsw.gov.au

SIZE

3,428 square
kilometres

POPULATION

35,741

Overview

The Broulee Biodiversity Certification project has been developed as a strategic solution to ongoing planning, development and biodiversity issues in Broulee. The approach proposes to resolve long-standing land use conflict and development uncertainty being experienced in a remaining undeveloped area of urban land in the coastal village of Broulee on the south coast of NSW.

Biodiversity Certification is an alternate assessment pathway given effect through an amendment to the *Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995* (TSC Act). Biodiversity Certification (or biocertification) allows local government in areas with high development pressure to provide for the protection of biodiversity at the strategic planning stage.

While housing numbers are expected to increase in Broulee, a range of environmental constraints must be considered in the planning process. Biocertification offers a pathway for development to occur while at the same time providing permanent conservation of a high conservation value coastal vegetation community (e.g. Bangalay Sand Forest).



Source: Eurobodalla Coast Tourism

Background

The Biocertification pathway was adopted to solve a long-standing constraint on development in the popular coastal village of Broulee.

In 2010, Council resolved to undertake Biocertification investigations in Broulee following:

- ongoing concerns communicated by frustrated local landholders and developers,
- feedback from Council's planning and development assessment units, and
- advice received from the (then) Department of Environment and Climate Change that, 'continued cumulative clearing of remnant Bangalay Sand Forest in the Broulee area is not acceptable and a more strategic approach to development is required as a matter of urgency' (September 2009).

Biocertification is used to help identify areas of high conservation value which need protection, and areas that are less constrained and suitable for development. The process provides for a range of options to offset biodiversity impacts, should this be required, so as to enable development of an identified area. Biodiversity must be 'maintained or improved' for certification to be conferred by the Minister for the Environment.

Implementation

The project was delivered over a 3 year period with final exhibition occurring in February 2014 and the final report adopted by Council in June 2014. Extensive consultation with NSW Government agencies and affected landowners occurred during delivery of the project. A tailored presentation was delivered in 2010, followed by a Biocertification workshop in 2011, with additional workshops and personal meetings held up to the final exhibition in 2014.

The technical aspects of the project were delivered by an independent consultant and a member of staff who holds the relevant Biocertification accreditation. The Office of Environment and Heritage provided extensive support in directly undertaking field surveys for threatened species and in the provision of technical and policy advice. The methodology relies on extensive field surveys, literature and mapping reviews and mining of existing datasets to build an ecological picture of the study area. A sampling regime was designed and implemented with 21 field plots being surveyed within the 509ha study site.

Outcomes

The most notable achievement from this project is the support of the affected landholders of the Broulee residential area.

The final outcome will be development of the Broulee urban area in a way that ensures endangered habitat is managed for conservation. It is expected that perimeter roads will be required to create separation between retained vegetation and residences for fire protection and also to minimise the number of land parcels that abutt high conservation value vegetation.

Additional benefits include:

- Streamlined development assessment process
- Savings in time and money spent on individual flora and fauna studies
- Secure conservation outcomes for high value natural environments and strategically targeted mitigation or offset efforts
- Reduction in the cumulative impacts resulting from continued ad-hoc development.

Key Learnings

Being a new process to both council and the community, the pathway to achieving biocertification has been long and at times complicated. Although supported by excellent technical knowledge and expertise, communicating the process of biocertification to landowners, the community and the council was challenging and at times met with resistance. However, the final support and praise of the affected landowners demonstrates the merits of Biocertification, the professional capacity of staff and the effort that went into community engagement.

The primary challenges that were overcome throughout this process included:

- Brokering support from landowners and the local community

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- Maintaining local political support over the 3 year implementation period
 - Obtaining access to private property to carry out field surveys; and,
 - Achieving an equitable and realistic price for credits to “buy into” the scheme.

It would have been necessary to meet the above challenges independent of the Biocertification project. However, this project provided an opportunity to have funds to maintain the site and improve the sites’ environmental function as a valuable and rare habitat.

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This project was the 2014 winner of the Natural Environment Policies, Planning & Decision Making Award at the LGNSW Excellence in the Environment Awards.