



natural resource management  
for nsw local government

# NCCARF Terrestrial Biodiversity & Climate Change Adaptation in NSW Management & Policy

## Local Government Perspective

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Local Government & Shires Associations



Local Government  
Association of NSW



Shires Association  
of NSW

# Local Government and Shires Associations

- Policy Division - Environment Team
- Advocacy – 152 NSW councils
- Provide support & services to councils
- Natural Resource Management issues:



- Biodiversity
- Threatened Species Conservation
- Native Vegetation
- Noxious & Environmental Weeds
- Salinity
- Feral Animals
- CMAs
- Environmental Water
- State of Environment Reporting
- Coastal Management
- Stormwater Management
- Floodplain Management
- NRM & Land Use Planning
- NRM & Corporate Planning

## Role of Local Government

- Legislative responsibilities
  - ‘to properly manage, develop, protect, restore, enhance and conserve the environment of the area for which it is responsible’ (*Local Government Act 1993*)
  - ‘to conserve biological diversity and promote ecologically sustainable development’ (*Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995*)
- Community expectations
- Healthy landscapes support healthy communities



## NRM Survey

- *The Capacity of NSW Local Government to Engage and Participate in NRM* (July 2008) [www.lgsa.org.au/NRM](http://www.lgsa.org.au/NRM)
- 64 councils responded (42% of NSW councils)
- The highest priority NRM issues were:

- Native plant conservation
- Water quality
- Weed management
- Development pressures & land use



# Climate Change Needs Surveys

- 2009 Survey by DECCW
- 2010 Survey by the Associations:  
101 councils responded about their action on climate change including barriers, drivers and future needs (70% of NSW councils)
  - competing priorities, staff
  - support from executive management





# What are NSW councils doing?

**Risk assessments, adaptation strategies, land use planning & policies – examples include:**

- City of Sydney's draft "Urban Ecology Strategy."
- Goulburn Mulwaree Council with financial assistance from the local CMA engaged consultants to undertake a Biodiversity Strategy. The Strategy included in Council's LEP 2009 including:
  - Corridors for revegetation
  - Stipulating that High & Medium Conservation Value areas require further investigation if DA's are submitted  
80% of the LGA
  - Identifying Biodiversity "Hotspots"

## What are NSW councils doing?

- Lake Macquarie City Council's *Biodiversity Policy and Guidelines* establish how biodiversity surveys are to be conducted & is proposing a *Biodiversity Offset Policy* requiring that any unavoidable clearing must be offset by dedication of appropriate habitat elsewhere.
- Using appropriate land use zoning to protect biodiversity values & considering additional policy controls/local provisions e.g. within the Standard Instrument LEP.



## What are NSW councils doing?

- Protecting areas identified as significant vegetation and habitat corridors via mapping and development controls.
- North Sydney Council is educating & engaging the local community to facilitate the development of 'green corridors' to aid the movement of genetic material between North Sydney's fragmented bushland reserve system & adjoining bushland.





# What are NSW councils doing?

## Specific actions:

- Carbon sequestration - native forest/woodland habitat in areas which were previously farmland; biodiverse forests
- Bird boxes - additional habitat for native birds & animals displaced by loss of mature woodland trees, through over clearing & in response to climate change
- Bushland rehabilitation/Bushcare - working with Landcare groups, active pest & weed management

# What are NSW councils doing?

## Research:

- Ku-ring-gai Council investigating the benefit or otherwise of hazard reduction burns & whether strengthening the resilience of housing stock & defensible space on the interface is a better investment than continuing to burn the bush for little benefit in terms of risk reduction



# What are issues for managers and policy makers?

## Values and beliefs

- *It is extremely difficult to integrate any consideration of biodiversity into decision making, let alone in the context of climate change adaptation. Council does not consider biodiversity outside the minimum statutory requirements.*
- *A belief held by some that biodiversity is more relevant or addressed more effectively by other levels of government*



# What are issues for managers and policy makers?

## Lack of resources

- *Primarily not having a dedicated biodiversity officer or someone with those responsibilities (staff time and capacity - expertise)*
- *Lack of funds to undertake initiatives - e.g. research, feral animals and plant control, more extensive fencing of areas*
- *Lack of information, knowledge or clear direction on how local government can or should address climate change impacts on biodiversity*



# What are issues for managers and policy makers?

## Lack of information – feedback from ACT

- Little information about climate change at the scale appropriate for conservation planning
- Do not yet have very good mapping of vegetation communities at fine scale
- There is not a good understanding of the thresholds at which species/ecosystems will change under climate change scenarios
- The added pressure of interactions between feral animals and native ecosystems under climate change is not well understood



# What are issues for managers and policy makers?

## Climate change risks

- Exacerbation of loss of connectivity due to habitat clearing and fragmentation
- Changed fire regimes - more frequent and/or severe
- Increased risk of pest & pathogen outbreaks
- Greater potential for transformative weed establishment and rapid spread
- Effect of higher temperatures (including overnight & heat wave periods) on terrestrial & aquatic ecosystems
- More variable soil moisture & stream flows

# What are issues for managers and policy makers?

## Climate change risks

- Risk of inundation from rising sea levels & salt water intrusion into ground water dependant ecosystems
- Threat of losing remaining remnants of salt marsh due to sea level rise
- Natural systems coastal ecosystems cannot migrate inland in response to rising sea levels as most of the retreat zones are already developed
- Council does not have funds to acquire new land or down zone existing areas to create suitable retreat zones
- Acquiring land in private ownership



# Resources for Councils

- Fact Sheets & Resources – *Climate Change Action Planning Workshop Package*
- Guidelines - *Integrating NRM into Local Government Operations*
- Workshops
- Councillor Training in NRM
- Websites
- Email newsletters
- Online forum



## Contact Details

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