RURAL Landholder Initiative

HEALTHY LAND AND WATERWAYS

GUIDELINES FOR GRANT FUNDING

ROUND 13 - 2026

lismore city council BIODIVERSITY MANAGEMENT STRATEGY Your environmental levy at work

Funds are available for projects to conserve and restore areas of high conservation value on private land. Total grant available is $15,000 over 3 years (ex GST).

OVERVIEW

The Rural Landholder Initiative is part of Lismore City Council's Biodiversity Management Strategy (BMS). It is designed to conserve and restore areas of high conservation value on private land through education and incentives. The BMS identifies a range of pressures on biodiversity within the Lismore Local Government Area (LGA) including:

- Clearing and fragmentation of native vegetation
- Environmental and noxious weeds
- Pest animals
- Degradation of waterways and altered hydrology
- Grazing of livestock in native vegetation and sensitive environments
- Increased risks posed by increased climate extremes.

The Rural Landholder Initiative seeks to address the above pressures on biodiversity through three broad objectives:

1. Provide landholders with financial assistance to support best practice land management that benefits the ecosystem services provided by native vegetation, biodiversity and healthy water bodies as well as agricultural production.
2. Develop genuine partnerships with Lismore's rural landholders, industry groups and community groups to support best practice land management.
3. Rehabilitate degraded habitats and assist in the recovery of threatened species.

Council understands the need to engage landowners in the work to achieve these objectives. Supporting farmers and rural property owners is critical to significantly improving the condition of high conservation value natural assets on private land and reducing the impact of the pressures on biodiversity, catchment health, cultural and social amenity values.

This document provides guidelines for landholders in the Lismore LGA seeking to access the small grants program called the Rural Landholder Initiative. The target of the grants are private property holders within the Lismore LGA and with land management issues associated with five land use sectors: beef grazing, dairying, orchardists (e.g. macadamia), floodplain cropping (e.g. sugar cane, tea tree) and non-commercial 'lifestyle' rural landholders.

GRANT FUNDING PRIORITIES – WHERE WILL WE FUND?

- ***High Conservation Value areas***

Projects that work to restore and expand High Conservation Value habitats through primary weed control and restoration are a priority for funding.

The BMS identifies criteria that must be present to consider an area as High Conservation Value (HCV). These include:

- Land containing threatened species or populations
- Key habitat for threatened fauna and flora, e.g. Regent Honeyeater habitat
- Endangered Ecological Communities, e.g. Rainforest; Swamp Sclerophyll Forest
- Key habitats that support priority vertebrate assemblages, e.g. Forest Red Gum grassy open forest

- Land within areas identified as very high priority wildlife corridor
- Koala habitat – Primary, Secondary A and B
- Old growth forest
- Native riparian vegetation
- Wetland and estuarine vegetation.

Maps indicating priority criteria areas are available to view on the Council webpage. You can investigate other details in relation to your property in the Lismore City Council online mapping service.

- ***Restoration on the floodplain: Identify priority riparian areas for rehabilitation***

The floodplains of the Richmond River are amongst the most over cleared landscapes in NSW and are a priority for protection of remnant ecosystems and improvement through weed management, revegetation, erosion control and habitat connectivity. Retaining, rehabilitating and conserving existing native floodplain vegetation on riverbanks and wetlands is encouraged.

Fencing for stock exclusion and off stream watering in sensitive riparian areas and wetlands on the floodplain may be eligible for increased levels of funding where it is undertaken with habitat restoration actions.

Restoration activities on the floodplains are informed by the Coastal Zone Management Plan. This is a catchment-wide initiative.

WHAT WILL BE FUNDED BY COUNCIL?

Lismore City Council will fund a combination of activities for on-ground environmental works.

The following activities are eligible for funding in areas that will contribute to protection and enhancement of biodiversity:

- *Environmental weed control* and initial follow-up maintenance.
- *Bush regeneration* works to restore areas of native vegetation and/or revegetation with local native plants and associated materials such as mulch and tree guards.
- *Fencing materials* to manage grazing pressure in areas of remnant vegetation.
- *Fencing materials* to construct fencing which will exclude livestock from riparian areas. A range of fence types can be applied, however fencing should be designed in line with best practice wildlife-friendly fencing. Fencing must be constructed to industry best-practice specifications required to manage stock and minimise risk of damage due to flood events. Electric fencing must at a minimum use permanent star-pickets.
- *Off-stream watering equipment* to protect waterways from stock impact. This includes fixed equipment such as base fill, troughs, tanks, piping and fixtures.
- *Plantings for erosion stabilisation* using local native plants considered indigenous to the site.
- Implementing actions identified in an existing regenerative farm plan, landscape hydration plan, or other recognised nature-based solutions plan.
- *Stabilising stock crossing points* for natural waterway improvement.

Council may consider assisting with other activities if they meet the objectives of the RLI and exhibit a high public and environmental benefit (e.g. pest animal control). However, please discuss any activity not listed with Council's Extension Officer before you submit your Expression of Interest (EOI).

Activities that lead to broader public benefits and improvements at a landscape scale will be given priority over activities deemed to be of high private benefit or considered to be part of a landowner's general responsibility e.g. general biosecurity duty for weeds as per the Biosecurity Act 2015. The general biosecurity duty supports the principle of shared responsibility and means everyone is doing what is reasonable for them to do to prevent, eliminate or minimise biosecurity risks.

ACTIVITIES INELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING

The following activities will not be eligible for funding:

- Direct farm production inputs such as fertiliser and lime.
- Capital items, assets or non-fixed equipment such as dams, bores, tractors, chainsaws, pumps, and spray units.
- Boundary fencing, unless the fence is a riparian fence as part of protection of waterway habitat and will lead to stock exclusion (including neighbour's stock)
- Costs of fencing installation. The landholder needs to cover as in-kind the cost of labour associated with fencing construction.
- Costs associated with the installation of off-stream watering equipment. The landholder needs to cover as in-kind the cost of labour associated with off-stream watering.
- Revegetation works within 50m of a dwelling.
- The repair or replacement of existing access roads and tracks, existing water supply infrastructure deemed to be routine property maintenance and management.
- Cost of acquiring permits, licences or approvals to undertake eligible activities.
- Projects that are primarily for beautification or improving amenity without significant environmental outcomes.
- Any work that is a requirement in whole or in part of any development consent condition.
- Activities or ongoing maintenance of activities which organisations and individuals have committed to as part of a previous grant from any funding source.
- Projects that primarily focus on weed control only and are not part of a holistic restoration project. See link to Weed Biosecurity list of priorities in the Rous County Council jurisdiction for details.
- Retrospective funding – projects which are already underway or which will commence prior to the date indicated in our online application information.
- Lands zoned Large Lot Residential (R5), Rural Landscape (RU2) and Village (RU5) less than 2ha under the LCC LEP 2012.
- Lands zoned Residential R1 and R2 under the LCC LEP 2012.
- Any lands zoned B1, B2, B3, B4, B6, Industrial (IN1, IN2) and Infrastructure (SP2) under the LCC LEP 2012.
- Activities outside of the Lismore City Council area.

HOW MUCH FUNDING IS AVAILABLE?

Project funds up to $10000 are available for projects requiring primary bush regeneration works and initial maintenance over a 12 month time frame. Additional funds up to $5000 where complex on-ground works require follow-up are available for a second and third year. T**otal grant available is $15,000 over 3 years (ex GST)**.

Landholders of floodplain properties involved in primary production wishing to protect and enhance riparian or wetland habitats, with stock exclusion fencing are eligible for additional costs up to $2500 (ex GST).

An additional allowance of 10% of grant funds will be provided to cover the costs of project management including site monitoring and reporting. The allowance will be provided to the principal contractor of the project. Where landowners accept the responsibility of managing their own project this will be considered an in kind contribution.

Providing a realistic and accurate costing of the works will contribute to the strength of an application. The project proposal should be realistic and achievable and reflect the landholder's ability to contribute in-kind inputs into the project. Applications will be accepted for shorter timeframes and for less than the maximum amount of grant funding. Applications will be assessed by the environmental value of the application regardless of its scope. Selection Criteria for assessment of projects are included in these guidelines.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO APPLY?

To be eligible for grant funding, the applicant and the project must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- EOIs must be fully completed and submitted on the application form. If you are unable to complete the form online please contact Lismore City Council's Rural Landholder Initiative Officer, Ellie Sales on 0488 062 410.
- Landholders who own land within the Lismore Local Government Area are eligible to apply (community and industry groups are not eligible).
- Any Lands zoned within the Lismore City Council LEP 2012 as Primary Production (RU1), and Forestry (RU3).
- Lands zoned within the Lismore City Council LEP 2012 as Rural Landscape (RU2), Village (RU5) and Large Lot Residential (R5) and larger than 2ha.
- Landholders with previous Lismore City Council Rural Landholder Initiative agreements are eligible to apply for additional funds. Existing Agreements must be finalised, and they must have completed their contractual obligations (including monitoring) to the satisfaction of Lismore City Council.
- Applicants must be up to date with rate payments to Lismore City Council for the property associated with the application.
- The project must show value for money by outlining the cash or in-kind contribution to the project.
- Successful applicants must be willing to sign an Agreement to maintain the project site beyond the funding period.

WHAT IS THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS?

a) Acknowledgement of receipt: Online Expressions of Interest will receive an email message confirming applications have been successfully submitted. Posted proposals will receive an acknowledgement via email within two weeks of the closing date. If you do not receive acknowledgement within 2 weeks, please contact Lismore City Council on 02 66250 500.

b) Shortlist Assessment: Lismore City Council Environmental Strategies staff will assess and shortlist proposals against the following criteria:

- Contribution to Lismore City Council Biodiversity Management Strategy priorities.
- Capacity to deliver environmental outcomes and demonstrate best management practice in the available time frame.
- Current site values and condition.
- Evidence of property planning that demonstrates a strategic project approach.
- Size of the project, value for money, including adequate in-kind or cash contributions.
- Ability of landholder to engage partners, neighbours and build community capacity.
- Capacity of landholder to maintain project outcomes beyond the term of the project.
- Fair representation of diverse rural industries, land-use types and land management issues.

c) Proposal Verification: Applicants with shortlisted proposals will be contacted to discuss their proposal. A meeting or site visit may be arranged to verify the proposal and refine project outputs. Information from a site visit will be used in a final assessment. If your project is shortlisted for verification, you will need to communicate in a timely manner for your application to remain eligible. Not all shortlisted projects are guaranteed funding.

d) Technical Assessment Panel: Final recommendations for funding proposals will be made to a Lismore City Council Assessment Panel, where decisions will be finalised for offers for project funds. Criteria used in this assessment includes:

- Geographic spread of projects
- Industry representation of projects
- Demonstration of Best Management Practice activities appropriate to the project on offer

e) Notification: Landholders with successful proposals will be contacted privately to finalise project

arrangements. Public announcement of successful projects (de-identified) will be made via Lismore City Council web site.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Table 1. Summary of Selection Criteria

Selection Criteria	Evaluation Measures	Notes to improve your chances of success
Landholder capacity and project scope	• Work program achievable in the timeframe • Preliminary results can be measured in 12-month timeframe • Previous works are evidence of landholder capacity to continue project maintenance • Long-term outcomes are considered • Landholder has capacity to maintain project outcomes into the long-term • Projects represent a geographic spread across the Lismore LGA • Projects represent the dominant five land use sectors across the LGA • Demonstration of Best Management Practice for biodiversity improvement	• If the project is part of a larger project, this should be stated and detailed in your application. Property Plans can be provided that indicate strategic long-term approach to management • Projects should focus on achieving long-term outcomes, for example connecting vegetation between a fragmented landscape, fencing an area from stock or developing a multi-staged and multi-year project for potential future funding opportunities • Applicants are advised to consult the resources on Lismore City Council's website for ideas on land management practices that relate to improving and conserving biodiversity across our landscapes and waterways. The booklets relate to Healthy landscapes and waterways, as well as four key industries operating in our region.
Aligns with one or more priority areas identified in the BMS	• Areas of land identified with High Conservation Value identified in *BMS s. 3.1.4*: including: Endangered Ecological Communities, Koala habitat, rainforest, old growth forest as well as native riparian, wetland and estuarine vegetation. • Areas of land identified as key habitat for species of local conservation priority identified in *BMS Technical Appendix 2* as well as threatened flora and fauna species listed in the *TSC Act* or *EPBC Act*. • Areas of land identified as providing very high or high habitat corridor values in *BMS Technical Appendix 2*, including 100m river corridors and 50m creek buffers. • Areas identified as priority in the Richmond River *Coastal Zone Management Plan*.	• Priority will be given to projects that demonstrate a high potential to maintain and improve the quality of assets in areas of High Conservation Value. • Areas where koalas are known to move through or live are a priority for enhancement through tree planting expansion and protection projects. • To find out if you have areas of High Conservation Value on your property check Council's online mapping system. • Indicative maps are included to help you determine if there are areas of High Conservation Value on or near your site. • The Rural Extension Officer can assist to provide you a map of your property and identify potential conservation values.

Selection Criteria	Evaluation Measures	Notes to improve your chances of success
	• The area identified may be located in the Clarence-Richmond Alluvial plain which is an over-cleared NSW Landscape • Areas of Koala habitat as defined under the Comprehensive Koala Plan of Management and NSW Koala Recovery Plan are a priority for restoration.	
Selection Criteria	**Evaluation Measures**	**Notes to improve your chances of success**
Value for Money	• Projects will be financed on a matched funding basis. Applicants must contribute funds, labour and/or materials at least equal to the amount of funds sought. Labour is considered as part of the contribution at the rate of $45 per hour. • May be summarised as Total investment per area of land involved ($/ha)	• An in-kind contribution is where the applicant gives their own time in physical labour and/or materials to the project. • Think about all the ways you already contribute to funding your project
Collaboration	• Project demonstrates ability to engage partners, neighbours and build community capacity	• Your willingness to host a field day is not essential or required to be eligible for funding, although we will be looking for sites to demonstrate good environmental projects to the community. • Collaborative projects between neighbours or community groups are highly regarded. By working together the outcomes of the project will be greatly improved.

OTHER TIPS TO SUBMITTING A WELL-PLANNED PROJECT.

When preparing your application, you should consider the following tips:

- Ensure the project description in the application form is clear and all sections are completed.
- Use a map of your property to define the location and extent of your project. Maps can be hand drawn or developed on Lismore City Council intramaps or a mapping program like google maps.
- Access resources on Lismore City Council's website available online to guide your restoration priorities.
- Ensure the project can be easily completed within the key time frames. Consider dividing large projects into smaller, easily achieved stages. If your proposal is part of a larger project, please provide details in your application.
- Discuss your application with neighbours, family members or local Landcare or other groups to identify complementary works and projects.
- Bushland Regeneration contractors may be able to provide advice and assistance with the preparation and costing of projects and EOI's. They will be able to provide advice on industry standard techniques and approaches and a reasonable estimation of follow up and maintenance required on the site. See also Bush Regeneration in Progress
- Lismore City Council's Rural Landholder Initiative officer may be able to provide limited support and assistance towards the development of a project plan and EOI.
- Landholders will need to demonstrate a financial or in-kind contribution and a commitment to long term management of the funded project.
- You should allow for four follow up treatments of your site in the years subsequent to the project. The amount of time you spend on a treatment will vary but in general may require up to an 8-hour day for one person. The maintenance required should reflect your treatment methods, the level of likely ongoing weed invasion and your own capacity to undertake works. In general effort required to maintain works will drop off in the years immediately after a project's completion. However, project sites may require ongoing maintenance even after 5 or 10 years of the project's completion. Accurately and realistically accounting for an ongoing maintenance regime should account for your continuing commitment to the project's outcomes and an understanding of the effort involved in subsequent years.
- Cash contributions towards the project may include the landholder paying for external labour.
- You may choose to engage a contractor to undertake ongoing maintenance of your site. A costing provided by a contractor and a commitment to engaging them in the works will improve the strength of your application.
- Materials and external labour should be calculated at cost.
- In-kind labour/time contributions should be calculated at $45/hr, or $350/day.
- The EOI is meant to be an outline of the project. Accepted projects will be developed more fully with a professional regenerator and Council.

IF YOU ARE SUCCESSFUL

Successful applicants will be offered Agreements with the Lismore City Council to undertake either a one-year or a two/three year staged restoration project. As a general approach, Council will engage a professional bush regeneration contractor to work with successful applicants to develop a Site Action Plan for the relevant site. Applicants are encouraged to have a land management plan already developed for their property. This will facilitate a prompt start of projects. The Contractors will then continue to work with the landholder to enact the Action Plan and undertake the restoration work.

Landholders will be expected to contribute to the success of the on-ground project. This can be through working alongside the Contractor and learning bush regeneration techniques to maintain the site for the long-term, or committing to engaging in other ways to look after the project.

MANAGEMENT AGREEMENTS

Only the registered owners of a property can apply for funding. Successful applicants will be required to enter into a Management Agreement with Council. This Agreement outlines the roles and responsibilities of Council and the applicant when implementing, managing, and reporting progress on the approved project.

Current Shareholders in a Multiple Occupancy (MO) property can apply for funding. It is up to the shareholder/s to consult with the Governance Group of the MO to gain general approval for the project and for the Governance Group to determine who the appropriate signatory is to an Agreement. Prior to sign-off of Management Agreements, successful shareholders must provide documented evidence of the approval of the proposed works and approved signatory to any Agreement by the MO Governance group.

INSURANCE FOR PUBLIC ACCESS

Landholders do not need to have insurance for public access. Council's insurance extends to this function and will be identified in the management agreement.

FIELD DAYS

An important part of promoting improvements in land management practices is to demonstrate these to the wider community. Council may request to hold a field day at successful project sites and will organise, facilitate and cater the event, invite guest presenters and advertise locally for other interested landholders and neighbours to attend. You would be responsible for preparation of the site prior to conducting the field day, helping promote the event to your neighbours, and providing an introductory welcome, some guidance about the site, its history, and your management intentions on the day. Not every project site will host a field day event, and it is not compulsory or expected to have a field day at your property.

WORKS CONTRACTORS

Where materials, equipment and professional labour are required, these will be provided by a relevant qualified contractor, engaged directly by the Lismore City Council. Landholders are encouraged to undertake project works and to provide in-kind materials and equipment themselves, and to work alongside the professional contractors who are able to teach up to date techniques in bush regeneration. This will maximise the value of the funds available. The final budget for contactors will be worked out with successful applicants to fit within the Council's available funds.

Landholders wishing to contact experienced local bush regenerators can find recommendations through their local Landcare network group or Richmond Landcare Inc.

(DOCUMENT REVIEWED – OCTOBER 2025)