

# BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

Policy | Development and Environment

To define Council's commitment to and objectives for the conservation of biodiversity within  
The Singleton Local Government Area

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<b>Responsible Director:</b>	Director Infrastructure and Planning		
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# 1 Background

## 1.1 Title of the Policy and Commencement Date

The Biodiversity Conservation Policy takes effect from the date of adoption by Council.

## 1.2 Purpose of the Policy

This policy is intended to express Singleton Council's commitment to minimising impacts to biodiversity and conserving and enhancing areas of high biodiversity value within the Singleton LGA.

# 2 Objective

## 2.1 Objectives and Coverage of the Policy

Council is committed to ensuring a healthy sustainable natural environment for the wellbeing and enjoyment of its community while balancing the socioeconomic needs of the community now and into the future. To achieve this Council will:

- Provide clear, consistent, data-based information to Council, the community, and stakeholders on high biodiversity values and corridors.
- Provide guidance to the community and stakeholders on where Council consider conservation should occur without it limiting potential future land use opportunities.
- Incorporate the protection of bushland and biodiversity into Council operations, strategic land-use planning and development assessment.
- Ensure that Council is proactively managing biodiversity values within land it owns or manages.
- Raising awareness and involving the community in the management, conservation and restoration of bushland and natural areas.

# 3 Application

## 3.1 Application of this Policy

This policy applies to all employees, councillors, volunteers and contractors of Council.

# 4 Definitions

For the purposes of this policy:

Term	Meaning
Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD)	Effective integration of economic and environmental considerations in decision-making processes



Term	Meaning
High Biodiversity Values (HBV)	High concentration of biodiversity values which include large tracts of vegetation (large patch size), the connectivity between them (corridors), areas of high species richness and diversity, and the conservation significance of the entities (flora, fauna, and ecological communities) present.
Conservation	Conservation of biodiversity means ensuring that natural landscapes, with their array of ecosystems, are maintained, and that species, populations, genes, and the complex interactions between them, persist into the future. In real terms this means the avoidance, mitigation, and subsequent conservation in perpetuity retention and management of areas of biodiversity value.
Biodiversity Corridors	Biodiversity corridors are areas that link and include patches of vegetation and/or habitat and support ecological processes for plants (for example, pollination and seed dispersal) and wildlife movement (for example, for migration, feeding and breeding). Corridors can take several forms, including corridors of discontinuous patches (stepping stones) of vegetation and continuous lineal strips of vegetation predominantly along riparian strips.
Threatened Entities	Plants, animals, populations, or ecosystem listed under the <i>NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016</i> or the <i>Commonwealth Environmental Protection Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i>

## 5 Principles/Body

The Singleton Council local government area is a biodiverse region encompassing mountain ranges, natural bushland, rivers, wetlands and lakes, a significant proportion of which is conserved in National Parks. Council is committed to responsible management of this natural environment for the benefit and enjoyment of current and future generations.

While this policy establishes Council's approach to management of biodiversity values, our Environmental Management Policy provides the overall direction on Council's management of the environment as a whole and these as well as other relevant policies should be considered jointly.

### 5.1 High Biodiversity Values and Corridors

A key element of biodiversity conservation is understanding what biodiversity values Singleton contains, the significance of those values, what area of each biodiversity value occurs within the LGA, and where it occurs. Therefore, Council commits to:

- Identify areas of High Biodiversity Value and the connectivity between them using an evidence-based approach.
- Produce a digital map of High Biodiversity Values and Biodiversity Corridors identified and adopted by Council.



- Make the map publicly available either through the council map viewer or as a GIS file on request
- Ensure the map remains current by undertaking regular scheduled reviews of the content

## 5.2 Council Systems and Processes

The Local Government Act 1993, NSW states that “ecologically sustainable development (ESD) requires the effective integration of economic and environmental considerations in decision-making processes”. Council’s role is “to properly manage, develop, protect, restore, enhance and conserve the environment of the area for which it is responsible, in a manner that is consistent with and promotes the principles of ecologically sustainable development”. To achieve this Council will:

- Integrate the proposed High Biodiversity Value map into council’s GIS platform.
- Ensure ecological assessment and reporting is undertaken in accordance with the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 (BC Act), State and Commonwealth survey guidelines and industry best practice survey methodologies.
- Ensure evaluation of proposed ecological impacts (including vegetation clearing) is consistent with relevant requirements of the Singleton Local Environment Plan (LEP) and Development Control Plan (DCP).
- Ensure applicants have considered the High Biodiversity Values map in their development applications.
- Ensure that all feasible measures have been demonstrated to avoid and minimise ecological impacts of a development before residual impacts are assessed in accordance with the BC Act.
- Ensure that development does not impede the ecological functions of identified biodiversity corridors.
- Ensure that residual and indirect biodiversity impacts resulting from development are minimised with implementation of on-site mitigation measures identified in biodiversity management plans and/or conditions of consent.
- Ensure that where vegetation is to be retained as part of a development application that a management plan is developed and delivered to ensure its long-term viability
- Where natural areas are to be transferred to council as part of a development application they need to be in a condition that minimises Councils management costs i.e. majority of management works are complete or appropriate funds are provided to council for management.
- Apply conditions of consent which seek to avoid or minimise the potential impacts of companion animals (dogs and cats) where development proposals adjoin sensitive fauna habitat or a National Park.

## 5.3 Managing Biodiversity on Council Land

Council owns and/or manages up to 3,800 hectares of land, much of which contains biodiversity values of some description. Council has a legislative responsibility as well a responsibility to the Singleton community to manage those assets for the benefit and enjoyment of current and future generations. Council will:



- Use the High Biodiversity Values map to undertake an inventory and opportunity and constraints analysis of council owned land
- Prioritise the restoration and enhancement of public bushland based on both conservation significance and the level of public interest.
- Provide sustainable recreational access to bushland reserves with a focus on environmental interpretation of features with special ecological and cultural significance where appropriate.
- Restoration projects will aim to restore bushland to a condition that is as self-sustaining as possible, giving consideration to addressing the causes of the bushland degradation.
- Integrate best practice bushland restoration practices into natural area management projects undertaken by all sections of Council. These include:
  - Prioritise the protection, restoration and enhancement of bushland remnants within wildlife corridors and buffer zones
  - Weed control works will be undertaken in a staged process so that short-term loss of fauna habitat within the immediate locality, in particular structural cover and shelter, is minimised.
  - Revegetation will involve the use of local native plant species sourced from the local area (local provenance)
  - Bushland restoration work conducted by third parties on public land will be undertaken by qualified bush regeneration contractors and supervised volunteer groups.
- Manage weeds and pests on Council owned or managed land in areas of high biodiversity value consistent with requirements of the Biosecurity Act 2015 and:
  - Undertake weed control and compliance consistent with the Singleton Weeds Strategy in partnership with the Upper Hunter Weeds Authority
  - Ensure adequate resources are made available for the effective management of Council natural areas.
  - Maximise the effectiveness of pest animal and weed control programs by co-ordinating with other land management agencies, adjacent local government areas and private landowners
  - Educate the community on the impacts of weeds and pest animals and their identification
  - Secure long-term funding for weed and pest animal management at the local level
- Recognise that in certain situations, some over-abundant native plants (such as Golden Wattle (*Acacia saligna*)) and animals (such as native Miner birds) have become invasive species which are impacting upon local bushland and biodiversity and are to be managed as pest species in accordance with this policy and relevant legislation.

#### 5.4 Landholder Engagement

Council also has a responsibility to provide opportunities and support for the community to undertake biodiversity conservation activities. This can be achieved by



empowering community groups and landowners to undertake conservation activities on public and private land. To achieve this Council will:

- Ensure the community is aware and able to access information on where council considers High Biodiversity Values and corridors occur and which of these areas it considers suitable for conservation and:
  - Integrate the High Biodiversity Values mapping with relevant council, regional, and state strategic planning documents to develop a map of Areas Suitable for Conservation.
  - Add the map of High Biodiversity Values and Areas Suitable for Conservation to Council's GIS and make it publicly available.
- Provide education to the community on high biodiversity values and their importance in ensuring a sustainable, vibrant and resilient community.
- Identify and communicate incentives that are available for biodiversity conservation and maximise the community's ability to access these incentives.
- Advocate for local conservation outcomes from development applications within the region.
- Ensure information regarding best practice land management for biodiversity conservation are available for landowners.
- Actively engage in partnerships, research and innovation opportunities to improve bushland and biodiversity management.
- Engage, support, and collaborate with local bushland volunteer groups, private landowners, local businesses, and State Government, to motivate and inspire the community to value, protect and enhance our bushland.

## 6 Relevant Legislation

*Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016, NSW*

*Biodiversity Conservation Regulation 2017, NSW*

*Biosecurity Act 2015, NSW*

*Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979, NSW*

*Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999, Commonwealth*

*Fisheries Management Act 1994, NSW*

*Hunter Regional Plan 2036, NSW*

*Local Government Act 1993, NSW*

*Local Land Services Amendment Act 2016, NSW*

*Water Act 2000, NSW*

*State Environmental Planning Policy (Vegetation in Non-Rural Areas) 2017, NSW*





## 7 Document Information

Related documents and reference information in this section provides a single reference point to develop and maintain site compliance information.

### 7.1 Related Documents

Related documents, listed in **Table 7-1** below, are internal documents directly related to or referenced from this document.

Number	Title
POL/5013	Singleton Environmental Management Policy
20/15407	Singleton Sustainability Strategy 2019-2027
21/42007	Singleton Priority Weeds Strategy 2019

Table 7-1 – Related documents

## 8 Responsible Officer / Policy Owner

Ownership of this policy rests with the Manager Development and Environmental Services.

## 9 Responsibilities

Parties or Persons	Responsibilities
Leadership Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assign authorities, responsibilities, and accountabilities for relevant roles with respect to biodiversity management</li> <li>Ensure allocation of appropriate resources for biodiversity management</li> <li>Raise awareness of this policy with staff at all levels of the organisation</li> <li>Ensure that Council is appropriately managing biodiversity values within land it owns or manages.</li> </ul>
Development and Environmental Services Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide clear, consistent, data-based information to Council, the community, and stakeholders on high biodiversity values and corridors.</li> <li>Provide guidance to the community and stakeholders on where Council consider conservation should occur without it limiting potential future land use opportunities.</li> <li>Incorporate the protection of bushland and biodiversity into Council operations, strategic land-use planning and development assessment.</li> <li>Raising awareness and involving the community in the management, conservation and restoration of bushland and natural areas.</li> <li>Provide biodiversity awareness training to staff and contractors as part of Council's induction process or as requested.</li> </ul>





Parties or Persons	Responsibilities
All Staff, Volunteers, and Contractors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and manage biodiversity-related risks in their areas of accountability</li> <li>Communicate those risks to their manager or supervisor in accordance with the corrective action tables and risk escalation process</li> <li>Avoid negative impacts to biodiversity wherever possible</li> </ul>

## 10 Approval

As per cover sheet.

## 11 Monitoring

This policy will be monitored by the Leadership Team to ensure compliance.

## 12 Review Date

This policy, once adopted, is to remain in force until it is reviewed by Council. This policy is to be reviewed approximately every two (2) years to ensure that it meets legislative requirements.

## 13 Record Keeping, Confidentiality and Privacy

This policy is to be made available for public viewing as required under the *Government Information (Public Access) 2009, NSW*.

## 14 Breaches and Sanctions

Any breaches of this Policy will be referred to the General Manager for appropriate action.

## 15 Document History

The below table provides a summary of changes and amendments to this document.

Version.	Date Amended	Author	Comments (e.g. reasons for review)
1	June 2021	Z. Andersons	New Policy

