

## Remnant vegetation values

### WHAT IS REMNANT VEGETATION

Remnant vegetation is a term used to describe those patches of native trees, shrubs, grasses, etc which now remain following the widespread clearance of native vegetation across the region.

Remnants can be of any shape or size, and occur on all land tenures, both privately and publicly owned. About 90 per cent of remnant bushland in South-East Queensland is privately owned and managed.

### WHAT IS THE VALUE OF REMNANT VEGETATION

Remnant vegetation is significant for many reasons, including the aesthetic value, recreational value, and – most importantly – the conservation value.

Without remnant bushland the balance of nature ceases to exist. This balance provides for all living things, including us. The plants in these remnants are the basis of life on earth, absorbing the energy from the sun to generate oxygen, and providing nourishment and other essential life-giving requirements to almost all forms of life.

### THE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The arrival of European settlers brought a new culture to the land. The traditions of land management and uses based on European experience have proven to be inappropriate to the Australian environment.

To encourage settlement, the government of the day introduced schemes and incentives that involved vegetation clearing. The clearing of large tracts was encouraged in property development plans.

Few foresaw the possible environmental implications of uncontrolled vegetation clearing during the early history of Ipswich. As a result of this lack of awareness, about 79 per cent of the original vegetation in Ipswich has now been cleared for urban, rural, commercial or industrial development.

## STATUS OF REMNANT VEGETATION IN IPSWICH

The conservation status of remnant vegetation is defined by the Vegetation Management Act of 1999, as: *Endangered* – less than 10 per cent, and *Of Concern* – less than 30 per cent remaining.

Ipswich has three broad vegetation types. These are dry vine forest communities; open forests and woodland communities, and the diverse vegetation of the alluvial flats, watercourses and wetland. Within these are distinctly different community sub-types, making a total of 38 Regional Ecosystems.

## WHY ARE WE LOSING OUR NATIVE PLANTS AND ANIMALS?

In Ipswich, 275 plant and 45 wildlife species are classified as Regionally Significant. A further 14 plant species and 10 wildlife species are classified as *Rare*. A further 9 plant and 6 wildlife species are classified as *Vulnerable* and a further 4 plant species are classified as *Endangered*; that is, they may become extinct if current threats continue.

There are three main processes causing this decline; habitat loss, habitat fragmentation and habitat degradation.

- Habitat loss is when the native vegetation disappears, along with the animals that live there.
- Habitat fragmentation is when the remnants are so small and so far apart that the wildlife cannot move between them. Ultimately populations of plants and animals become inbred and die out.
- Habitat degradation is most commonly an invasion by weeds, removal of understorey, or modified nutrient levels in the soil.

## Benefits of retaining remnants of bushland

### Broadscale benefits

- Assists in the reduction of global warming by removing carbon from the atmosphere and retaining it in the vegetation
- Provides a venue for scientific and horticultural research
- Contributes to the survival of native plants and animals
- Maintains rainfall patterns

### Local benefits

- Provides habitat for wildlife and allows wildlife movement between isolated bushland reserves
- Enhances property values and provides opportunities for diversification
- Assists in maintaining water quality and constant water flow in streams
- Refuge for plant pollinators and seed dispersers
- Provides places of solitude and scenic beauty
- Helps protect against salinity and erosion
- Supports natural air conditioning.

## MAJOR THREATS TO NATURAL ECOSYSTEMS

- Land clearance
- Weeds
- Overgrazing
- Residential development
- Illegal dumping
- Fire

## HOW GOOD IS THAT PATCH OF BUSH?

Not every patch of vegetation has the same conservation value.

This value is often based on the habitat it provides for native wildlife. Native animals rely on the remnant vegetation for food, shelter and breeding sites.

Much of the habitat is in the understorey, or the shrub and groundcover plants beneath the trees. The understorey is often overlooked – even referred to as ‘scrubby rubbish’ to be cleared out. Hollow branches and logs are collected for firewood.

Healthy remnant vegetation providing good habitat has the following elements:

- Regeneration of trees and understorey
- No sign of dieback of vegetation
- Free of weeds and exotic grasses
- Fallen logs and branches
- Old trees with hollows
- A range of biodiversity
- The natural tree cover remains
- Abundant native wildlife

## WHAT IS A REGIONAL ECOSYSTEM?

The State Government recognises a Regional Ecosystem as a vegetation community in a bioregion that is consistently associated with a particular combination of geology, landform, soil type and vegetation. Regional Ecosystems in Ipswich include those that are classified as *Endangered* and *Of Concern*. If these remnants are lost, a huge portion of other living organisms will disappear too.

With 79 per cent of the original remnant vegetation of the Ipswich area already cleared, and much more degraded, the ‘greener quality lifestyle’ of future generations is very much the responsibility of the present generation.

Ipswich Enviroplan is a levy funded by the ratepayers of Ipswich. This initiative enables a range of activities that protect and maintain vital ecosystems and natural environmental values.

Enviroplan funds voluntary acquisition of land for conservation, the management of natural areas, and landholder partnerships to increase conservation on private properties.

Support for conservation initiatives is available through a range of council programs:

- Free plant program ([Ipswich.qld.gov.au/freeplants](http://Ipswich.qld.gov.au/freeplants))
- Landholder partnerships – Habitat Gardens, Voluntary Conservation Agreements and Land for Wildlife ([Ipswich.qld.gov.au/lcpp](http://Ipswich.qld.gov.au/lcpp))
- Bushcare ([Ipswich.qld.gov.au/volunteering](http://Ipswich.qld.gov.au/volunteering))
- Enviroplan Levy Community Funding ([Ipswich.qld.gov.au/funding](http://Ipswich.qld.gov.au/funding))