

ITEM 8.4	INGLESIDE CHASE RESERVE BIOBANKING APPLICATION
REPORTING MANAGER	EXECUTIVE MANAGER NATURAL ENVIRONMENT & CLIMATE CHANGE
TRIM FILE REF	2016/307937
ATTACHMENTS	<p>1 ↓ Ingleside Reserve Map</p> <p>2 ↓ Biobanking Brochure</p>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE

To seek Council resolution to apply to the NSW Office of Environment & Heritage (OEH) to register Ingleside Chase Reserve as a biobank site, and to seek endorsement to develop policy to pursue biobanking as a management option in appropriate bushland reserves throughout the Local Government Area (LGA).

SUMMARY

Ingleside Chase Reserve is a 70-hectare bushland reserve owned and managed by Council and is located on the Warriewood Escarpment between the suburbs of Warriewood, Ingleside and Elanora Heights. It contains a number of vegetation communities and a suite of listed threatened species. The reserve is currently managed via bushland restoration and hazard reduction contracts.

Council has engaged ecological consultants to conduct surveys, assessment and reporting required to establish the reserve as a biobank site under the OEH's Biodiversity Banking and Offsets Scheme.

A biobank site is an area of land over which the landowner has agreed to place a biobanking agreement to manage land for conservation. A Biobanking Assessment Report has been prepared to calculate the number of biodiversity credits for Ingleside Chase Reserve based on the vegetation type and fauna species present. The credits can be purchased by developers looking to offset their environmental impact. The proceeds then go into the Biobanking Trust Fund which provides for the environmental management of the reserve in perpetuity.

Biodiversity offset credits are likely to be sought by the State Government as part of the upcoming Ingleside Precinct development and Mona Vale Road upgrades. The offsets required by these projects can remain in the Northern Beaches LGA by the potential uptake of biodiversity credits made available through biobanking Ingleside Chase Reserve.

RECOMMENDATION OF DEPUTY GENERAL MANAGER ENVIRONMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE

That Council:

- A. Endorses the submission of a biobanking application to the NSW Office of Environment & Heritage to establish a biobank site at Ingleside Chase Reserve.
 - B. Delegate authority to the the Deputy General Manager Environment & Infrastructure to execute the biobanking application to the NSW Office of Environment & Heritage.
 - A. Staff develop a framework for the use of Council owned or managed reserves as offsets for environmental impacts.
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REPORT

BACKGROUND

Ingleside Chase Reserve is a 70-hectare bushland reserve owned and managed by Council and is located on the Warriewood escarpment between the suburbs of Warriewood, Ingleside and Elanora Heights. It contains a number of vegetation communities and a suite of listed threatened species. The reserve is currently managed via bushland restoration and hazard reduction contracts. Council has engaged ecological consultants to conduct surveys, assessment and reporting required to establish the reserve as a biobank site under the NSW Office of Environment & Heritage's (OEH) Biodiversity Banking and Offsets Scheme.

A biobank site is an area of land over which the landowner has agreed to place a biobanking agreement to manage land for conservation. The biobanking agreement places a legal covenant on the title of the land and provides ongoing funding for management. Extensive information is available on the OEH website, however *Attachment 2* provides a useful summary and background information on the scheme.

A Biobanking Assessment Report has been prepared to calculate the number of biodiversity credits for Ingleside Chase Reserve based on the vegetation type and fauna species present. The credits can be purchased by developers looking to purchase biobanking credits as offsets for environmental impacts. The sale of credits then goes into a Biobanking Trust Fund which then provides for reserve management costs in perpetuity.

While development offsets are considered a last resort, Council's preference is for offset sites to remain local and notes that current and previous State Government infrastructure projects have obtained offsets outside the Northern Beaches LGA. Biodiversity offset credits are likely to be sought by the State Government as part of the upcoming Ingleside Precinct development and Mona Vale Road upgrades. The offsets required by these projects can remain in the Northern Beaches LGA by the potential uptake of biodiversity credits made available through biobanking Ingleside Chase Reserve.

As part of the proposed biobanking agreement, funding provided would be used for biodiversity conservation actions, including bush regeneration, revegetation, weed and pest animal control, fencing, bushfire management, signage and track maintenance. The establishment of a biobank site does not preclude the current recreational activities identified within the reserve Plan of Management (PoM). However it does limit the extent to which these activities can be amended, particularly in terms of intensity of usage.

Benefits of establishing a biobank site at Ingleside Chase Reserve include:

- The provision of biodiversity offsets that are kept local to the Northern Beaches
- Ongoing, in perpetuity funding to the value of approximately \$100,000 per year for management of the reserve for conservation purposes.
- Facilitation of the implementation of some of the management actions which have been identified within the adopted PoM.
- The in-perpetuity management of the reserve's high conservation values.
- Management of the existing wildlife corridor linkage between Garigal and Ku-ring-gai National Parks
- Potential profits earned through the sale of biodiversity credits will be used for biodiversity conservation purposes on the Northern Beaches

Should Northern Beaches Council establish a biobank site, there is a legal requirement for public exhibition of the proposal including amendments to the Ingleside Chase Reserve POM, and associated community consultation.

Potential disadvantages to Council in establishing a biobank site include:

- The potential need to make minor revision to the existing PoM to include provision for biobanking.
- The potential for perceptions of conflicts with Council being both a consent authority for developments and offset provider should the development be approved
- The establishment of a biobank site is in perpetuity and is therefore restrictive to changes in land use, including use by the community or the operational needs of Council
- Council is responsible for the actual implementation of the works required by the biobank site management plan.

It is noted that the former Warringah Council resolved to "Support the use of the NSW Biobanking and Offset Scheme as a mechanism to manage environmentally significant land within Warringah."

CONSULTATION

OEH has been consulted during the preparation of the biobanking application regarding direction and advice (by Eco Logical Australia on behalf of Council).

TIMING

The application to the OEH will be lodged as soon as possible.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Based on future management costs over a 20 year period it is expected that approximately \$2,000,000 will be generated and funded if all credits are sold. This is approximately \$100,000 towards management of the reserve at no major annual cost to Council.

Currently NBC allocate \$20,000 per annum of Council funds on management of the reserve however the management outcomes are limited in such a large and diverse reserve.

The preparation of the Biobanking Assessment Report by Eco Logical Australia has cost Council \$41,000.

SOCIAL IMPACT


Ingleside Chase Reserve has a network of walking tracks which are well used by the community. The significant increase in funding per annum will allow optimum management which will improve aesthetic and intrinsic values, allowing the community to continue to enjoy the environment of the reserve.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The intent of biobanking is to increase conservation values at biobanked sites through sufficiently-funded management which allows better environmental outcomes. Such outcomes in Ingleside Chase Reserve include increasing habitat value and conservation of flora and fauna through better threatened species management, reducing impact of weeds and feral animal pests, and reducing human impacts to improve water quality in the Narrabeen, Fern and Mullet Creek catchments.



NORTHERN BEACHES
COUNCIL

 Ingleside Chase
reserve boundary

Ingleside Chase Reserve - Proposed BioBank site



Scale: 1cm = 70m
Aerial Photography - Feb 2014
Licensed from NearMap
This plan is not survey accurate



Further information

Website www.environment.nsw.gov.au/biobanking
Phone 131 555
Email biobanking@environment.nsw.gov.au

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Department of Environment and Climate Change NSW
50 Goulburn Street, Sydney
PO Box A230, Sydney, South 1212

Phone: 02 9995 5000 (weekdays)

Phone: 131 555 (weekends information and publications requests)

Phone: 1300 301 307 (national parks information and publications requests)

Fax: 02 9995 5098

TTY: 02 9211 4723

Email: biobanking@environment.nsw.gov.au

Website: www.environment.nsw.gov.au

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BioBanking
Biodiversity Banking and Offsets Scheme

for
conservationists



BioBanking is a biodiversity banking and offsets scheme that improves biodiversity and provides funds for landowners to manage their land for conservation. BioBanking is a voluntary scheme that supports landowners to take care of their bushland forever ... and pays them to do it.



What is BioBanking?

BioBanking is a market-based scheme that brings together:

- landowners who create biodiversity credits, by establishing a bioBank site
- purchasers who buy the credits created.

Purchasers may be conservationists, philanthropists or government departments interested in conserving biodiversity in perpetuity. Developers who need to offset the loss of biodiversity from a development site are also purchasers.

There are two types of biodiversity credits – species credits and ecosystem credits.

Conservationists or philanthropists may decide to target particular threatened species by any buying credits for those species or credits for ecosystems that support them. Conservationists may also choose to focus on a particular geographic region with a view to creating a linked corridor or protecting a vulnerable area.

Behind the scenes

BioBanking applies a consistent scientific methodology to assess biodiversity, whether for a proposed conservation or development site.

The BioBanking Credit Calculator is a computer program that uses the methodology and calculates the number and classes of credits created at a bioBank site or those required to offset clearing at a development site.

Three databases underpin the methodology and calculator:

- Vegetation Types Database – describes vegetation types for each of the 13 catchment management

authority (ICMA) areas in NSW. There are approximately 1600 in total. Vegetation types are used in the methodology as a surrogate for general biodiversity values.

- Vegetation Benchmarks Database – identifies the range of quantitative measures that represent the benchmark condition for each vegetation type
- Threatened Species Profile Database – contains information for all listed threatened species, populations and communities, such as their habitat characteristics, range, response to management actions, life history strategies, survey requirements, and ability to withstand loss in numbers and extent.

The data underpinning the calculator is reviewed and updated on a regular basis. The calculator and all databases are available for free on the BioBanking website.



Ensuring improved biodiversity outcomes in perpetuity

A biobanking agreement is registered on the land title of a biobank site to ensure biodiversity is protected and managed forever. When land that includes a biobank site is sold, the new owner takes over the obligations of the biobanking agreement and in return receives the annual payments from the Biobanking Trust Fund.

Biodiversity offset credits must be purchased from a biobank site that has:

- the same vegetation type as the development site
- another vegetation type with the same predicted species, or
- a more cleared vegetation type that contains the same threatened species.

This ensures more endangered ecosystems are not lost in favour of those under less threat.



Previously, the preferred location for an offset was often on the same site as the development. In some cases this was not practical for the best use of land close to infrastructure. Sometimes it also led to conflict between development and conservation objectives for the future. Biobanking offers more flexibility for where credits may be obtained, leading to better results for biodiversity.

How much is a credit worth?

Many variables influence how much a credit is worth, such as the underlying value of the land, the condition of the vegetation and the demand for particular credit types. Landowners, or other credit owners, are also allowed to build a profit margin into their credit price.

Land that is close to urban areas (such as on the outskirts of Sydney) may be more expensive and if used for a biobank site may generate credits with higher prices.

The condition of the vegetation on a biobank site will affect the cost of the management actions required, which in turn will affect the credit price required to ensure those actions can be completed.

As Biobanking is a market based scheme, demand from purchasers and the supply of credits will also affect their price. For example, a credit in high demand from developers may have a higher price than a credit with low demand. The biobanking public register lists expressions of interest, credits available for sale and all past credit transactions, which may help inform negotiations regarding the price of credits.



Conservationists or philanthropists may decide to target particular threatened species or areas. The biobanking public register lists expressions of interest from landowners wanting to establish biobank sites as well as biodiversity credits available for sale. Both can be searched by CMA subregions, vegetation type and threatened species.

If an expression of interest matches a conservationist's requirements, they may approach the landholder and enter into an option to purchase credits after an assessment is undertaken and a biobanking agreement granted.

Conservationists can publicise the types of credits they are interested in purchasing by submitting a 'credits wanted form' to be included in the 'list of wanted credits' on the Biobanking website.



How does Biobanking work?

The assessment process

Applications for biobanking agreements (for biobank sites) and biobanking statements (for development sites) must include a site assessment by an accredited Biobanking Assessor using the current version of the calculator.

The credits generated by a biobank site or required by a development site will vary as each site has different vegetation types, conditions and threatened species.

Buying and selling credits

Biodiversity credits are sold by biobank site owners to fund the management of their land. Anyone can purchase biodiversity credits. Purchasers can choose to retire the credit, or keep them for possible resale at a later date. If a developer buys credits to offset the effects of a development site, they must retire them so they cannot be traded again.

