

# Conservation Tenders

## FAQ's

### **Q. What do I need to do to participate?**

If you are interested in participating, the first step to take is to submit an expression of interest (EOI) for a site assessment within the EOI period for the tender. You will need to consider what parts of your property would be eligible for the tender and what parts of your property you would be willing to include in a Conservation Area, to be managed for biodiversity outcomes. You will need to submit an expression of interest (EOI) for a site assessment within the EOI period for the tender. You will need to identify that the area you are proposing to manage as a conservation area will meet the minimum size requirement.

EOIs will be prioritised with highest ranking sites receiving site assessments. If your EOI progresses to the site assessment stage, you will be provided with materials to read in preparation for a visit from a BCT officer. If you are unsuccessful in this tender, local BCT staff will be in contact to discuss options that are available to you if you are still interested in protecting the biodiversity on your property.

Q. Will all sites be visited and funded?

A. Unfortunately, not all sites can receive a site assessment for the conservation tender. Sites will be prioritised in a desktop assessment taking into consideration factors such as: size, landscape context, risk and priority landscapes. The site visit will also be used to assist in identifying whether your property is eligible for a conservation agreement.

Receiving a site assessment is not a guarantee

that you will receive funding. Tenders are a competitive process, aimed at investing in best value for money sites. Sites with the highest biodiversity values offered at the best price are most likely to be funded. The Tender Guide provides further information about the assessment of sites.

Successful bidders will be invited to enter into a Conservation Agreement that is registered on the title of the land. Payments will be made in accordance with the landholder's bid and will continue for the term of the agreement.

NSW BCT reserves the right to seek clarification or additional information from landowners about any information included in their bid, to inform the bid assessment process. The BCT further reserves the right to reject bids which set out management payments that would clearly not support implementation of the conservation management plan and actions.

### **Q. What is the conservation tender process?**

Tenders will be conducted in a two-stage process. Landholders will initially be invited to express their interest and eligible landholders with the highest-ranking sites will be contacted by the BCT to arrange a site assessment. You can refer to the 'eligibility' information on our website, which will assist you to decide if you are eligible or contact the BCT on 1300 992 688.

If your site is eligible, the BCT will work with you to prepare a conservation management plan to enable participation in the tender. For more information refer to the South West Slopes



Conservation Tender Guide for Landholders on the BCT website: [www.bct.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bct.nsw.gov.au)

### **Q. How do I determine if my land is eligible for a tender?**

Tenders information is available on the BCT website. A factsheet is prepared for each tender area with a map of the eligible tender area and an outline of the eligibility criteria.

If you are unsure or unable to access the BCT website, you can contact us on 1300 992 688.

### **Q. What happens if I have an existing agreement?**

Sites that are subject to an existing binding agreement or contract (e.g. contract or legal agreement) and/or that receive funding for activities similar to, or in conflict with activities required under a BCT Conservation Agreement may not be eligible for this program. Landholders will be asked about any existing agreements prior to the site visit and landholders with concerns about eligibility should discuss this with the BCT during the initial site visit.

For more information refer to the South West Slopes Conservation Tender Guide for Landholders on the BCT website: [www.bct.nsw.gov.au](http://www.bct.nsw.gov.au)

### **Q. Is public land eligible?**

Public owned and managed land\* is not eligible. Travelling Stock Reserves (TSR) will not be eligible, as the BCT is engaging with LLS about support for protection of the environmental values of TSRs, which will be further investigated in 2019.

Local Government Authorities are also encouraged to investigate Biodiversity Stewardship Agreements options for land they own and manage.

### **Q. I manage leasehold land, am I eligible?**

A person who leases land under the Crown

Land Management Act 2016 can participate in the tender if they are within the tender area, have an eligible site and meet other eligibility criteria. If the bid is successful, entering into the Conservation Agreement will be subject to obtaining the consent of all owners of the land.

### **Q. I have vegetation that I'm not allowed to clear - does that mean I will get funding?**

Not necessarily. The BCT is focused on investing in good value for money proposals to protect and manage biodiversity that is identified as a priority in the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Investment Strategy.

As this tender is a competitive process it is the landholders who offer sites with the highest biodiversity value for the best price that are most likely to be successful.

### **Q. Does a Conservation Agreement mean I can no longer use the land?**

Entering into a Conservation Agreement CA is a voluntary decision by the you, the landholder.

Entering into a Conservation Agreement with the BCT does not inhibit your access to your land, and nor does it mean there is public access to it. It does however protect the land and its native flora and fauna for the term of the agreement

The BCT recognises that active management of conservation areas is required to manage threats such as pests and weeds.

Landholders who are successful in the program will receive ongoing income for managing the land for conservation outcomes. For Woodland and Grassland landscapes in the South West Slopes, strategic grazing may be allowed where this practice provides good biodiversity outcomes. Successful landholders will be provided with an annual income to maintain and improve the biodiversity values of the land under a conservation agreement, regardless of the seasonal conditions or commodity prices.

\* Publicly owned and managed lands mean land owned and managed by state, federal and local government authorities, bodies, departments, statutory corporations, state - owned corporations and other similar entities, and for land owned by such entities.



### **Q. Is there a risk that pests and weeds get out of control in the Conservation Area?**

Weeds and pests are just as much a threat to biodiversity as they are to agriculture. In preparation of your bid for the tender, you are encouraged to consider how much it will cost to manage pests and weeds in the proposed Conservation Area. Management of pests and weeds may involve engaging contractors, hiring equipment and/or purchasing chemicals.

Successful bidders will enter into a conservation agreement with ongoing annual management payments, a proportion of which is for the ongoing management and reduction of weeds and pests within the Conservation Area.

### **Q. My neighbour is worried that a Conservation Area will harbour weeds and pests and become a fire hazard.**

The Biodiversity Conservation Trust recognises that conservation areas require ongoing management. Landholders participating in the Tender prepare a bid that considers costs for managing weeds, pests and biomass levels.

Through receiving ongoing annual management payments, successful bidders who have entered into a Conservation Agreement are required to manage weeds, pests and biomass to the satisfaction of the BCT.

### **Q. Will a Conservation Agreement on title negatively impact land value and reduce interest and saleability of my asset?**

The potential impact of a Conservation Agreement on land value depends on a number of factors.

Property buyers may see an Agreement as something of interest and value, particularly if they are interested in sustainability and bushland amenity. Unlike many previous conservation programs, the BCT Conservation Management Program provides a guaranteed

annual income source that may be attractive to potential buyers.

However, Conservation Agreements do provide some restrictions on land use activities that may impact the value of the property and/or change the type of person interested in purchasing your property.

The BCT encourages landholders to carefully consider the design of their Conservation Area and their decision to enter into a Conservation Agreement, including seeking independent legal and financial advice.

### **Q. What are the terms of agreement and what do they mean in terms of payments?**

The landholder chooses the term of the agreement, this can be anything over 15 years or in perpetuity. Payments will be made in accordance with the landholder's bid and will continue for the term of the agreement.

If landholders choose a termed agreement, the payments would conclude at the end of the term specified. The landholder may choose voluntarily at that point to extend the term of their agreement but there would be no facility for the BCT to continue annual payments.

### **Q. Will I still have to pay LLS and Local Council rates?**

Yes. While the BCT does deliver some programs that provide opportunity for local government rate relief the tenders operating under our Conservation Management Program do not. Landholders may consider costs, such as rates, in developing their bid for the tender.

### **Q. Does the Conservation Agreement with the Trust have to run with the land?**

Yes. Placing the agreement on title means that the agreed outcomes are secure for the term of the agreement - even if the land is sold. This is important to the BCT as we are concerned with securing long-term conservation outcomes.



The BCT Conservation Management Program sets funds aside to ensure annual conservation management payments may be made for the term of the agreement. This program provides a unique opportunity to secure an additional revenue stream for landholders to conserve and manage native vegetation and biodiversity on private land.

### **Q. What are the terms of agreement and what do they mean in terms of payments?**

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If landholders choose a termed agreement, the payments would conclude at the end of the term specified. The landholder may choose voluntarily at that point, or at any time prior, to extend the term of their agreement however there is no guarantee that conservation management payments will be extended. This will depend on available funds and the Government's investment priorities.

### **Q. My property is not in the current tender region, what options do I have?**

The Biodiversity Conservation Trust currently delivers a range of programs across the state, informed by the priorities set by the NSW Government's Biodiversity Conservation Investment Strategy. The BCT has been established with a focus on investing funds on private land where it will have the greatest conservation benefit. This means that all areas of native vegetation are not treated equally, and some areas will be a higher priority for investment than others. In addition, resources to assess new agreements are limited, and so

the BCT is running tenders in smaller regions to ensure that the tenders are run efficiently and cost-effectively.

Further opportunities may arise in the future for landholders who are not within the current tender area – future tenders are likely in other parts of the state in the next couple of years. For example, many landholders are eligible to apply for a Fixed Rate Offer to get some payments to establish a Conservation Agreement on their land. Entering into one of these agreements does not exclude you from future tenders if they occur in your area.

The [BCT website](#) has information on this and other programs that are currently available to assist in undertaking Private Land Conservation.

### **Q. What is the level of investment in the conservation tender?**

The NSW Government has committed \$61.4 million across the BCT's programs for 2018-19 to deliver major benefits to the environment and support landholders to carry out important conservation management on their properties. Of this funding, \$46.6 million will be allocated to the BCT's Conservation Tenders in 2018-19.

### **Q. Who is the BCT?**

The NSW Government established the BCT as part of its environmental reforms in mid-2017. The BCT protects and enhances biodiversity by promoting conservation measures on private land and offering a biodiversity offsetting service. We encourage long-term conservation by supporting landholders in their efforts to manage and enhance biodiversity values on their land. The government has committed \$240 million over four years and a further \$70 million ongoing to our private land conservation program. There are five Tenders running across the state that will share this funding

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[bct.nsw.gov.au](http://bct.nsw.gov.au)

email: [info@bct.nsw.gov.au](mailto:info@bct.nsw.gov.au) | phone: 1300 992 688

[f@NSWBCT](#) [@BCT\\_NSW](#)

