



Biodiversity
Conservation
Trust

Biodiversity Conservation Trust Plains-wanderer Conservation Tender

Landholder Guide | September 2020



The NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout NSW and recognises their ongoing connection to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

Front Cover: Female Plains-wanderer. David Parker (DPIE)

1. Introduction	4
2. BCT Conservation Tenders.....	4
3. Where is the Conservation Tender being offered?.....	6
4. Tender Process	7
5. Submitting an Expression of Interest for site assessment	8
6. Eligibility	8
7. Plains-Wanderer Habitat	11
8. Assessing good condition vegetation.....	11
9. Sites with existing agreements and obligations	12
10. Tender opening dates	12
11. The site visit.....	12
12. Submitting a bid.....	13
13. Assessment of bids.....	15
14. Tender Conditions	15
15. Level of investment.....	16
16. Further information	16
17. Important additional information	17
Attachment 1: Plains-wanderer Conservation Tender Maximum Prices	17
Attachment 2: Landholder Guide: Preparing a Bid.....	17
Attachment 3: Conservation fencing guidelines and equivalent standards	17

1. INTRODUCTION

This guide is to assist landholders who are interested in participating in the Plains-wanderer Conservation Tender. The Plains-wanderer is an endangered bird of the Riverina grasslands for which protection and management of habitat on private land is a key part of species recovery. The Biodiversity Conservation Trust (BCT) is offering landholders with Plains-wanderer habitat an opportunity to diversify their income by earning annual management payments for actively managing Plains-wanderer habitat on their property.



Figure 1 Plains-wanderer habitat managed to ideal condition, NSW Riverina Plains.
Photo David Parker, DPIE

2. BCT CONSERVATION TENDERS

Conservation tenders are a key pathway by which interested landholders can participate in the BCT's Conservation Management Program, to enter a funded conservation agreement.

The BCT invites landholders who have at least 100ha of mapped Plains-wanderer habitat in the tender area (See Figure 2) to express their interest in a site assessment by submitting an Expression of Interest (EOI) form. Landholders can check the amount of mapped Plains-wanderer habitat on their property on the BCT website.

Expression of interest forms will be available from the [BCT website](#), or by contacting the BCT on 1300 992 688 and can either be mailed or emailed.

Expressing interest in a site assessment does not create a binding obligation to participate in the tender.

For sites that are eligible for a site assessment, BCT field staff and ecologists will work with the landholder to:

- identify the environmental values on the site
- nominate a potential conservation area
- prepare a conservation management plan for that area
- agree on the land management actions needed to protect and manage the native vegetation on site.

Once this is agreed, the landholders will be invited to submit a tender or 'bid', using a standard template. The bid will include the conservation management plan and a schedule setting out the annual payments that the landholder wishes to receive to implement the plan and the conservation management actions.

To maximise the hectares of Plains-wanderer habitat and number of agreements that can be established, the BCT has a set a limit on the amount that it will pay annually per hectare of habitat. Landholders can make their bid more competitive by setting a price below the maximum.

- The maximum price for mapped Plains-wanderer habitat is \$40/ha/yr.
- The maximum price for other eligible vegetation is the applicable price offered in the Biodiversity Conservation Trust fixed price offer. These rates vary depending on local government area and land and soil capability and range from \$9 to \$28.80/ha/yr. Attachment 1 lists the fixed price for local government areas in the tender area.

Within the maximum price limit, it is entirely up to the landholder to determine the price they require to conserve and manage the nominated site in accordance with the agreed conservation management plan.

Landholders can also make their proposals more competitive by proposing paddocks with more primary habitat compared to non-primary habitat. Where practical, the program can contribute to fencing costs to allow paddock division to maximise the proportion of primary habitat within the proposal.

Landholders that progress to the bid stage will have the option to include direct costs for essential conservation fencing in their bid (see 'Essential conservation fencing' in section 12).

Successful landholders will be offered a conservation agreement which can be in-perpetuity or for a minimum 15 years fixed term. Payments will be made in accordance with the landholder's bid and will continue for the term of the agreement.

3. WHERE IS THE CONSERVATION TENDER BEING OFFERED?

The Plains-wanderer Conservation Tender area is on the NSW Riverina Plains roughly between Narrandera, Darlington Point, Griffith, Hay, The Cobb Highway, Deniliquin and Jerilderie.

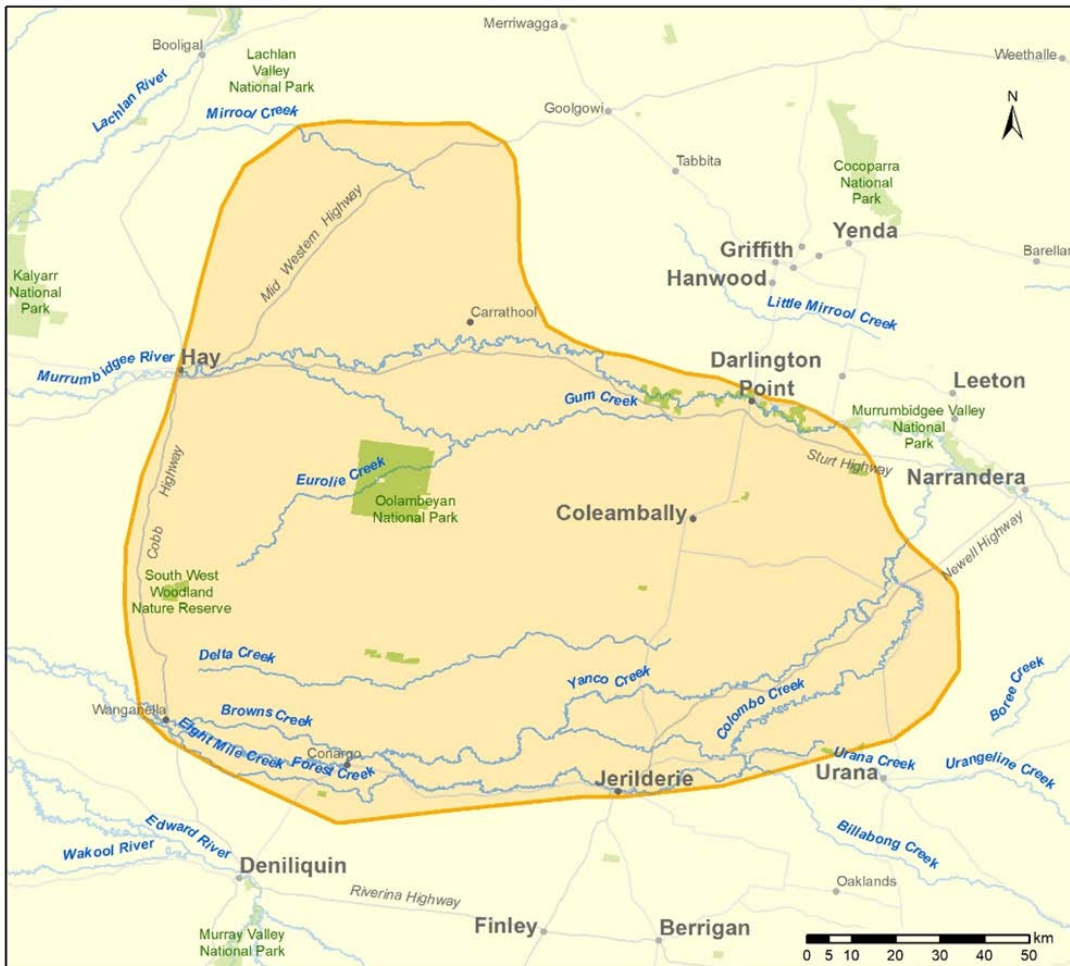


Figure 2 Plains-wanderer Conservation Tender area.

The Plains-wanderer conservation tender is focused on securing Plains-wanderer habitat that is crucial to the survival of the species in NSW. The Riverina Plains is the largest population of Plains-wanderers in NSW and is the focus of the NSW government's Saving our Species recovery strategy. The long-term recovery of the Plains-wanderer relies on well managed habitat on private lands including good grazing management to maintain ideal ground cover.

If your site is eligible for a site assessment, the BCT field staff will identify if these values are on your site. For sites that are eligible to participate in the tender, having these values on your site will influence your Biodiversity Value Score. The Biodiversity Value Score is explained under 'Assessment of Bids'.

4. TENDER PROCESS

Tenders will be conducted in a three-stage process. Landholders will initially be invited to express their interest in a site visit. You can determine if your site is suitable for the tender by referring to the eligibility information at 'eligible sites' below, or by contacting the BCT on 1300 992 688.

Expressions of Interest will be prioritised with the highest-ranking eligible sites offered a site assessment. For highest ranking eligible sites, the BCT will work with Landholders to prepare a conservation management plan to enable participation in the tender.

Stage 1 Expression of interest and site assessment

Step 1. Submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) for a site assessment.

Step 2. BCT will be in touch to verify the details of your EOI and work with you to identify the area you wish to nominate as a conservation area to participate in the process. EOIs will be prioritised and the highest-ranking sites offered a site assessment. Landholders with highest-ranking sites will be contacted by the BCT to arrange a time for site visit and assessment.

Step 3 Site assessment to confirm site size and vegetation¹. The BCT will then commence preparation of a conservation management plan in consultation with you, including proposed conservation management actions. A Biodiversity Value Score will be developed (see 'Assessment of Bids' below).

Step 4. The proposed conservation management plan, including conservation management actions, is provided to you with a bid form to enable you to participate in the tender.

Stage 2 Bid phase

Step 5. Landholders submit their bid after being sent the final conservation management plan. All bids are held within a secure location until after the final bid closing date when they are assessed by a BCT assessment panel for eligibility and value for money.

Step 6. Successful bidders are provided an opportunity to enter into a conservation agreement under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* (NSW) with the BCT and receive annual conservation management payments for the term of the agreement.

Stage 3 Entering a conservation agreement

Step 7. For those successful bidders that decide to proceed with a conservation agreement the BCT will send the executed agreement to the NSW Land Registry Services to be registered on the title of the land. It will be binding on successors in title and not just the current owner of the land.

Step 8. BCT is notified by the NSW Land Registry Services that the conservation agreement has been registered on title.

Step 9. The BCT will contact you, provide a welcome pack and process the first conservation management payment.

¹ Sites that clearly do not meet minimum size or vegetation condition requirements may be informed at this point that they will not proceed further in the tender process.

Additionally, landholders who enter conservation agreements are provided ongoing support under the BCT [Landholder Technical Support Package](#).

5. SUBMITTING AN EXPRESSION OF INTEREST FOR SITE ASSESSMENT

The first step to secure participation in a tender is to make an Expression of Interest (EOI) for a site assessment. This can be done by mailing or emailing an EOI form available from the website, or by contacting the BCT on [1300 992 688](tel:1300992688).

The BCT will undertake a desktop assessment to ensure that your site is located within the tender area and meets the minimum size requirements. EOIs may then be prioritised with the highest-ranking sites offered a site assessment. If your site is ineligible to participate in the tender, the BCT will contact you to discuss alternate options that you may wish to consider.

If you made an EOI over the phone, and you are eligible for a site assessment, a BCT field officer will bring a record of the EOI to the site visit and you will be asked to confirm the details.

Registration of an EOI does not mean that you are required to submit a bid, however it ensures that your site will be assessed for eligibility.

The BCT reserves the right to extend the EOI period or close the EOI period early if a sufficient number of applications are received.

6. ELIGIBILITY

Eligible Sites

Eligibility criteria for the **Plains-wanderer conservation tender** are:

- The site proposed for conservation management must be within the tender area (Figure 2),
- The site must contain at least 100ha of mapped Plains-wanderer habitat as shown on the [BCT website](#), and
- The native vegetation must be in moderate to good condition.

**Note:* The BCT will assess the mapped habitat to verify it has not been modified since mapping and remains viable primary habitat. A small potential exists for a property within the tender area to contain primary Plains-wanderer habitat that has not been mapped. In the event that potential habitat is identified within the tender area that is not mapped, the BCT will consult with relevant threatened species officers, and the BCT reserves the right to determine whether the site contains primary Plains-wanderer habitat.

If your site is within the tender area and prioritised for site assessment, the BCT field staff will contact you to arrange a time to meet with you for a site assessment. This assessment will identify if your site contains moderate to good condition vegetation with reference to

applicable vegetation condition thresholds. Up to 10% of the total area proposed may constitute vegetation in poor condition.

For sites that straddle the tender boundary, the minimum size and condition requirement must be met by land that is within the tender area. The BCT reserves the right to limit the area of land that is permitted outside the tender area and/or modify the assessment of land outside the tender area. The BCT further reserves the right to prioritise sites for assessment based on the area proposed within the tender area.

The identification of a conservation area on your property is ultimately a matter for you, and your participation in the tender is entirely voluntary.

For sites that progress in the tender process, the site assessment will result in the site being assigned a Biodiversity Value Score. This score is explained below under 'Assessment of Bids'. The tender evaluation stage will confirm whether your site contains sufficient moderate to good condition vegetation to be an eligible site, with regard to applicable vegetation condition thresholds and proposed management actions².

Sites that are Crown leasehold land will be required to meet the Crown Lands policy with respect to biodiversity conservation agreements. See [biodiversity conservation agreements on crown land](#) information on the Industry NSW website. Applicants are encouraged to review this information and contact Crown Lands to ensure that their site meets Crown requirements. The consent of Crown Lands will be required for any conservation agreement with the BCT.

Public protected areas³, Travelling Stock Reserves (TSR) and public owned and managed land⁴ are not eligible to participate in this tender.

Eligible Entities

The applicant entity must be:

- an Owner of the land⁵ – as defined by the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* (NSW), and

² Sites with greater than 10% native vegetation in poor condition may be considered eligible by BCT at its absolute discretion

³ For example, land reserved under Part 4 or Part 4A of the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974, and flora reserves or special management zones within the meaning of the Forestry Act 2012.

⁴ 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.

⁵ Under the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 owner of land includes: (a) every person who, either at law or in equity— (i) is entitled to the land for any estate of freehold in possession, or (ii) is a person to whom the Crown has lawfully contracted to sell the land under the [Crown Land Management Act 2016](#) or any other Act relating to the alienation of lands of the Crown, or (iii) is entitled to receive, or is in receipt of, or if the land were let to a tenant would be entitled to receive, the rents and profits in respect of the land, whether as beneficial owner, trustee, mortgagee in possession or otherwise, and (b) a person who leases land under the [Crown Land Management Act 2016](#), and (c) any other person who, under the regulations, is taken to be the owner of the land, but (unless the regulations otherwise provide) does not include a beneficiary of a trust relating to the land.

- an Australian citizen⁶, registered for tax purposes in Australia and holding an Australian bank account, or
- an Australian registered company, registered for tax purposes in Australia, registered for GST and holding an Australian bank account, and
- fit and proper persons to enter into a conservation agreement with the Biodiversity Conservation Trust, and
- willing to enter into a conservation agreement with the Biodiversity Conservation Trust

A separate expression of interest is required for each property⁷. The BCT may consider an exception to this rule where the legal entity owns properties that are adjoining, and one plan of management and registered conservation agreement is proposed for the adjoining properties. This is subject to: the minimum size and conservation asset eligibility criteria (e.g. condition or confirmation of particular habitat) being met on each property; and the BCT assessing that the proposed configuration of the conservation area across multiple adjoining properties is compatible with the objectives of the tender, and other logistical and administrative considerations. The BCT reserves the right to limit site assessments for properties owned by the same legal entity.

A separate expression of interest is required for property that is owned by different entities.

A maximum of two bids per legal entity may be submitted.

Bids are to be made by a unique legal entity with legal rights to enter into the conservation agreement with the BCT.

Multiple bids for the same land area will not be permitted. The BCT will accept one bid per Plan of Management.

Eligible participants must nominate for a fixed-term (minimum 15 years) or in-perpetuity agreement. Participants are not permitted to nominate different term agreements for different parts of the property within the same bid.

Landholders (including Sole traders, Partnerships, Companies and Trusts) should refer to the BCTs *landholder guide on taxation* [available on the BCT website](#) for eligibility, administrative requirements and documentation the BCT needs to confirm ownership capacity.

Landholders will be required to declare any conflicts of interest when submitting a bid. Persons who have associations that are considered by BCT to represent a conflict of interest which is unable to be managed will not be eligible. If a landholder believes they may have a conflict of interest it should be discussed with the BCT staff during the initial site visit.

⁶ Australian citizens residing outside of Australia are eligible, provided they are registered for tax purposes in Australia and hold an Australian bank account.

⁷ BCT defines a property according to the description provided by the Valuer General for the purposes of land taxation and council rates, and is identified by a single Property Number.

BCT staff and Board members (and their close family members) and delivery agents (contractors and directors of delivery agents) involved in the delivery and evaluation of a BCT conservation tender, are not eligible to participate in that tender. Any EOI received from such parties will not progress further in the process.

7. PLAINS-WANDERER HABITAT

The primary focus of this tender is securing long term conservation and appropriate management of Plains-wanderer habitat.

The Plains-wanderer is known as a ‘goldilocks’ species as it is very fussy about the structure of the grasslands in which it lives and breeds. The grasslands must have enough space between grasses and other vegetation for the small bird to move around but also some vegetation cover for males to nest within. Ideal Plains-wanderer habitat is characterised as having 50% bare ground and 10% fallen litter, with the remaining 40% made up of grasses, herbs and forbs. Grass tussocks are spaced 10-20cm apart. Most of the vegetation is below 5cm high, but some vegetation up to around 30cm is important for concealment. This grassland structure is favoured by Plains-wanderer.

In high rainfall years with good plant growth, strategic grazing management is an important tool for controlling grass growth and maintaining habitat in ideal condition for the Plains-wanderer.

Both native and domestic grazing animals favour the vegetation in Plains-wanderer habitat. Grazing pressure is therefore less on surrounding grasslands and if the habitat is grazed to ideal condition the surrounding grasslands are also maintained in good condition.

The Plains-wanderers generally are not found near woodlands or tall shrubs in what appears to be a strategy to avoid attacks from perching birds of prey. Mapped habitat close to trees or shrubs needs to be assessed for suitability.

For more information on managing Plains-wanderer habitat refer to the [Saving our Species Plains-wanderer Habitat Management Guide](#).

8. ASSESSING GOOD CONDITION VEGETATION

It may be difficult for you to know if the native vegetation that you propose to protect is eligible. If your expression of interest is high ranking based on desktop assessment, the BCT will assess the site condition of your proposed conservation area with reference to applicable vegetation condition thresholds. Final assessment of vegetation condition will occur after the bid has been submitted, and can be influenced by management actions that the landholder proposes to undertake within the conservation area to improve vegetation condition.

9. SITES WITH EXISTING AGREEMENTS AND OBLIGATIONS

Landholders who have sites with existing conservation agreements or similar obligations may be eligible to apply, depending on the type and duration of the agreement or obligation.

Paddocks for Plains-wanderer Program

The BCT have worked closely with managers of the Paddocks for Plains-wanderer (PfPW) Program to ensure both programs are compatible and complementary. Landholders who are already part of PfPW program are eligible to apply however would need to provide a copy of their agreement to the BCT to confirm funding covers different actions.

Landholders successful in the BCT tender may or may not already be part of the PfPW program. To bring all landholders managing for Plains-wanderer into one network, BCT will strongly encourage and support each successful landholder to sign up to a Paddocks for Plains-wanderer Local Area Management Plan (LAMP) with the LLS. BCT will prepare the maps for those programs and assist with the preparation of the LAMP if required.

Other existing agreements and obligations

BCT will limit the number of site assessments for existing in-perpetuity agreements to 25% of total site assessments.

The BCT will further reserve the right to limit the total number of successful applicants with existing in-perpetuity agreements to ensure the majority of available funding is targeted towards new agreements.

Additional information about eligibility and treatment of sites with existing agreements or similar obligations is available in the *existing obligations and agreements table* [available on the BCT website](#) or through contact with the BCT.

Generally, if management activities are required or are already funded under an existing agreement, then the BCT will not provide further funding for those activities.

Those landholders who are not eligible to participate in this tender are encouraged to contact the BCT or Local Land Services to discuss other options that may be available to support the appropriate management of Plains-wanderer habitat and other native vegetation.

10. TENDER OPENING DATES

The BCT will call for Expressions of Interest (EOI) to participate in the Plains-wanderer conservation tender from the **2nd of November**. EOIs will close at midnight on **7th of December**. Advertisements will be placed in local newspapers and the BCT website will announce opening and closing dates to submit an EOI for a site assessment.

11. THE SITE VISIT

For the Plains-wanderer conservation tender site visits will occur after Summer in 2021 when conditions are favourable for vegetation assessment.

The following activities occur during the site visit:

- Where an EOI has been lodged by phone, you will be asked to confirm the details captured on the application form.
- The BCT will assess the site against the BCT's site eligibility criteria.
- You have an opportunity to ask any questions to ensure you understand the program and what is being offered.
- You and the BCT field staff will commence discussions to develop a conservation management plan and identify conservation management actions. A conservation management plan is required to enable you to participate in the tender. This will require you to:
 - identify what part of the property you are proposing to manage for conservation
 - actively manage Plains-wanderer habitat to ideal condition including appropriate grazing as a tool for managing vegetation structure to ideal condition
 - identify what types of conservation management actions you are willing to do (for example: weed and feral animal control).
 - discuss other matters such as existing agreements, potential conflicts of interest and other information we may require to allow development of a conservation agreement (such as mortgagee consent).

The BCT has a range of useful resources for landholders which can be found on the [general resources tab](#) of the BCT website. This includes an example of a conservation agreement.

BCT field staff will undertake an assessment of the site to develop a Biodiversity Value Score (BVS). A site will require a BVS to participate in the tender (for more information about the BVS refer to 'Assessment of bids' below).

12. SUBMITTING A BID

You will need an agreed BCT conservation management plan in the format set by the BCT to be able to submit a bid.

A draft conservation management plan and bid form will be sent to participants by the BCT after field staff have visited your property and discussed your management options with you.

After you receive your draft conservation management plan, you will be given a short time within which you can request an amendment to the conservation management plan. BCT will advise you of the maximum price that you can submit in your bid. You will be required to submit a bid prior to the closing date.

The BCT's field staff will offer as much support as possible to landholders interested in making a bid. For probity reasons, BCT field staff will not be permitted to advise you on your

bid costing beyond advising your maximum bid price and will not know what bid price is likely to comprise a successful bid. You should consider seeking expert financial and/or legal advice as appropriate to your circumstances.

Your bid form will require you to nominate the annual conservation management payments you will require to implement the management plan. You will be asked to nominate the figures in today's dollars. For successful bids, the conservation agreement will provide for future years payments to be indexed (increased) in line with inflation.

For successful bidders, the BCT will calculate the present value (PV) of the full payment schedule to calculate the amount to be set aside by the BCT to cover all future annual payments.

Additional information is available to assist eligible participants on how to develop their bid (Attachment 2: Landholder Guide - Preparing a bid).

All agreements with the BCT will include a provision for periodic review every five years. In limited circumstances, the BCT may agree to amend the conservation management actions and/or reset the forward schedule of payments, if this is well justified and funds are available.

Essential conservation fencing

Landholders that progress to the bid stage will have the option to include direct costs for essential conservation fencing in their bid. Essential conservation fencing includes new fencing and fencing repairs. These costs will be in addition to annual management payments for the agreement.

Where a fencing request is agreed, the BCT will make a contribution of either

- a) up to 50% of direct fencing costs or,
 - b) up to the relevant BCT cost benchmark (\$6.00 to \$8.00/m depending on the location and characteristics of the site),
- whichever is the lower.

If you are seeking direct costs for essential fencing, you will be required to:

- discuss the proposal with BCT staff and demonstrate why the request is essential and how it is consistent with the BCT conservation management plan developed for the site
- complete fencing installation within the first 12 months of the agreement period
- undertake the fencing in accordance with the BCT *Essential conservation fencing infrastructure: Guidelines, standards and benchmarks* available on the [general resources tab](#) of the BCT website.

The BCT will consider requests on their merits, including demonstrated need and proportionality to the total value of the agreement, and reserves the right to refuse such requests or to limit the total funds provided per request for essential conservation fencing. Where a participant's request for essential conservation fencing costs is agreed to by the BCT, these costs will be paid within the first year unless otherwise stated within the agreement.

For further information and additional conditions see the *Conservation fencing guidelines and equivalent standards* excerpt from the BCT *Essential conservation fencing infrastructure: Guidelines, standards and benchmarks* in Attachment 3 and also available on the [general resources tab](#) of the BCT website.

13. ASSESSMENT OF BIDS

All bids are required to be received by the tender closing date. The closing date for this tender is midnight on 17 June 2021.

Bids for each tender area are held within a secure location until after the tender closing date for that area and will then be assessed by a BCT assessment panel.

The BCT reserves the right to consider a bid received after the closing date where the integrity and competitiveness of the tender process is not compromised.

The BCT has developed an Assessment Metric to determine best value for money sites in Conservation Management Program tenders, fixed price offer and revolving fund. The Assessment Metric assists the cost effectiveness of BCT's investment in private land conservation.

The Assessment Metric ranks best value for money sites via the generation of a Biodiversity Value Score (or BVS) for each site, which is then divided by the price for conservation management of the site, to generate a Biodiversity Value Index.

The BVS represents the biodiversity value achieved from conservation management of a site and is made up of four components:

- Conservation Value – comprising the Site Conservation Value and the Landscape Conservation value.
- Duration – the long-term security benefit of the proposed site.
- Risk – the risk of clearing vegetation based on its position in the landscape.
- Area – the size of the proposed site that is above threshold ecological condition.

This tender will use the 'Targeted metric variant' outlined in the BCT Assessment Metric document on the BCT website (under the general resources tab).

14. TENDER CONDITIONS

Before submitting a bid, you need to be satisfied that the proposed management payments are correct and financially and practically viable to enter into a conservation agreement.

Bids must be submitted by a legal entity with the capacity to contract. The BCT may ask a landholder to provide evidence of its legal status or capacity to enter a contract.

Your bid must be accompanied by a 'fit and proper person' declaration, and a 'conflict of interest' declaration. The BCT, in its discretion, will consider whether the applicant is a fit and

proper person, and how any conflicts of interest will be managed. Where the BCT forms an opinion that the applicant is not a fit and proper person or a conflict cannot be managed, the BCT will exclude the bid from further consideration.

Bids must be in writing and in English and the bid price must be in Australian dollars.

Facsimiled submissions will not be accepted.

Bids should be sent by email to tenders@bct.nsw.gov.au

Alternatively, you can post your bid to the locked bag. You should ensure that where a bid is mailed, sufficient time is allowed for the bid to be received prior to the closing date.

Bids that do not include a fully completed response may be excluded from the tender without further consideration at the BCT's discretion.

It is not intended that the issue of a tender, or a bid in response to it, commits, obligates or otherwise creates a legal relationship in respect of entering into an agreement with a landholder. However, any bid lodged by a landholder will constitute an irrevocable offer by the landholder. A landholder may withdraw their bid by notification in writing to the BCT prior to entry into a conservation agreement.

The BCT is not bound to accept the lowest or any bid. The BCT reserves the right to seek clarification or additional information from landholders about any information included in the bid, including the proposed bid price structure, to inform the bid assessment process. The BCT reserves the right to reject bids which set out management payments that would clearly not support implementation of the conservation management plan and actions.

The BCT is not responsible for costs incurred by a landholder in participating in a tender or preparing and submitting a bid. Acceptance of a bid will be subject to the landholder entering a conservation agreement with the BCT.

You can contact the BCT if you have any questions or if you have a complaint on 1300 992 688. Any complaints will be managed in accordance with the BCT complaints policy.

15. LEVEL OF INVESTMENT

The budget available for the Conservation Management Program, which includes multiple conservation tenders and other offers, during 2020-21 is approximately \$47 million.

16. FURTHER INFORMATION

Call us **1300 992 688**. Visit our website www.bct.nsw.gov.au

Send us an email: info@bct.nsw.gov.au

17. IMPORTANT ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The BCT has prepared important additional information for landholders who are eligible to participate in a tender. This Information is included in the following attachments:

Attachment 1: Plains-wanderer Conservation Tender Maximum Prices

Attachment 2: Landholder Guide: Preparing a Bid

Attachment 3: Conservation fencing guidelines and equivalent standards

Plains-wanderer Conservation Tender Maximum Prices

The following information relates to the maximum prices that BCT is willing to pay for Plains-wanderer habitat and for other eligible native vegetation in this tender.

Plains-wanderer habitat – maximum price

The purpose of this conservation tender is securing long term appropriate management of Plains-wanderer habitat in the NSW Riverina. The BCT has set a higher upper limit of \$40/ha/yr for the targeted Plains-wanderer habitat.

Other eligible native vegetation – maximum price

For other eligible native vegetation surrounding the Plains-wanderer habitat the maximum price is the applicable rates of our fixed price offer program which vary per local government area and the land and soil capability class. In the tender area the majority of areas fall in land capability classes 4-6. These rates are listed in the table below. For the complete schedule of fixed price offers visit the BCT website.

The BCT commissions land valuation research to identify average market values for land in each local government area. The BCT determines a price to serve as a reasonable contribution to conservation management costs based on those land valuations and the land capability classes.

Local Government Area	Other eligible native vegetation Land Capability Classes 4-6 Maximum Price (\$/ha/year)*	Other eligible native vegetation Land Capability Classes 1-3 Maximum Price (\$/ha/year)*	Eligible Plains-wanderer primary habitat (mapped) Maximum Price (\$/ha/year)
Griffith	\$26.64	N/A	\$40
Leeton	\$26.64	\$48.60	
Narrandera	\$28.80	\$53.28	
Federation	\$26.64	\$57.78	
Murrumbidgee	\$23.40	\$40.03	
Edward River	\$22.32	\$39.96	
Hay	\$9.00	N/A	
Carrathool	\$13.32	N/A	

* Eligible non-primary habitat on other land capability classes will attract the corresponding fixed price offer price (available on the BCT website). Most lands in the tender area are Land Capability Class 4-6. You can check your Land Capability Class and the corresponding maximum price in the interactive Plains-wanderer Conservation Tender web map viewer.

Preparing a Bid

This guide is to assist landholders to prepare a bid to participate in a conservation tender under the Biodiversity Conservation Trust's Conservation Management Program.

Receiving a conservation management plan

The Biodiversity Conservation Trust (BCT) will send you a draft conservation management plan after field staff have visited your property and discussed your management options with you.

The draft conservation management plan will be prepared based on the discussions held with the BCT field staff and agreed management actions.

You should contact BCT field staff on 1300 992 688 after receiving your draft conservation management plan if you require any changes.

When do I submit a bid?

Bids must be received by the Biodiversity Conservation Trust by midnight on the closing date.

It is up to you to determine the payments that you require, within the maximum amounts BCT has identified (see below), to conserve and manage your site in accordance with the agreed conservation management plan.

By submitting a bid, you acknowledge that the conservation management plan (and associated management actions) is final and this is the basis upon which you will bid.

How do I cost the proposed conservation management plan?

Every site will be different, and landholders will have different abilities and existing resources to implement conservation management actions.

The BCT has set a maximum price of \$40/ha/yr that it is willing to pay for mapped primary Plains-wanderer habitat. The maximum price for other eligible native vegetation is determined by the applicable fixed price offer (see Attachment 1).

For landholders that progress to the bid stage of the tender, the BCT will identify the maximum price that you can bid.

Landholders have the option to include direct costs for conservation fencing in their bid. These costs will be in addition to annual management payments for the agreement. Where a fencing request is agreed the BCT will make a contribution of either a) up to 50% of direct fencing costs or, b) up to the relevant BCT cost benchmark, whichever is the lower.

Landholders should consider the likely management costs over the term of the agreement.

The BCT anticipates bidders will consider the following types of costs:

- labour costs, including hired or your own
- material costs for undertaking conservation management actions, for example fencing materials, equipment or chemicals for pest and weed control, or plants for re-vegetation (if applicable)
- costs of equipment required to undertake management actions
- the costs of seeking specialist advice on conservation management actions from contractors, advisors, personal financial advisors, accountants or product suppliers
- costs associated with stock exclusion, such as alternate water sources
- loss in income due to changes in the income producing aspects of the conservation site (e.g. loss of timber production, grazing, or other development opportunity)
- time and costs associated with participation (e.g. reporting).

Landholders may also choose to consider the benefits to be gained from changing management of their native vegetation. Landholders may wish to reduce the price of their bid to reflect these benefits.

Benefits may include:

- increased land values or aesthetic values of the property
- reduced risk or costs for future management
- personal enjoyment and satisfaction from having made a positive contribution toward securing a diminishing conservation asset
- income generated from stock required to manage habitat to ideal condition in high growth years.

How will you decide how much to bid?

Within the upper price limits set for this tender, the amount you bid is entirely up to you. You should consider the annual payments you wish to receive for undertaking the actions outlined in the agreed conservation management plan over the term of the proposed agreement. If you request a contribution to essential conservation fencing these costs will be additional to your annual management payments.

Bids will be assessed and ranked based on value-for-money. Therefore, the amount you bid will influence how competitive your bid is likely to be with respect to other bidders within the same region.

The BCT encourages you to ensure that you prepare your bid in a way that ensures that you will be able to meet your obligations under the proposed agreement.

All conservation agreements will be the subject of ongoing conservation management payments for the agreement term.

To prepare your bid, you should fill out the bid template. This requires you to nominate the conservation management payments you wish to receive.

You should nominate these figures in today's dollars. The agreement will provide for future years' payments to be indexed (increased) in line with inflation.

For successful bidders that sign a conservation agreement, the BCT will set aside sufficient funds to ensure it can make the agreed annual conservation management payments.

All agreements will include a provision for the conservation management plan and associated payments to be reviewed by the landholder and the BCT, and possibly renegotiated, every five years. In limited circumstances, the BCT may agree to amend the conservation management actions and/or reset the forward schedule of payments, if this is well justified and funds are available.

For probity reasons, BCT field staff will not be permitted to advise you on your bid costing, beyond advising your maximum bid price, and will not know what bid price is likely to comprise a successful bid.

Discussions with BCT field staff will not be permitted during the period from the receipt of the agreed conservation management plan to the lodgement of the bid, to ensure tender probity.

How do I submit a bid?

Bids must be received by the BCT by midnight on the closing date.

Facsimiled submissions will not be accepted.

Bids should be sent by email to tenders@bct.nsw.gov.au

Alternatively, you can post your bid to the locked bag. You should ensure that where a bid is mailed to the locked bag, sufficient time is allowed for the bid to be received prior to the closing date.

What advice should I seek?

The BCT's field staff will offer as much support as possible to landholders interested in making a bid. However, you should consider seeking expert ecological, financial and/or legal advice as appropriate to your circumstances.

Assessment of bids

When will my bid be assessed?

When the tender period has closed, your bid will be compared against all the other bids submitted within the same tender.

The BCT will work to keep the length of time between bidding and notification of success to a minimum.

How will successful bids be determined?

Bids will be compared in a consistent manner according to a numerical index of biodiversity benefit, called the Biodiversity Value Score (BVS).

The Biodiversity Value Score (BVS) enables an objective assessment of the biodiversity value of managing a site within the program. It has been developed consistent with the NSW Government's investment priorities for private land conservation.

The Biodiversity Value Score (BVS) measures four components:

- conservation values on site, and proposed management actions
- the duration or term of the agreement. In some BCT conservation tenders, landholders have the option to select conservation agreements that are term (minimum of 15 years) through to in-perpetuity. The BVS gives greatest weight to in-perpetuity agreements and greater weight to longer-term agreements relative to shorter-term agreements.
- risks of conservation values being lost or impacted in the future is assessed, having regard to the land and soil capability class of the site⁸
- the eligible area of the proposed site to be protected by the conservation agreement is measured

To rank sites on a value-for-money basis, the BCT will calculate a Biodiversity Value Index (BVI) for each tender by dividing the BVS by the total present value of the proposed management payments for the conservation management of the site.

The Biodiversity Value Index will only be calculated after bids are submitted.

How can you make your bid competitive?

Your Biodiversity Value Score (BVS) represents the 'value' for conservation that will be produced if you are

⁸ Sites with eligible existing in-perpetuity agreements will be subject to a reduced Risk score.

successful in bidding for and entering a conservation agreement.

You can influence the likely success of your bid by agreeing to undertake the broadest range of conservation management actions that are acceptable to you. The area, condition and type of vegetation included in the conservation area also influences the final BVS. Maximising the amount of Plains-wanderer habitat, and the ratio of Plains-wanderer habitat to other eligible native vegetation can influence the likely success of your bid.

While the BCT had provided a maximum price that it is willing to pay in this tender, you can increase your competitiveness by bidding below this price. Your final bid price should reflect your idea of the balance between the benefits of managing the site and the costs of any change in management.

You need to be realistic in your pricing as you need to be able to meet your obligations under the agreement, and sites will be monitored to ensure that outcomes are being achieved.

You will be accountable for the completing management actions identified in the resulting agreement, if a bid is successful.

Landholders can withdraw a bid at any time before a conservation agreement is signed.

How will I be notified of the results?

Both successful and unsuccessful bidders will be notified by the BCT when the bid assessment process is completed.

If your bid is unsuccessful you will be given feedback on how your bid compared to those that were successful.

If your bid is unsuccessful, it may not mean that your site is not important for conservation. The BCT can provide you with information about other programs and future opportunities.

If your bid is successful, you will be invited to sign a conservation agreement, which will include the agreed conservation management plan and your proposed payment schedule.

An example of a conservation agreement is available on the BCT website.

How will the fairness of the bid assessment process be guaranteed?

The BCT has implemented an assessment process to ensure that all landholders are dealt with fairly. The BCT's probity advisor has been consulted in developing the BCT's conservation tender.

Bid assessment and ranking will be supervised by an independent probity adviser and approved by the BCT Board. Probity advice will be sought as required throughout the tender process and a probity report on each tender will be provided to the BCT Board. Individual landholder bids and contact details will not be disclosed as part of this report.

For more information you can call **1300 992 688** or visit www.bct.nsw.gov.au

ATTACHMENT 3: Conservation fencing guidelines and equivalent standards (excerpt from *BCT Essential conservation fencing infrastructure: Guidelines, standards and benchmarks*)

The following is an excerpt from the *BCT Essential conservation fencing infrastructure: Guidelines, standards and benchmarks* document available on the [general resources](#) page of the BCT website. Landholders should ignore the information on 'Conservation tenders' on page 6 of that document and instead use the information provided in this landholder guide.

Conservation fencing guidelines and equivalent standards

Planning and designing your fence

To be competitive in securing support from the BCT, landholders must demonstrate their fence design and construction will enable them to effectively manage the threats identified to their conservation area whilst remaining sympathetic to local native wildlife. These threats will vary from site to site but generally this will require you to gain control over domestic livestock grazing and may also include unmanaged grazing by feral herbivores (especially unmanaged goats where they threaten the biodiversity values of the site).

Landholders must demonstrate that their fence will enclose an area effectively to secure the conservation assets in accordance with their management plan. The fence design should be cost effective and optimise benefits for the biodiversity values of the site. Conservation fencing must meet the equivalent standards as set by the BCT (see **Table 1** for sites in Central and Eastern NSW or **Table 2** for sites in Western NSW).

Is boundary fencing eligible?

Boundary fencing may be considered 'essential conservation fencing infrastructure' where there is a demonstrated conservation need and the boundary of a conservation area is also the property boundary. Under the *Dividing Fences Act 1991* the general principle is adjoining owners are required to contribute equal proportions to the carrying out of fencing work where there is no sufficient dividing fence in place (that would result in the provision of a dividing fence that is of sufficient standard).

Prior to requesting a direct contribution from the BCT for conservation fencing of your site, it is your responsibility to have identified existing obligations with regards to boundary fencing, including under any grant or lease agreement or other legislation.

Where a funding request is agreed to for boundary fencing the BCT will contribute up to 50% of your proportion of the dividing fence construction or 50% of the cost benchmarks identified, whichever is the lower (equaling approximately a quarter of the total cost for fencing work).

It is your responsibility to ensure that you have reached an agreement with your neighbour regarding boundary fencing works. You will be required to have negotiated with your neighbours and reach agreed terms for fence construction as required under the *Dividing Fences Act 1991* prior to any request being agreed to by the BCT.

What type of fencing works are not eligible for 'essential conservation fencing' requests?

The following requests are not eligible for 'essential conservation fencing infrastructure' requests:

- Boundary fencing where the adjacent land is a National Park, as the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) offer funding for fencing on a cost share basis¹.

¹ See the National Parks and Wildlife Service boundary fencing policy available at: <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/parks-reserves-and-protected-areas/park-policies/boundary-fencing>

- Fencing where there is a minimal risk of grazing incursion into the conservation area and/or damage to the conservation asset(s) from adjacent land.
- Fencing infrastructure costs where such works were previously publicly funded. Upgrading of fencing infrastructure may be considered where there is a demonstrated need to secure the biodiversity values of the site and the proposal is supported by the BCT.
- Feral pig fencing will not be funded due to alternative methods of management.
- Feral predator proof fencing will not be funded due to high costs and alternative methods of management.

Choosing materials – equivalent standards

Selecting the right materials for your site is crucial for ensuring long-term structural integrity and maximising the biodiversity benefits of your agreement.

The BCT will take an outcome-based approach to requests for essential conservation fencing infrastructure based on the conservation management objectives and detail within the conservation management plan for the site.

You are ultimately responsible for the design and specification of fencing to secure the conservation assets of your site, so long as it is equivalent in performance to the minimum standards specified in Table 1 and Table 2 below. You may choose to construct a fence of greater stability or performance dependant on your site and requirements. However, the contribution from the BCT as stated and agreed will not change. If your fencing design / specification reduces the quality and/or performance of the finished fence and will not achieve the management objectives within the conservation management plan for the site, your request will not be agreed to by the BCT.

Conservation fencing - equivalent standards for Central & Eastern NSW

The BCT cost benchmarks for Central and Eastern Division of NSW have been developed for 'standard' and 'difficult' sites.

'Standard' fence sites do not have any particular constraints which would impact on the ability of the standard specification fence to be constructed and maintained to meet the objectives of the conservation management plan.

'Difficult' fence sites are difficult to access and / or more complex to construct due to terrain and other factors. Difficult site fencing has to be justified by the site meeting one or more of the following criteria: site is steep/undulating; contains shallow stony soils/rock outcrops; meandering riparian areas; crosses drainage/flood channels; or areas of high native fauna traffic.

Table 1: conservation fencing equivalent standards for Central & Eastern NSW

Site type	Equivalent standard
All sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fencing for BCT conservation agreements must be wildlife friendly. The use of barbs is discouraged, unless there's a compelling reason. The BCT may consider limited use of barbed wire on a case by case basis where supported by clear justification • All materials should meet Australian Standards and be as new • Wire and gates should be galvanised • Steel posts can be black steel or galvanised • End assemblies / strainers and stays can be steel (heavy galvanised) or hardwood
Standard sites in Central and Eastern NSW	<p>Plain wire</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 - 7 horizontal wires (no barb on top or bottom lines) • Steel post spacing up to a maximum of 8m <p>Prefab wire mesh²:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 line wires, 900mm high, 300mm mesh (7:90:30). Line wires graded to no less than 100mm at base of fence (i.e 300mm x 120mm mesh). • Steel post spacing up to a maximum of 8m • Plain top and bottom support wire • One or two plain top wires may be placed above mesh to raise height
Difficult sites in Central and Eastern NSW	<p>Plain wire</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 - 7 horizontal wires (no barb on top or bottom lines) • Steel post spacing up to a maximum of 5m <p>Prefab wire mesh²:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 line wires, 900mm high, 300mm mesh (7:90:30) • Steel post spacing up to a maximum of 5m • Plain top and bottom support wire • One or two plain top wires may be placed above mesh to raise height

² Generally referred to as 'ringlock' or 'hinged joint' prefabricated, galvanised wire mesh

Conservation fencing - equivalent standards for Western NSW

The BCT cost benchmarks for Western NSW have been developed for 'standard' total grazing pressure (TGP) and 'waterpoint management' TGP sites. BCT equivalent standards have been developed to enable current best practice grazing management and ensure conservation fencing remains wildlife friendly.

A 'standard' TGP fence site will be appropriate where management of all grazing pressure from livestock as well as feral and native herbivores is required to secure the conservation asset(s) of the site. Generally, this will be in areas of low (<400mm) annual average rainfall. If you identify existing grazing pressure from unmanaged goats, you must outline a plan to remove them from your conservation area within the timeframe stated in your conservation agreement.

A TGP 'water point management' fence will be appropriate where managing access to artificial water points in the landscape is required to enable the natural regeneration of native vegetation. A TGP water point management fence is intended to be used in conjunction with standard TGP fencing to further assist landholders to manage total grazing pressure effectively to secure the conservation asset(s) of the site.

Table 2: conservation fencing equivalent standards for Western NSW

Site type	Equivalent standard
All sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fencing for BCT conservation agreements must be wildlife friendly. The use of barbs is discouraged, unless there's a compelling reason. The BCT may consider limited use of barbed wire on a case by case basis where supported by clear justification • All materials should meet Australian Standards and be as new • Wire and gates should be heavy galvanised • Steel posts can be black steel or galvanised • End assemblies / strainers and stays can be steel (heavy galvanised) or hardwood
Total grazing pressure (TGP) standard sites	<p>Total Grazing Pressure management fencing – standard TGP site</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prefab wire mesh³ (minimum 2.5mm), 8 line wires, 1150/1200mm high, 300mm mesh (8:115/120:30). Line wires graded to no less than 120mm at base of fence (i.e 300mm x 120mm mesh). • Steel post spacing up to a maximum of 10m (5m for slopes/difficult sites; 8-10m for plains/standard) • Plain support wires (minimum 2.5mm) - no wires installed above mesh due to welfare hazard for native wildlife • Recommended final height 1200mm. • Minimum 300mm length apron⁴
Total grazing pressure (TGP) waterpoint management site	<p>Total Grazing Pressure management fencing – TGP water point management site</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prefab wire mesh³ (minimum 2.5mm), 15 line wires, 1500mm high, 300mm mesh (15:150:30) • Steel post spacing up to a maximum of 10m • Plain support wires (minimum 2.5mm) - no wires installed above mesh due to welfare hazard for native wildlife • Recommended final height 1500mm • Minimum 300mm length apron⁴

³ Generally referred to as 'ringlock' or 'hinged joint' prefabricated, galvanised wire mesh.

⁴ Apron may be pre-attached to base of fence or sourced separately as attachable apron, e.g 5 line wires, 400mm length, 150mm mesh (5:40:15).

BCT cost benchmarks

The following cost benchmarks are the amount per metre the BCT will contribute to conservation fencing for successful applicants.

Where a fencing request is agreed, the BCT will make a contribution of either a) up to 50% of direct fencing costs or, b) up to the relevant BCT cost benchmark, whichever is the lower. There is no specified limit to the scale of individual requests, however requests of a BCT contribution of greater than \$50,000 for a property will be specifically reviewed.

Table 3: Cost benchmarks for BCT fixed price offers, co-investment partnerships and conservation partners grants.

Type	Cost benchmark
Central and Eastern NSW – standard site	\$6.00 / m
Central and Eastern NSW – difficult site	\$7.80 / m
Western NSW – standard TGP site	\$6.00 / m
Western NSW – TGP waterpoint management site	\$8.00 / m