

Biodiversity  
Conservation  
Trust

# Business Plan

2021-22 to 2024-25



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**Cover image:** A handful of grassland species found on a conservation area in the Monaro Tablelands. Colin Elphick / BCT.

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August 2021



## Acknowledgement of Country

The NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust acknowledges the Traditional Custodians throughout NSW and recognises their ongoing connection to land, waters, biodiversity and culture.

We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging, and commit to genuinely, collaboratively engage and partner with Aboriginal people in the delivery of our private land conservation programs.

Private land within NSW often contains various forms of significant sites and features within the landscape.

Aboriginal Cultural Values are connected to Country, including waterways, mountains, wetlands, floodplains, hills, sandhills, rock outcrops and the biodiversity within these geological features.

Many of these features are known to have cultural value and contain culturally significant sites.

These elements of the landscape can be associated with Dreaming stories and cultural learning.

*A cultural burn at Valley Arm in the Sydney Hunter region. Coral Latella / BCT.*



## Chair's foreword

It is with great pleasure that I present this, the second business plan of the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust of NSW (BCT), approved by the Minister for Energy and Environment on 17 August 2021.

Since its inception in August 2017, the BCT has worked tirelessly to build an effective and long-lasting private land conservation program in NSW. Protecting the diverse flora, fauna, landscapes and ecosystems of NSW is an essential part of our transition to a sustainable economy.

This business plan sets out the BCT Board's vision for the BCT now that it has grown from a new entity to an established and trusted organisation. With strong links in our regional communities and a range of programs for different landholders, the BCT is committed to further increasing the area of NSW that is being actively managed to protect our precious and unique biodiversity.

As we go forward on this journey, we will work closely with our customers and stakeholders to ensure that our programs are delivering for our community. Through financial and technical support, we will work with landholders to build lasting partnerships and vibrant private land conservation areas.

The NSW Government has committed \$70 million per annum ongoing to support the BCT deliver its programs across NSW. The goals and strategies of this business plan are guided by the Biodiversity Conservation Investment Strategy and the Biodiversity Offset Scheme, and with a view to future roles the BCT may play in supporting other NSW Government strategies and programs.

I would like to commend the BCT for its significant work to date, with more than 129,000 hectares added to the private land conservation estate since its creation.

I am looking forward to working closely with the rest of the BCT Board and BCT staff to deliver against our goals and firmly embed private land conservation within our community.

**The Hon Niall Blair, Chairperson, the Board of the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust**



BCT staff doing field work. Toby Eastoe / BCT.

## Our story

### Private land conservation in NSW

The [National Reserve System](#) (NRS) is Australia's network of public, Indigenous and private protected areas. NSW has nearly 81 million hectares. Of this, about nine per cent—or more than seven million hectares—is conserved in NSW national parks (also known as public protected areas). There are 10 Indigenous protected areas in NSW covering more than 16,000 hectares. The NRS also includes private protected areas subject to permanent covenants.

There is a long history of voluntary private land conservation (PLC) in NSW over more than five decades. Historically, schemes to support landholders to participate in PLC were managed by the National Parks and Wildlife Service, the NSW Nature Conservation Trust and the NSW environment department.

The legal mechanism of a wildlife refuge proclamation was introduced more than seven decades ago in the NSW *Fauna Protection Act 1948*, and the first wildlife refuge was proclaimed in 1951. These were eventually incorporated into the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*. The first in-perpetuity or permanent conservation agreement (which is binding on current and successive landholders and the NSW Government) was established in 1990 under section 69 of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*. Many individuals and non-government organisations also support or participate in private land conservation in NSW outside formal schemes.

## Our purpose and vision

### Our purpose

**Partnering with landholders to enhance and conserve biodiversity**

### Our vision

**Vibrant private land conservation areas protecting our unique and diverse plants and animals.**

### Our aims

**Our aspirational aims over the life of this four-year business plan are to:**

- **enter 400 private land conservation agreements with landholders**
- **secure 200,000 hectares of new conservation areas**
- **protect examples of another 50 unique under-represented NSW Landscapes.**



BCT staff with landholders on a BSA site visit in Western Sydney. Colin Elphick / BCT.

## The Biodiversity Conservation Trust

The Biodiversity Conservation Trust (BCT) was established in August 2017, as part of the NSW Government's biodiversity conservation reforms, to encourage and support landholders across NSW to participate in private land conservation. The BCT's core business is private land conservation. Landholders can apply to enter wildlife refuge agreements or conservation agreements through a range of programs and delivery mechanisms offered by the BCT.

The BCT also plays four key roles under the NSW Biodiversity Offsets Scheme (BOS) administered by the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE):

- Landholders wishing to generate and sell or use biodiversity credits can apply to enter a biodiversity stewardship agreement (BSA) with the BCT. The BCT manages and ensures compliance with the agreements.
- The BCT manages the Biodiversity Stewardship Payments Fund to make annual biodiversity stewardship payments to BSA holders.
- Developers can choose to pay into the Biodiversity Conservation Fund to meet their offset obligations. If they do so, the BCT will secure biodiversity credits or fund biodiversity conservation actions.
- Governments can commission and fund the BCT to acquire biodiversity credits under place-based offset schemes.

The BCT therefore plays a significant role in both enabling supply and fulfilling demand for offsets across NSW.

As at 30 June 2021, the BCT is managing 2,085 private land conservation agreements with landholders across 2.245 million hectares, which represents over 2.8 per cent of the landmass of NSW.

In addition to wildlife refuge agreements, conservation agreements, and biodiversity stewardship agreements, the BCT also manages a range of agreements with landholders entered with previous organisations like National Parks and Wildlife Service, the Office of Environment and Heritage, and the Nature Conservation Trust, including registered property agreements, voluntary conservation agreements, trust agreements and biobanking agreements.

## Our work to date

The BCT manages 2,085 private land conservation agreements. Our landholders are responsible for managing more than 2.245 million hectares, or 2.8 per cent of NSW. This represents approximately 25 per cent of the total conservation estate in NSW, which includes private land conservation, national parks and reserves, and Indigenous protected areas.

Since we launched our first private land conservation programs in March 2018, 285 landholders have signed a conservation agreement with the BCT, creating conservation areas in excess of 129,000 hectares. Guided by the Biodiversity Conservation Investment Strategy (BCIS), the BCT's new agreements have sampled five unrepresented and 83 under-represented NSW (Mitchell) Landscapes<sup>1</sup>.

The BCT met the BCIS target to sample 30 NSW Landscapes by 2023 four years early, in February 2019. These agreements have protected 137 different threatened species and 8 unique threatened ecological communities.

Around two-thirds (66 per cent) of the BCT's investment in funded conservation agreements is flowing to graziers, farmers or mixed farming enterprises; these landholders are being paid by the BCT to manage parts of their properties for conservation.

Since we were established, we have made payments to funded conservation agreement holders worth more than \$12.11 million and hold over \$143 million in trust to support our funded agreements.

Our grants program has seen \$4.4 million flow to holders of partnership conservation agreements. Importantly, 87 per cent of BCT agreements are in perpetuity, providing ongoing protection for the environment and stability and continuity for landholders.

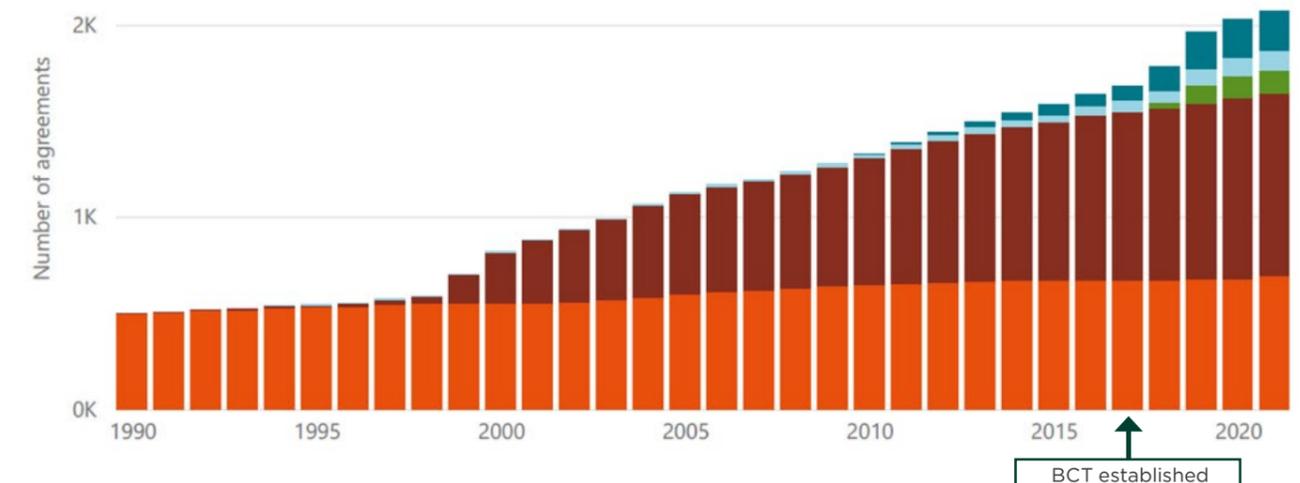
Under the Biodiversity Offsets Scheme, 211 landholders have entered biodiversity stewardship agreements to date. Of these, 130 are in active management, which means the protected land is being actively managed to enhance biodiversity outcomes. The BCT holds approximately \$176 million in trust, invested to support payments to these landholders.

The Biodiversity Stewardship Payments Fund is managed in accordance with a Risk Appetite Statement and Funds and Investment Management Framework approved by the BCT Board. The BCT works closely with DPIE to manage fund adequacy and has an investment strategy to appropriately manage changes in the economy.

So far, 212 developers have made payments worth more than \$48 million into the Biodiversity Conservation Fund (BCF) to transfer their offset obligations to the BCT. The BCT is working with landholders to purchase biodiversity credits and establish new biodiversity stewardship sites to meet these offset obligations. This program allows private and government development proponents to acquit their offset obligations quickly and easily. Importantly, it enables the BCT to bundle biodiversity offset obligations to achieve strategic biodiversity outcomes.

<sup>1</sup> NSW (Mitchell) Landscapes (NSW Landscapes) are used to represent regional ecosystems in the Biodiversity Conservation Investment Strategy. They were derived on the basis of patterns in rainfall, temperature, topography (shape and features of the land), drainage patterns, geology, soil and vegetation. There are 571 NSW Landscapes (Mitchell 2002).

### Private land conservation agreements in NSW – 1990 to present





*BCT staff look at a property map with landholders and Monks of Wat Buddha Dhamma. Harriet Ampt / BCT.*

## This business plan

Clause 10.1(1)(a) of the Biodiversity Conservation Regulation 2017 states that the business plan of the BCT is to contain ‘the goals of the Trust (being goals that are consistent with its objects under section 10.4 of the Act) and its plans for achieving those goals.’

This business plan sets out our goals for the next four years. Over this period, we will shift from establishing new programs, to a more mature organisation, consolidating and refining our activities.

We will continue to work with landholders, developers, our stakeholders and the community to deliver world-leading private land conservation and biodiversity offset programs. We will also continue our work to increase engagement of Aboriginal stakeholders in BCT programs.

## Our operating context

The BCT is a statutory, not-for-profit body established under Part 10 of the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*. The statutory object of the BCT, as stated in the Act, is to ‘protect and enhance biodiversity.’

We deliver private land conservation programs under Part 5 of the Act and we have roles in the Biodiversity Offset Scheme under Part 6 of the Act.

The BCT is part of the portfolio of the NSW Minister for Energy and Environment (Minister) and is part of the Planning, Industry and Environment cluster.

The *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* stipulates that the BCT must prepare and submit a business plan for approval by the Minister, to be reviewed at least every four years. The BCT Business Plan is developed in accordance with the:

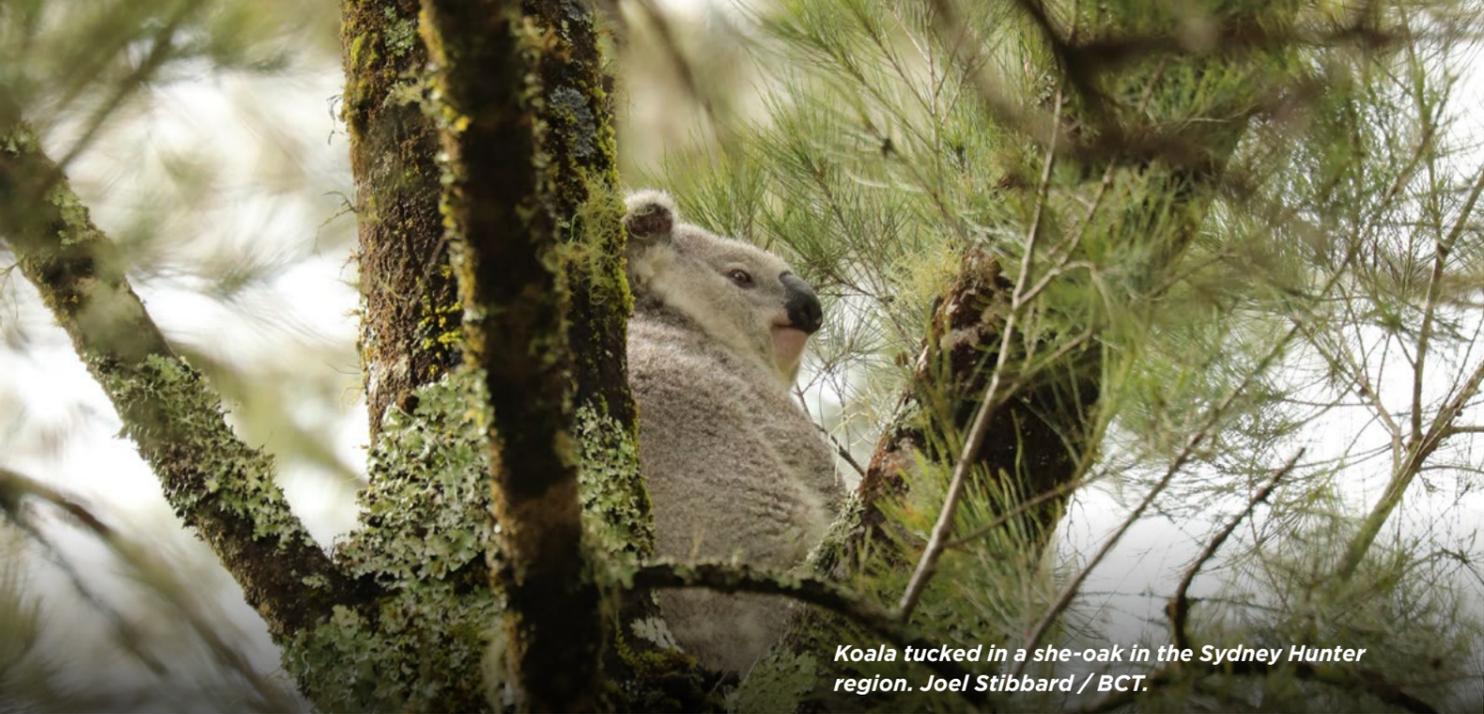
- *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*
- Biodiversity Conservation Regulation 2017 (including the Biodiversity Offset Scheme rules)
- Biodiversity Conservation (Savings and Transitional) Regulation 2017.

In addition to legislative requirements and regulations, the BCT Business Plan has been informed by the NSW Budget, policy directions set by the government in the land management and biodiversity conservation reforms, and koala conservation priorities. The BCT Business Plan is also guided by the Biodiversity Conservation Investment Strategy, made under Section 2.2 of the Act.

## Our strategic goals

The BCT Board has set the following strategic goals and actions for the BCT over the next four years.

Strategic goals	Strategic actions 2021-2025
<p><b>Strategic Goal 1:</b></p> <p>Increase private land conservation in areas of strategic biodiversity value</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Design and deliver private land conservation programs consistent with the Biodiversity Conservation Investment Strategy made by the Minister and other NSW Government initiatives</li> <li>• Increase the number and hectares of conservation agreements in areas of strategic biodiversity conservation value</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategic Goal 2:</b></p> <p>Deliver efficient, effective, and strategic biodiversity offset outcomes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide an efficient and effective service to landholders wishing to enter biodiversity stewardship agreements</li> <li>• Deliver a strategic offsetting service to acquit biodiversity offset obligations when developers pay into the Biodiversity Conservation Fund</li> <li>• Strategically procure biodiversity credits under place-based offsets schemes (when commissioned and funded by government)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategic Goal 3:</b></p> <p>Support participating landholders to conserve biodiversity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist landholders to conserve biodiversity by providing ecological advice and access to technical and educational resources</li> <li>• Provide financial support to landholders through management payments, grants and other financial instruments</li> <li>• Monitor, evaluate and report on ecological and socio-economic outcomes</li> </ul>
<p><b>Strategic Goal 4:</b></p> <p>Promote public knowledge, appreciation and understanding of biodiversity and the importance of conservation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Influence more landholders to participate in private land conservation</li> <li>• Raise public awareness about the importance of biodiversity and biodiversity conservation on private land</li> </ul>



*Koala tucked in a she-oak in the Sydney Hunter region. Joel Stibbard / BCT.*

## Strategic Goal 1: Increase private land conservation in areas of strategic biodiversity value

Strategic actions	How we will measure progress
Design and deliver private land conservation programs consistent with the Biodiversity Conservation Investment Strategy and other NSW Government initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Progress against BCIS targets</li> <li>Progress towards our targets of 400 new agreements, 200,000 hectares, and 50 NSW Landscapes.</li> </ul>
Increase the number and hectares of conservation agreements in areas of strategic biodiversity conservation value	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New agreements (number, hectares, investment, NSW Landscapes, threatened species and ecological communities)</li> </ul>

### Our work

Over the next four years the BCT will continue to implement the [Conservation Management Program](#) (CMP) and the [Conservation Partners Program](#) (CPP). These programs are complemented by a range of engagement and delivery mechanisms, which can be found on our website.

Our program implementation plans will be guided by the targets, priority investment areas and investment principles set out in the Biodiversity Conservation Investment Strategy (BCIS) as made by the Minister from time to time.

Our programs will also be guided by other NSW Government initiatives that align with our purpose, such as the Saving Our Species program and delivering on the NSW Government’s goal to double the number of koalas in NSW by 2050. The BCT may also be commissioned and funded by government to support private landholders to take climate action in areas such as carbon sequestration and climate change adaptation or resilience.

We will use of a range of delivery mechanisms to target areas of significance for the conservation of biodiversity.

The BCT will continue to actively engage with Aboriginal landholders to increase participation in our programs consistent with our Aboriginal Engagement Action Plan.

## Strategic Goal 2: Deliver efficient, effective and strategic biodiversity offset outcomes

Strategic actions	How we will measure progress
Provide an efficient and effective service to landholders wishing to enter biodiversity stewardship agreements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New agreements (number, hectares, biodiversity credits)</li> <li>Timeliness of application process</li> </ul>
Deliver a strategic offsetting service to acquit biodiversity offset obligations when developers pay into the Biodiversity Conservation Fund	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acquittal of offset obligations (credit types and numbers, value, timeframes) and how obligations are acquitted (like-for-like offsets, variation offsets, conservation actions)</li> <li>Progress towards balancing payments into the Biodiversity Conservation Fund and the cost of acquittal of obligations over rolling five-year periods</li> </ul>
Strategically procure biodiversity credits under place-based offset schemes (when commissioned and funded by government)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Acquittal of offset obligations (credit types and numbers, value, timeframes)</li> </ul>

### Our work

The BCT will continue to partner with DPIE to support an enduring Biodiversity Offsets Scheme that works towards no net loss of biodiversity.

The BCT will continue to facilitate the supply of biodiversity credits by assisting landholders to enter biodiversity stewardship agreements. We will make annual payments and assist landholders to meet their biodiversity stewardship obligations. We will work with landholders to ensure they understand their obligations under their agreements and that expected ecological gains are being achieved.

We will continue to deliver offsetting services for proponents choosing to transfer their offset obligations to the BCT by payment into the Biodiversity Conservation Fund. We will take a strategic approach to meeting offset obligations, including bundling obligations and acquiring an inventory of biodiversity credits for future use. We will continue to run biodiversity credit tenders and fixed price offers, including targeted offers where there are limited credits available on the market. We commit to complying with the offset rules prescribed in the *Biodiversity Conservation Regulation 2017*, including the requirement to take all reasonable steps to seek like-for-like offsets. We aim to balance the cost of acquiring offsets with the payments made into the Biodiversity Conservation Fund over rolling five-year periods.

We will continue to procure offsets under various place-based biodiversity offset schemes, such as the Growth Centres Biodiversity Offset Program and the Cumberland Plain Conservation Plan, which operate in Western Sydney. We will aim to procure these credits in the most cost-effective and efficient manner.

### Strategic Goal 3: Support participating landholders to conserve biodiversity

Strategic actions	How we will measure progress
Assist landholders to conserve biodiversity by providing ecological advice and access to technical and educational resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Landholder compliance with agreements and reporting obligations (percentage)</li> <li>Interactions with landholders (number)</li> <li>Participation in events and networks (number)</li> </ul>
Provide financial support to landholders through management payments, grants and other financial mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Payments made (number, value, mechanism)</li> </ul>
Monitor, evaluate and report on ecological and socio-economic outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Data and evaluations from ecological and socio-economic monitoring modules</li> </ul>

#### Our work

We will continue to promote best practice management for BCT agreements by providing advice to landholders, publishing technical guidelines and developing educational material.

We will work with landholders to ensure they understand the obligations under their agreements and implement a risk-based compliance program guided by the following principles:

- Responsive and effective
- Targeted
- Proportional
- Firm but fair
- Informed
- Consistent
- Transparent
- Ethical and accountable
- Collaborative.

The BCT will continue to build on its monitoring, evaluation and reporting (MER) framework and use its ecological and socio-economic monitoring modules to assess program effectiveness. We will continue to provide input to the NSW Environmental Monitoring Assessment and Reporting Framework (eMAR) as well as the NSW Sharing and Enabling Environmental Data (SEED) Portal, to assess biodiversity conservation outcomes at State and bioregional scales.

The BCT is implementing an Ecological Monitoring Module (EMM) to inform evaluation and reporting of ecological outcomes and demonstrate return on investment in BCT programs. Landholder support and site visits, together with ecological monitoring data collected, will enable evaluation of management effectiveness and support landholders in achieving the objectives of their agreement.



Boorowa school student learning about biodiversity on a BCT educational field day. Colin Elphick / BCT.

### Strategic Goal 4: Promote public knowledge, appreciation and understanding of biodiversity and the importance of conservation

Strategic actions	How we will measure progress
Influence more landholders to participate in private land conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interactions with landholders</li> <li>Progress towards our target of 400 new agreements with landholders.</li> </ul>
Raise public awareness about the importance of biodiversity and biodiversity conservation on private land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Delivery sites of BCT biodiversity education and awareness activities</li> <li>Participation in BCT biodiversity education activities</li> </ul>

#### Our work

Under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*, one of the BCT's four tasks is to promote 'public knowledge, appreciation and understanding of biodiversity and the importance of conserving biodiversity.'

The BCT does this through a range of activities including:

- events targeted to potential agreement holders
- working with partner organisations like Landcare and Local Land Services to increase landholder and community knowledge of biodiversity and conservation management
- through our Education Program, delivering conservation education programs to school students across NSW
- through our Aboriginal Engagement Action Plan, which seeks to increase Aboriginal stakeholder participation in BCT programs and support two-way learning.

## Our business enablers

The BCT has identified three key business enablers that will help us meet our targets and deliver against our strategic goals and actions.

Business enablers	Actions
<p><b>Enabler 1:</b> Act as trustee of money or other property vested in the Trust</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Manage the Biodiversity Conservation Fund prudently so as to fulfil our purpose and for the benefit of conservation areas</li> <li>• Manage the Biodiversity Stewardship Payments Fund prudently for the benefit of biodiversity stewardship sites</li> <li>• Attract gifts of money or property and manage the BCT Public Fund to protect and enhance biodiversity</li> </ul>
<p><b>Enabler 2:</b> Engage with our landholders, customers and stakeholders</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communicate and engage effectively with our landholders, customers and stakeholders</li> <li>• Enable Aboriginal engagement in private land conservation</li> <li>• Be transparent and accountable to the government and the community</li> </ul>
<p><b>Enabler 3:</b> Invest in our staff and systems to fulfil our purpose, and be responsive to future needs and challenges</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invest in our staff to maintain engagement, performance, professionalism, service and accountability</li> <li>• Fulfil our health and safety duties and ensure the wellbeing of our staff</li> <li>• Invest in business systems to enable an adaptive, efficient, effective and accountable organisation</li> </ul>

## Enabler 1: Act as trustee of money or other property vested in the BCT

Actions	How we will measure progress
Manage the Biodiversity Conservation Fund prudently so as to fulfil our purpose and for the benefit of conservation areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reporting on BCF assets and adequacy</li> </ul>
Manage the Biodiversity Stewardship Payments Fund prudently for the benefit of biodiversity stewardship sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reporting on BSPF assets and adequacy</li> </ul>
Attract gifts of money or property and manage the BCT Public Fund to protect and enhance biodiversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Value of donations received</li> <li>• Percentage of funds applied to conservation programs</li> </ul>

### Our work

Clause 10.1(1)(b) of the Biodiversity Conservation Regulation 2017 states that the business plan of the BCT is to contain 'its plan for the investment of money of or under the control of the Trust and for the management of the proceeds of its investments.' The Act requires the BCT to 'act as trustee of money or other property vested in the Trust.'

The BCT manages the Biodiversity Conservation Fund (BCF). In addition to general operational resources, the BCF will continue to be used to hold the funds set aside and invested to enable annual conservation payments to holders of funded conservation agreements (CAs), which are either in-perpetuity or long-term agreements. The BCF also holds payments made by development proponents who opt to transfer biodiversity offset obligations to the BCT under the Biodiversity Offset Scheme.

The BCT manages the Biodiversity Stewardship Payments Fund (BSPF). The BSPF is used to hold the funds set aside and invested to enable annual stewardship payments to holders of biodiversity stewardship agreements (BSAs), which are all in-perpetuity.

The BCT Board maintains a Risk Appetite Statement and a Funds and Investment Management Framework which set out policies to be implemented by the BCT. Among other things, this requires the BCT to regularly seek actuarial advice and investment advice from TCorp and, to ensure the Board can consider and approve investment arrangements that prudentially balance investment return and risk.

The BCT also manages the BCT Public Fund in accordance with the Act and Commonwealth Government requirements, overseen by the BCT Public Fund Management Committee. Over the next four years we will identify appropriate fund-raising avenues and philanthropic projects to support biodiversity conservation in NSW. The BCT will seek to build strong relationships with donors and partner with other philanthropic organisations that share our purpose.

Our performance as a fund manager will be disclosed in the BCT's annual reports.

## Enabler 2: Engage with our landholders, customers and stakeholders

Actions	How we will measure progress
Communicate and engage effectively with our landholders, customers and stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Landholder and customer satisfaction (survey)</li> <li>Stakeholder feedback (survey)</li> <li>Partnership analysis</li> <li>Engagement events (number)</li> <li>Media coverage (number)</li> </ul>
Enable Aboriginal engagement in private land conservation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of landholders with agreements who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (number and percentage of total agreements)</li> <li>Targeted engagement/communication products (number)</li> <li>Face to face stakeholder meetings (number)</li> <li>Number of Aboriginal employees (percent)</li> </ul>
Be transparent and accountable to the government and the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Website and social media interactions (number)</li> </ul>

### Our work

The BCT values working in partnership with landholders and other stakeholders. We are committed to actively understanding the needs of landholders conserving biodiversity on behalf of NSW and will use customer feedback to improve and refine our programs and processes.

The BCT will continue its customer focus, using a range of communication channels to engage customers, including via our website, email, post, face-to-face, phone, social media and through the use of text, film and photography.

The BCT will work to deliver against our Customer Service Charter and Guarantee of Service, publicly available on our website. The Customer Service Charter outlines how we work with customers and what they can expect when contacting the BCT. Our Guarantee of Service sets out timeframes within which customers can expect a response from the BCT, regardless of how the enquiry is received.

Working to enable Aboriginal landholders to engage in our programs and supporting two-way learning for our non-indigenous landholders will be a key focus for the BCT over the next four years. We will deliver actions under our Aboriginal Engagement Action Plan, including:

- building and maintaining relationships with Aboriginal landholders, communities, and stakeholders
- working through the barriers and enablers to facilitate Aboriginal participation in BCT programs and building cultural competency of BCT staff
- strengthening our communication and engagement with existing and prospective Aboriginal landholders.



*BCT staff training for field assessment in the Central West region. Coral Latella / BCT.*

## Enabler 3: Invest in our staff and systems to fulfil our purpose and be responsive to future needs and challenges

Actions	How we will measure progress
Invest in our staff to maintain engagement, performance, professionalism, service and accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Staff engagement and job satisfaction (PMES measures)</li> </ul>
Fulfil our health and safety duties and ensure the wellbeing of our staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Safety incidents</li> <li>PMES wellbeing measures</li> </ul>
Invest in business systems to enable an adaptive, efficient, effective and accountable organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>PMES tools and technology measures</li> <li>Technology projects (value)</li> </ul>

### Our work

The BCT will continue its strong focus on employee health, safety and wellbeing. We will continue to improve our guidelines and procedures to address work health and safety issues and ensure staff receive appropriate training and information to allow them to work safely.

The BCT actively responds to the People Matter Employee Survey (PMES) results released annually, to identify business improvement opportunities and improve staff wellbeing. We will continue to focus on ensuring staff have clearly articulated roles and responsibilities, opportunities for training and development and the tools and technology needed to achieve our business goals. The BCT aims to see staff engagement and satisfaction levels above 80 per cent.

We will actively work with all staff to ensure they are equipped to manage stress, particularly through access to flexible work arrangements, access to a range of leave entitlements, and through promotion of other DPIE and BCT initiatives and support (access to Employee Assistance Helpline; sharing of physical, mental and emotional wellbeing initiatives and events).



*BCT staff member at a grazing workshop in the Central West region. Coral Latella / BCT.*

## Our people

The BCT governance structure consists of a BCT Board and board committees, managing the affairs of the BCT as set out in the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*, and the BCT Executive team.

### BCT Board

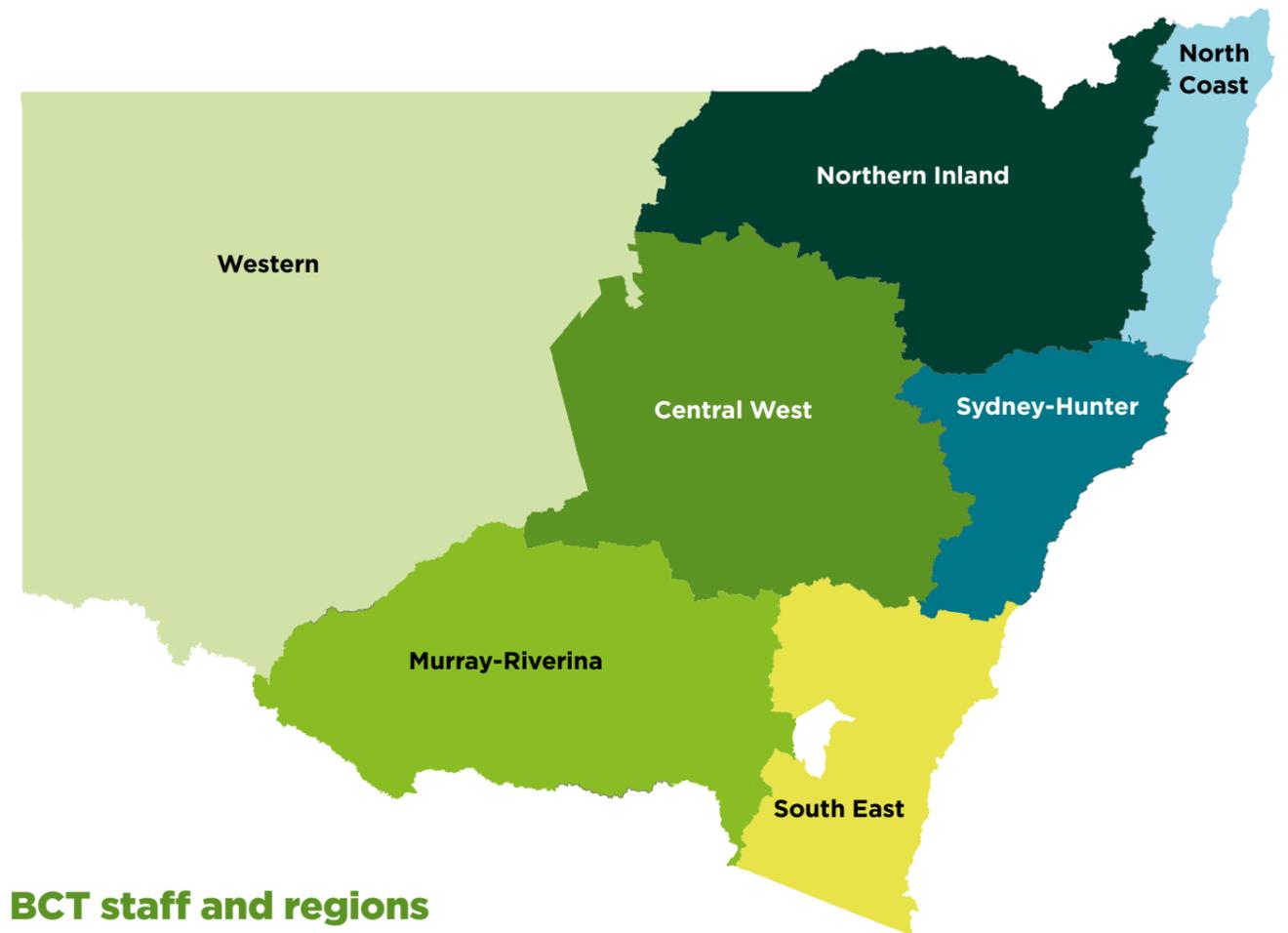
The BCT Board is directly accountable to the Minister and operates pursuant to the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* and associated regulations.

The BCT Board is constituted under Part 10.3 of the Act, ensuring compliance with a comprehensive governance framework developed to inform operational processes including finance, programs and service delivery, reporting responsibilities and administrative requirements.

The Board has established an Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) consistent with NSW Treasury requirements. The ARC provides advice to the Board on financial management, funds and investment management, risk, internal audit, conformance, and other governance issues.

The Board is supported by a Programs and Delivery Committee to provide advice to the Board on program design, planning and delivery, and BCT performance.

The Board has also established a Public Fund Management Committee to oversee and manage the Biodiversity Conservation Trust Public Fund (the Public Fund) in accordance with relevant State and Commonwealth legislative requirements.



### BCT staff and regions

The BCT operates across seven regions with most staff located in hubs in regional areas. Our regional teams include ecologists and regional conservation staff, who support landholders with agreements and engage new landholders seeking to participate in private land conservation.

We also have teams focussed on acquitting biodiversity offset obligations.

Our regional and offset teams are supported by our program, technical and business-enabling teams located in regional hubs or in our head office in Parramatta.

### BCT Executive and branches

The BCT leadership team includes a Chief Executive Officer (Executive Director) and three directors.

The Chief Executive Officer is accountable to the Board for the substantive activities and operations of the BCT. The CEO reports to a designated Deputy Secretary within DPIE for employment and administrative purposes.

The Strategy and Finance Branch performs business-enabling functions, including financial management, funds and investment management, strategy, business planning, reporting, governance, risk, conformance, audit, and staff services and support.

The Programs Branch designs, plans and coordinates the BCT's private land conservation programs and the BCT's biodiversity offsets program. The branch is responsible for leading operational policies, guidelines, monitoring and delivery of technical services to support BCT programs and agreements. The branch includes a Communications, Media and Education team.

The Regional Delivery Branch is responsible for the ongoing management of existing agreements, providing support to landholders, and ecological monitoring. The Branch is responsible for the operational planning and on-ground delivery of the BCT's programs by engaging with new landholders and customers. Regional staff are the primary interface with members of the public, local stakeholders and networks, and participate in community engagement and education activities across NSW.



Masked devil cicada (*Cyclochila australasiae*) on a North Coast conservation area.  
Harriet Ampt / BCT.

## Governance and accountability

### Governance

The BCT Board has established and ensures compliance with a comprehensive governance framework, including:

- a Board charter and performance framework
- an Audit and Risk Committee (and associated charter), to oversee financial management, risk, compliance, and internal and external audit
- assigned chief finance, audit and risk officers
- a risk management framework, plan and reporting
- a conformance management framework, plan and reporting
- work health and safety policy and procedures
- an internal audit charter, an internal audit plan and an outsourced internal audit provider
- external audit by the NSW Auditor General
- instruments of financial and administrative delegations
- a probity framework.

### Data management

Clause 10.1(1)(c) of the Biodiversity Conservation Regulation 2017 states that the business plan of the BCT is to contain 'its plan for collecting and managing data or information for the exercise of its functions (including for the purposes of the biodiversity information programs of the Environment Agency Head under section 14.3 and of the evaluation of investment in biodiversity conservation on private land).'

The BCT will adhere to the DPIE enterprise information management strategy, which meets the requirements of the NSW Government Information Management Framework. This strategy provides an overarching approach to initiatives such as information asset governance, digital information security, scientific rigour statements, data quality statements and management plans, and data information custodianship.

We will collect data from program participants that is relevant to the exercise of our functions and in accordance with the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998*. We use a customer relationship management platform for customer data management and respect the privacy and confidentiality of client details.

The BCT will collate its own spatial data and access data from other agencies and external sources. The BCT will provide data to interested parties through an open data policy or under a data licence where necessary.

The BCT values spatial data as a critical asset of the business. Implementation of BCT's Spatial Information Strategy will enable confident decision making by all staff and stakeholders, deliver more efficient operations, better services to our landholders and improved biodiversity conservation outcomes.



*Hibbertia monogyna on a conservation area in the Sydney Hunter region. Joel Stibbard / BCT.*

## BCT annual reports

The BCT's annual reports are prepared in accordance with the *Annual Reports (Statutory Bodies) Act 1984*, which requires the BCT to include a financial report, auditor's report, response to any matter raised by the Auditor-General, budget for the next financial year, and an operations report.

In addition, under the Biodiversity Conservation Regulation 2017, the BCT must include a report on the progress of the BCT on achieving its goals, including actions taken during the year by the BCT to implement its business plans.

The regulation provides that:

- The annual report of the Trust under the *Annual Reports (Statutory Bodies) Act 1984* may be combined with the annual report of the Trust under section 6.37 of the Act while it continues to be the Fund Manager of the Biodiversity Stewardship Payments Fund.
- The combined report is to contain separate financial statements for the Biodiversity Stewardship Payments Fund and for other money or funds of or under the control or management of the Trust.

Our previous annual reports are available on our website. The BCT also provides a range of information about the BCT's activities and outcomes on its website which is updated quarterly.

## Review processes

This business plan proposes the use of program implementation plans to set out in detail how the BCT has been guided by the Biodiversity Conservation Investment Strategy (BCIS) and our legislative framework. The Minister for Energy and Environment may remake the BCIS at any time. Should the Minister do so, the BCT will determine if it is necessary to submit a revised draft business plan to the Minister within six months of any new BCIS being made.

The Act requires the BCT to review its business plan at least every four years. This business plan will be updated in 2025, or earlier if the policy or financial settings for the BCT are significantly changed.

The BCT understands that the NSW Government may initiate a broader review of the implementation of the land management and biodiversity conservation reforms at some point. The BCT will actively participate in any such review as required.

The BCT will commission and support independent review of its programs. These reviews will be undertaken consistent with the NSW Government Program Evaluation Guidelines.

The BCT will seek feedback from our landholders, customers and stakeholders and will seek opportunities for co-design and delivery of programs and strategies.



*A powerful owl (Ninox strenua) on a conservation area in the Sydney Hunter region. Joel Stibbard / BCT.*



Biodiversity  
Conservation  
Trust