

Biodiversity Buddies Grant Program

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1.0 Biodiversity Buddies Grant Program Purpose

The Biodiversity Buddies Grant Program exists to support resident projects which enhance biodiversity outcomes across the Knox municipality. Only 4% of Knox contains remnant area and a significant proportion of this is on private land. The grant program targets properties with or near significant indigenous vegetation to help conserve and promote biodiversity, including flora, fauna, and habitat.

2.0 Biodiversity Buddies Grant Program Overview

The Biodiversity Buddies Grant Program funds 50% of the cost of residential Biodiversity Projects, at the discretion of the assessing Biodiversity Officer. A maximum payment of \$1,000 can be provided by the grant.

'Biodiversity Projects' refer to and are restricted to one or a combination of projects defined in the *Biodiversity Projects and Scope* section of this document. These include:

1. Revegetation for Land Restoration
2. Weed Control
3. Fencing of Significant Bushland for Protection
4. Responsible Pet Management

The scope and conditions for specific Biodiversity Projects are defined through agreement between the applicant and assessing Biodiversity Officer.

The details and requirements of the Project are agreed upon following an initial site visit, then outlined within an Agreed Action Plan. The Agreed Action Plan is signed by the applicant and assessing Officer prior to the commencement of works. Grant payment is processed following the final site inspection at the completion of the works and the Agreed Action Plan is updated and re-signed.

Any works covered by the grant must be fully paid for by the applicant before Council's contribution is made. For Biodiversity Projects requiring quotes, the applicant must attain up to two quotes for the project costs. Assessment of the quotes must be made in collaboration with Council prior to accepting the quote.

3.0 Application Eligibility and Criteria

3.1 Eligible Properties

Eligible properties must be:

1. Residential properties within the municipality of Knox.
2. Registered as a Knox Gardens for Wildlife property.
3. Within or near significant remnant vegetation. This can include:

- a) The property being in close proximity to a Site(s) of Biological Significance
- b) The property demonstrating the potential to be a 'stepping stone' or 'habitat corridor' between significant remnant vegetation at the discretion of the assessing Biodiversity Officer. Where the funding may be oversubscribed, properties that are next to or close to a Site of Biological Significance will take precedence.

3.2 Eligible Applicants

Eligible applicants must:

1. Be an existing member of the Knox Gardens for Wildlife Program.
2. Provide written consent from the property owner if renting.
3. Be committed to implement the works according to the Agreed Action Plan.
4. Understand and endorse the importance of the project to the environmental value of the area.
5. Demonstrate a willingness to have an ongoing responsibility and commitment to the biodiversity outcomes of the project.
6. Ensure work complies with the guidelines of the Victorian and local planning schemes (e.g. planning overlays, zonings and specific landscape plans). For more information or guidance please call the Planning Department on 9298 8125.

3.3 Application Restrictions:

The Biodiversity Buddies Grant Program operates within the timeframe of any given financial year.

Within each round:

1. Applications are accepted between 1 July and 30 April per financial year.
2. A maximum of one application can be made by a property/applicant per financial year.
3. The grant will not cover works which are required to be completed by a Compliance Order.
4. All works associated with a Biodiversity Buddies application must be completed by 31 May each financial year. Works conducted outside of this timeframe cannot be claimed for the current or future grant rounds.
5. All costs must be provided on itemised invoices or receipts and be purchased in the same financial year as the application. Eftpos receipts are not an acceptable proof of payment and cannot be claimed for the grant

6. Payments made using gift cards or vouchers must be discussed with the assessing Biodiversity Officer prior to the commencement of works.
7. Contracted works must be carried out by a suitably qualified contractor.
8. Funded works cannot commence until the grant has been approved.



Left: Residential property prior to the Biodiversity Buddies Grant with invasive Sweet Pittosporum (*P. undulatum*) and Mirror Bush (*C. repens*).

Right: Garden space made available for indigenous revegetation following the removal of invasive Sweet Pittosporum (*P. undulatum*) and Mirror Bush (*C. repens*) with the funding from the Biodiversity Buddies Grant.

4.0 Biodiversity Projects and Scope

4.1 Revegetation for land restoration

Applicants must ensure that ongoing care is given to the revegetated area, including watering of plants and weeding beyond the grant applications lifespan.

Species selection and specifications

1. Selected plants for revegetation must be of local Knox provenance and be planted at appropriate times of the year (preferably not over summer).
2. Revegetation projects must include a minimum of 300 individual plants

3. Plant species should be relevant to the ecological vegetation class which the applicant's property is within, or in close proximity to. Ecological vegetation classes and their list of species can be found in the [Sites of Biological Significance Report 2010 Version 2.](#)

Site preparation and revegetation

1. Appropriate consideration, planning, and site preparation must be undertaken prior to revegetation.
2. The cost of weed matting can only be claimed where it has (a) a direct benefit to the revegetation and biodiversity in a broader landscape context, and (b) is specified within the applicant's Agreed Action Plan.
3. The cost of mulch materials and labour can only be claimed where it has (a) a direct benefit to the revegetation and biodiversity in a broader landscape context, and (b) is specified within the applicant's Agreed Action Plan. Mulch cannot be claimed where it is utilised for aesthetic reasons.
4. The cost of tree guards and stakes can only be claimed where (a) they are necessary for revegetation to be successful, and (b) it has been outlined in the applicant's Agreed Action Plan.
5. Where revegetation is completed by the applicant, time and labour costs cannot be claimed.

4.2 Weed Control

Applications for weed control are prioritised for those weeds considered an 'environmental weed' in Knox, under Clause 3.1 of the [Amenity Local Law Act 2020](#), and those listed [here](#). Other environmental weed species may be considered eligible at the discretion of Council if their removal is agreed to have a direct benefit to biodiversity in the broader landscape context.

The method used for weed control is at the discretion of the applicant. However, if herbicides are used the applicant must consider the environmental consequences of doing so and must follow the products instructions.

Removal of woody weed species

1. Where weed control is completed by the applicant, time and labour costs cannot be claimed, nor can the tools used to do the weed control.

2. Weed removal must have direct benefits for biodiversity and cannot be undertaken for the 'beautification' of a property.
3. Stump grinding can be included in the grant's scope only where revegetation will occur in place of the removed tree(s).
4. Prior to removing established trees, the impacts to wildlife habitat must be considered and could include the incremental removal of large trees over a period of years (e.g. *Pinus radiata*) to prevent degradation of habitat connectivity.

Removal of non-woody weed species

1. Where weed control is completed by the applicant, time and labour costs cannot be claimed, nor can the tools and materials used to do the weed control.

4.3 Fencing of Significant Bushland for Protection

Fencing of significant bushland applications are prioritised for properties in or near areas classified as 'threatened', 'endangered', or 'high-value' according to the [Sites of Biological Significance Report 2010, Version 2](#). Other areas for fencing may be considered at the discretion of Council.

1. Fencing can be claimed where there is direct benefit to biodiversity (e.g. protecting rare and threatened plant species from grazing or trampling by kangaroo, wallaby deer, foxes, and rabbits).
2. Fencing used to partition property cannot be claimed.
3. If the applicant constructs the fence, time and labour costs cannot be claimed.
4. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure work complies with the guidelines of the Victorian and local planning schemes (e.g. planning overlays, zonings and specific landscape plans). For more information or guidance please call the Planning and Building Department on 9298 8125.

4.4 Responsible pet management

Responsible pet management projects can be claimed where the Biodiversity Project has evident and arguable benefit to biodiversity of the area and surroundings.

1. The grant covers cat enclosures to the extent that they enclose an area to prevent cat access to wildlife.

2. The grant does not cover the cost of optional features to an enclosure such as ramps, ledges, optional tunnels, toilet areas, and door flaps.
3. Invoices must be fully itemised.
4. If the applicant constructs the enclosure, time and labour costs cannot be claimed.

5.0 Key Program Dates and Steps

5.1 Key Round Dates

1 July: Applications open on Smarty Grants

1 April: If required, applicants on the Biodiversity Buddies Grant Program waitlist may be contacted to progress their application.

30 April: Applications close

31 May: Last date for Final Site Inspection. All itemised invoices and receipts due.

5.2 Grant Program Milestones

Step 1: Create an application through the Smarty Grant Portal

Please note applications will require photos of the work site and a description of the Biodiversity Project(s) being undertaken

Step 2: Initial site visit, project consideration and development of the Agreed Action Plan

If the initial application meets the criteria outlined in *Application Eligibility and Restrictions* within this document, the applicant will be contacted by Council to arrange a site visit to the property.

Here, the specific nature of the Biodiversity Project and project timeline is workshopped. The projects eligibility and prioritisation is assessed by the Biodiversity Officer.

If an application meets all criteria an Agreed Action Plan is developed and signed by the applicant and Biodiversity Officer. Please note, an application is not approved for the Biodiversity Buddies Grant until an Agreed Action Plan is signed.

Step 3: Quote acquisition and selection

For Biodiversity Projects which require quotes, the applicant is responsible for sourcing a minimum of two quotes from suitably qualified contractors.

Before a quote is accepted and works commence, the obtained quotes must be accepted by Council. The quote must reflect the Biodiversity Project outlined in the Agreed Action Plan.

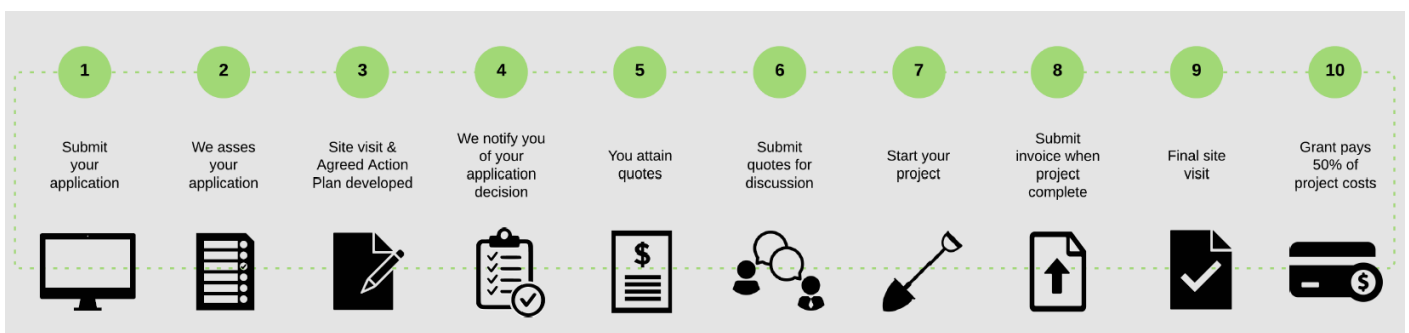
Step 4: Completion of the Biodiversity Project and final site inspection

Upon completion of the biodiversity works, the applicant must inform the Biodiversity Officer. A final site inspection will be conducted to ensure the completed works align with the Agreed Action Plan.

Step 5: Documentation and grant payment

In preparation for the grant payment requisition the applicant and Biodiversity Officer will prepare and sign documentation. These include:

1. Itemised invoices and receipts. The applicant is required to provide itemised invoices and receipts for the Biodiversity Project(s) undertaken.
2. Finalised Agreed Action Plan. The Agreed Action Plan will be updated with post-work photos and signed by the Biodiversity Officer and applicant.
3. EFT Consent Form. The applicant is required to nominate their preferred account for payment. This document requires a signature.
4. Payment Requisition Form. This form is prepared by the Biodiversity Officer and signed by the applicant and Biodiversity Coordinator.



6.0 Expectations

1. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure adequate communication with the Biodiversity Officer throughout the Biodiversity Project and grant process. Unreliable communication risks the application's withdrawal or cancellation.
2. It is the responsibility of the applicant to progress the Biodiversity Projects closely in line with the project timeline arranged in the Agreed Action Plan. The Biodiversity Officer should be notified of significant alterations to the project timeline. In the event that an application with an Agreed Action Plan is no longer able to meet the grant deadlines, the application may be withdrawn or cancelled at the discretion of Council.
3. Biodiversity works undertaken must align with the Agreed Action Plan. Any alterations to the Agreed Action Plan must be arranged with the Biodiversity Officer. Failure to comply with the Agreed Action Plan may risk the application's withdrawal or cancellation.

7.0 Resources:

- [Application Portal - Smarty Grants](#)
- [Biodiversity Buddies Grants, Knox City Council](#)
- [Sites of Biological Significance, Knox City Council](#)
- [Gardens for Wildlife, Knox](#)
- [Managing Environmental Weeds, Knox City Council](#)

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