



REGIONAL STEWARDSHIP STORIES



COMMUNITY CONNECT: GREEN CHAMPIONS

Community Connect: Green champions restoring landscapes across South East Queensland

Community conservation in South East Queensland (SEQ) is motivated by passion, knowledge and skills and is built out of respect and recognition of the environmental significance of the region's distinctive habitats - wildlife and flora, terrestrial, freshwater and marine habitats. This type of conservation not only serves to protect, maintain and improve ecosystem health and resilience, but to also create social connection, promote health and wellbeing, strengthen cultural values and contribute to the character of our region.

Background

Successful environmental stewardship is driven by community management and actions to protect biodiversity and conserve our natural resources. In SEQ, local, state and federal government, non-profit organisations, industry groups, First Nations partners, natural resource management groups, community conservation groups and private landholders work together to improve environmental outcomes.

The dedication of volunteers is reflected in their contributions of time, resources and expertise to plan and implement projects that benefit both ecosystems and society.

Volunteerism plays a significant role in environmental stewardship - in Queensland, 64% of residents volunteered in 2023, representing 2.8 million people contributing approximately 719.8 million volunteer hours valued, at \$117.8 billion to the community (Volunteering Queensland, 2024).

Community conservation values

- Supports conservation and restoration of beautiful SEQ environments.
- Community engagement and socialising.
- Promotes activity, health and wellbeing.
- Council opportunity to celebrate and support volunteers and promote environmental outcomes.
- Environmental education and awareness building.

Community conservation for everyone

The beauty of community conservation is in the diverse ways in which it is practiced. There are innumerable kinds of environmental volunteerism including environmental awareness programs, on-ground rehabilitation and revegetation, debris collection, citizen science and more. Some stakeholders participate in regular volunteer engagement, while for many it is an occasional, but meaningful contribution. This might be participating in a tree planting day or a community cleanup day. In fact, 44.4% of Queensland resident volunteers participate in informal volunteerism without organisational support, with 31.5% volunteering in formal settings and organisations such as non-profits as well as 21.1% engaging in both formal and informal volunteering (Volunteering Queensland, 2024).

This regional story celebrates joint and individual volunteerism from individual actions including through the Land for Wildlife program and Bushcare community groups.

Success story: Celebrating mums by reinvigorating Mother Nature

Occasional volunteerism can have a profound impact. In SEQ, many residents dedicate their time to volunteering for specific environmental events each year – activities that hold deep and meaningful significance for members of the community. These acts not only contribute to protecting precious biodiversity but create a lasting bond between individuals and their local environment. One example of this is the



Annual Mother's Day tree planting event, Trees for Mum, run by Ipswich City Council. Ipswich first held this event in 2013 to celebrate the dedication, love, resilience and courage of women throughout the region. You'll see all kinds of families at this event including children planting trees alongside their mums or residents planting a new green shoot to honour the memory of a beloved mum. Since launching the event in Ipswich, the program has resulted in 13,460 native tube stock being planted throughout the riparian corridors of Bundamba, Sandy and Woogaroo Creeks with the most recent event seeing over 200 attendees. Learn more about Trees for Mum: <https://www.ipswichfirst.com.au/?s=trees+for+mum>.

Learning how to protect and manage habitat

Land for Wildlife was founded more than 40 years ago in Victoria when a group of conservationists and farmers joined together to protect declining bird populations on farms. This program was successful in establishing habitat and providing farmers with skills to care for wildlife on their properties. The program was brought to Queensland in 1998 by SEQ local government officers. Currently 13 Local Government Areas work closely together to run the Land for Wildlife South East Queensland network.



Land for Wildlife is a council funded program and is free for landowners to join. Properties range from schools, to residential blocks, to large agricultural properties. The program provides resources and knowledge and supports landholders to better manage wildlife habitat on their properties. The program also includes site visits for on-ground advice from a Land for Wildlife Officer and the development of personalised plans. These plans serve to protect habitat and manage threats such as pest animals and weeds. *Land for Wildlife* is the fastest growing network for conservation on private lands in Australia.

In 2023, the Land for Wildlife South East Queensland program achieved:

- The planting of over 1.8 million native plants.
- 78,780 ha of retained habitat.
- 9,132 ha of habitat under restoration.
- 5,455 properties participating.
- 41,456 observations and 4,841 species sightings recorded.

At the heart of the Land for Wildlife program are **landowners who are passionate about the environment.**

One such landowner is Rob Bauer, an organics farmer in the Lockyer Valley. Rob has been managing his organic farm for over 30 years continuing a long line of family farming. For Rob, organic farming is part of healthy living - something to which he has long been committed to having transitioned his farm from chemical dependency to organic practices in the 1980s.

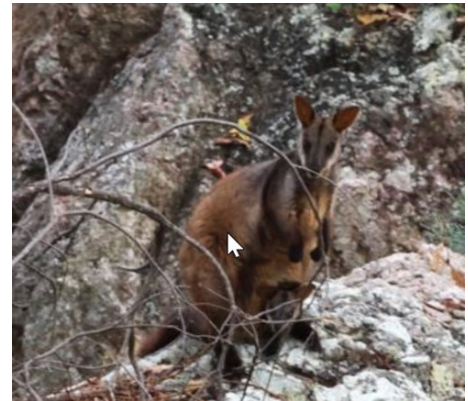
Rob first became involved with the Lockyer Valley Land for Wildlife program while managing a local landcare group. Rob quickly realised that the program aligned Rob first engaged with the Locker Land For Wildlife program. He felt the program was a good fit for what he was striving to achieve on his property. He is a firm believer that the "birds, bees and the trees all go together with the crops" emphasising the connection between nature and agriculture. Roughly half of Rob's 282-acre farm is under active cultivation for organic cropping with the remainder providing habitat for wildlife. He continues to build and maintain the health of the remaining property and has seen



the number of wildlife increase and the trees he planted year ago turn into beautiful forest. He says the thing he is most proud of is seeing his grandson following in his footsteps. Rob has shared his knowledge and love of organic farming and bush care with school groups and other visitors that visit the farm to see his achievements. Over the years, 3,200+ people have visited his property to learn more about his sustainable practices.

Bioblitz

At Palen Creek in the Scenic Rim, a Land for Wildlife property owner is committed to restoring 20 ha of native vegetation creating a corridor and fire refuge for local wildlife both on the property and in the neighbouring national park. Scenic Rim Regional Council is supporting these efforts by revegetating creek banks and planting 4,500 endemic native plants as well as providing weed control.



To celebrate the ongoing restoration efforts on the property, Scenic Rim Regional Council and the landowners hosted a 12-hour bioblitz, a biological surveying event where participants identify as many species as possible in a specific area over a short timeframe.

This particular survey event recorded 410 species of plants and animals living in the area. One highlight was the sighting of the threatened brush-tailed rock-wallaby. These survey results will contribute to improved and targeted restoration initiatives on the property.

Community conservation

Community Bushcare programs are a great way for passionate volunteers to come together with their local council and make a positive impact on the environment. These programs benefit not only the environment but also the people involved. While the names of these programs vary across councils, they all share the same core purpose - to bring together volunteers in restoring natural habitats including parks, remnant bushlands, wetlands and along freshwater, estuarine and marine waterways.



These programs also offer participants valuable opportunities to socialise, exercise and connect with nature.

On the Sunshine Coast, volunteers get together to conserve local bushland at planting events, working bees and school excursions.

2000+ volunteers annually achieve:

- The planting of over 20,000 native plants.
- Composting over 1,600 wheelie bins of weeds.
- Restoring 170 ha of bushland.
- Restoration of waterways.
- Creating habitat corridors.
- Dune stabilisation.

Some residents of South East Queensland are just as passionate about working together as they are about **restoring bushland**. A great example is the Wello Woods Bushcare group from the Redland City Council area. For 20 years, they have been restoring urban bushland including weed control, bush regeneration, revegetation and running citizen science programs.

The group have also undertaken an initiative to plant koala food trees, contributing to the restoration of an important wildlife corridor. In addition to their environmental work, the group always make time to share stories and laughter, forming a strong sense of community with the Bushcare group.

The Redlands sees a strong community of volunteers with 33 active Bushcare groups and over 500 volunteers across the region. These dedicated volunteers contributed 3,745 volunteer hours in 2023/2024 alone, planting 6,000 endemic native plants. The group have also contributed data to new iNaturalist project for Redlands Bushcare sites.

To find out more about bushcare in the Redlands, visit:

https://www.redland.qld.gov.au/info/20268/volunteering_and_local_initiatives/671/community_bushcare

How can you get involved?

The need to green our landscape

Queensland's wild spaces need our support. In SEQ, 97% of the remnant vegetation in the bioregion is considered to be of State or Regional significance (Queensland Government, 2017).

SEQ is home to diverse wildlife, plant communities and marine and aquatic systems. However, it is also Queensland's largest and fastest-growing region with an estimated population of around six million people expected to live in the area by 2046 (Queensland Government, 2023).

Meanwhile, as the impacts of climate change become more evident, the need to restore, maintain and protect our ecosystems continues to grow. The role of community stewardship becomes increasingly more important to the preservation of our biodiverse region and natural environment.

Become a green champion in your local area

Pull on a pair of gardening gloves, grab your binoculars or a snorkel and join an environmental volunteering opportunity in your local area - whether it's bushland, beach, or coastline.

Don't want to get your hands dirty? Volunteer to support public environmental education or awareness program instead. Volunteers of all kinds are welcome—whether you can dedicate just a few hours or contribute a little each day. You can also show your support by sharing a cause you care about on social media or encouraging friends and family to recycle and compost. Every little bit makes a difference for the environment.

Stay informed about upcoming events, workshops, and volunteer opportunities in your local area.

Are you a long-time committed steward of SEQ?

We'd love to hear your thoughts and celebrate your achievements whether it's planting out lomandras near a streambank, collecting rubbish on the beach, or running a seminar about bristlebirds. This is your opportunity to share your knowledge us better understand, inform and support management activities in SEQ. Just click on the link or use the QR Code below.



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