



NSW Environmental Trust ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24



Acknowledgement of Country



Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land and pays respect to Elders past, present and future.

We recognise Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' unique cultural and spiritual relationships to place and their rich contribution to society.

Artist and designer Nikita Ridgeway from Aboriginal design agency, Boss Lady Creative Designs, created the People and Community symbol.

NSW Environmental Trust Annual Report 2023–24

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Sturt National Park. Photo: Tom Hunt/Wild Deserts

Little Penguin, Snapper Island. Photo: Emi Berry/DCCEEW

Western Quoll. Photo: Tom Hunt/Wild Deserts

Koala. Photo: Brayden Stanford/DCCEEW

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Environmental Trust

The Hon. Penny Sharpe MLC
Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy,
Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage
52 Martin Place
Sydney NSW 2000

Dear Minister,

We are pleased to submit the annual report for the NSW Environmental Trust for the year ended 30 June 2024, for your presentation to the NSW Parliament.

This report has been prepared in accordance with the annual reporting provisions (Division 7.3) of the *Government Sector Finance Act 2018* and *NSW Treasury Policy and Guidelines Annual Reporting Requirements* (TPG23-10).

The Trust continued to support many ongoing projects during the 2023–24 year and has been instrumental in launching new ventures. Rehabilitating habitat, and the consequent nurturing of wildlife, has remained a key priority with volunteers often involved in such projects. Advances in environmental science have opened new possibilities for reducing emissions and the Trust is also supporting some projects in this field.

This year, the land acquisition program added 3 properties totalling 7,204 hectares to the national parks estate. Each of the properties feature wetlands and threatened ecosystems, with one property, Little Llangothlin Nature Reserve, containing a high-altitude freshwater lagoon that is a refuge for waterbirds in times of drought.

Through major projects, flying fox habitat has been restored at multiple sites, small mammals have been reintroduced to former habitats after the eradication of feral animals, and marine ecosystems in and near Sydney have been monitored for their health and the marine life they support. Research has also continued, using biocontrol methods to reduce the impact of invasive weeds.

Several of the Trust-funded environmental education programs were designed to promote behaviour change. Different education projects have encouraged businesses to eliminate single-use plastic, persuaded people to walk their dogs on a leash when near ground-nesting birds, and helped gardeners avoid the risk of introducing invasive plants.

This year the Trust spent over \$58 million supporting the delivery of environmental projects.

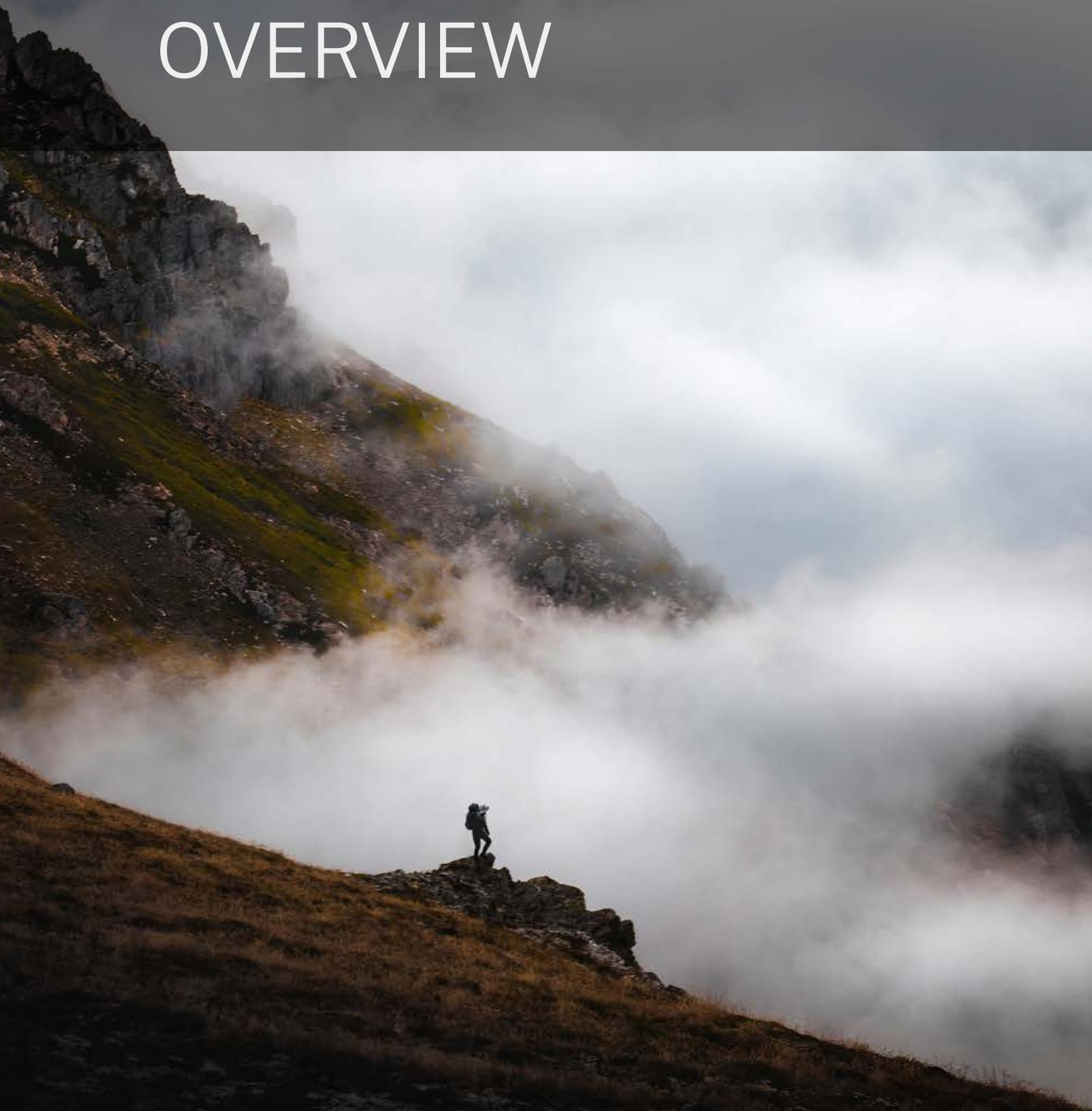
Yours sincerely,

Shane Eccleston
NSW Environmental Trust

Julie Taylor Mills
NSW Environmental Trust



OVERVIEW



Aims and Objectives of the Trust

The NSW Environmental Trust (the Trust) is an independent statutory body supporting projects that enhance the environment of New South Wales. Established under the *Environmental Trust Act 1998*, it funds contestable grants, major projects and various NSW Government initiatives.

Before 1 January 2024 the Trust was administered by the NSW Department of Planning and Environment, but changes to the Machinery of Government that came into effect on that date brought the Trust under the administration of the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water. The Trust is chaired by the NSW Minister for the Environment.

The objects of the Trust are to:

- encourage and support restoration and rehabilitation projects in both the public and private sectors that will, or are likely to, prevent or reduce pollution, the waste stream or environmental degradation of any kind, within any part of New South Wales
- promote research in both the public and private sectors into environmental problems of any kind and, in particular, encourage and support:
 - research into and development of local solutions to environmental problems
 - discovery of new methods of operation for NSW industries that are less harmful to the environment
 - research into general environmental problems
 - assessment of environmental degradation
- promote environmental education and, in particular, encourage the development of educational programs in both the public and private sectors that will increase public awareness of environmental issues of any kind
- fund the acquisition of land for national parks and other categories of dedicated and reserved land for the national parks estate
- fund the declaration of areas for marine parks and related purposes
- promote waste avoidance, resource recovery and waste management (including funding enforcement and regulation and local government programs)
- fund environmental community groups
- fund the purchase of water entitlements for the purposes of increasing environmental flows for the State's rivers and restoring or rehabilitating major wetlands.

Membership of the Trust

As defined in section 6 of the Environmental Trust Act, the Trust consists of 5 members:

- Minister (as Chairperson)
- Secretary of NSW Treasury
- Secretary of the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

- a person appointed by the Minister from a panel of 3 persons nominated by the Nature Conservation Council of NSW
- a person appointed by the Minister from a panel of 3 persons nominated by Local Government NSW.

In 2023–24 the Trust met 3 times via a combination of face-to-face and online meetings.

Members of the Trust and meetings

Member	Position	Meetings attended	Meetings eligible to attend
The Hon. Penny Sharpe MLC	Chairperson from 5 April 2023 NSW Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Heritage (statutory appointment)	3	3
Ms Alison Weaver	Deputy for Secretary of NSW Treasury (from 7 September 2022) (statutory appointment)	3	3
Mr Atticus Fleming	Deputy for Secretary, Department of Planning and Environment (29 January 2022 to 21 February 2024) (statutory appointment)	2	2
Ms Mia Garrido	Deputy for Secretary, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (from 22 February 2024) (statutory appointment)	1	1
Ms Julie Taylor Mills	Representative of Nature Conservation Council of NSW (5 December 2022 to 4 December 2025)	3	3
Councillor Linda Scott	Representative of Local Government NSW (10 November 2021 to 23 September 2024)	3	3

A number of decisions were also made out of session.

The Director Grants, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water acts as the Trust Secretary.

Structure and management of the Trust

The Environmental Trust Act outlines the Trust's functions and governance structure as Trust members, Trust committees and Trust staff employed within the Grants Branch of the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water.

The Trust funds the costs of administering its grant programs, including staff. The department provides support services, including IT, finance and human resources.

The Trust administration's major functions are:

- researching, designing and implementing new programs
- developing and managing program governance
- providing technical and other assistance to grantees
- coordinating technical committee assessments
- supporting Trust meetings and technical review committees to facilitate good decision making
- negotiating grants and agreements, approving project plans and making payments
- monitoring and acquitting funded projects
- reviewing and evaluating programs and procedures.

Grants administration

The Trust provides grants to community groups, industry, Aboriginal organisations, research organisations and local, state, and federal government agencies.

In 2022, the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet released a *Grants Administration Guide*. The guide provides an overview of the grants administration process, overarching principles that apply to all NSW Government grants, and mandatory requirements that must be complied with when administering grants.

Following a consultation process, revisions to the guide were approved by Cabinet in late 2023 and an updated guide was gazetted on 18 March 2024. Trust administration staff provided input into the guide revisions through a consultation process as representatives of the Cabinet Office's Grants Administration Community of Practice. The Trust's grants administration processes continue to adhere to best practice steps outlined in the guide.



STRATEGY



Strategic objectives

The work of the Trust has been guided for the past 4 years by the Strategic Plan for 2020–24. It was structured to make sure the Trust’s mission – to ensure that current and future generations can enjoy a thriving natural environment in New South Wales – could be achieved.

The core priorities for the Trust’s work as set out in that plan were to strengthen the state’s natural environment, support native species and their habitats and to reduce human-induced impacts on the environment. These objectives were addressed in multiple ways, including acquiring new properties, restoring ecosystems, protecting native plants and animals, promoting initiatives that focused on climate change and emissions reduction and supporting moves to reduce waste.

During the 2023–24 year, the Trust began work on a Major Projects Prospectus to build a new strategic plan for the NSW Environmental Trust from 2024–2029. Extensive research and stakeholder consultation formed the foundations of the strategic plan. The Trust worked with a variety of stakeholders to identify the most significant environmental issues impacting New South Wales and these were then analysed and refined into 3 strategic priorities:

1. prioritise healthy Country and recognise and value Aboriginal peoples, their traditional knowledge and practices, and connection to Country
2. restore ecosystems and biodiversity
3. strengthen environmental management.

Guided by these priorities, the Trust will foster opportunities to recognise and demonstrate the value of Aboriginal traditional knowledge and practices, and provide support and resources to connect with, and manage Country. The Trust will also create opportunities for Aboriginal people to manage waterways, wetlands and groundwater on Country, and recognise the value of culturally significant species and the role of Aboriginal peoples in their conservation.

Improving the resilience of ecosystems to adapt to the impacts of climate change and supporting the restoration of waterways and wetlands will help to restore NSW’s ecosystems and biodiversity.

Improving monitoring and data-management practices, cross-tenure connectivity and understanding of plant and animal diseases, all while increasing land managers capacity will strengthen environmental management in New South Wales and ultimately support better environmental outcomes.

Capturing program outcomes

The Trust primarily achieves its environmental goals through awarding grants. The grant programs use stringent processes that ensure consistent and transparent decision making for awarding grants and administering funded projects as well as for assessing project performance and outcomes.

Trust programs capture environmental outcomes using an integrated monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement (MERI) framework. Its structure encourages adaptive management to optimise what grantees can achieve through their project’s lifespan. Using agreed indicators, grantees regularly report on the on-ground results and progress of their project, enabling the Trust to assess project as well as program achievements. Drawing on both quantitative and qualitative evidence to measure and evaluate outcomes, the MERI framework focuses on impact and is underpinned by a logic model linking actions to positive environmental change.

During 2023–24 the Trust continued to implement the enhanced MERI framework. This will be ongoing into the next year as Trust programs are rolled out.

A coastal scene featuring a rocky breakwater in the foreground and middle ground. The water is a deep blue. In the background, a concrete pier or breakwater extends into the sea. A seal is resting on the concrete ledge. The text "OPERATIONS AND PERFORMANCE" is overlaid in white on a dark horizontal band across the middle of the image.

OPERATIONS AND PERFORMANCE

Summary highlights

In 2023–24 the Trust spent more than \$58 million supporting projects across a number of its strategic priorities.

The following are a few highlights from the 2023–24 year.

Land Acquisition Program

Three properties were bought under the Land Acquisition Program in the 2023–24 year with \$13.7 million of Trust funds. Each property adds land to an existing reserve and enriches their environmental and cultural properties. In each case, water is a significant factor. The acquisition of 40.61 hectares of land adjacent to Doodle Comer Swamp Nature Reserve in southern New South Wales brings extra wetland habitat to the reserve and will provide habitat for several threatened bird species.

An 18.41-hectare property in the New England Tablelands, part of the Billy Bung Lagoon and adjoining Little Llangothlin Nature Reserve, was acquired to ensure its permanent protection. Such lagoons, which are a refuge for waterbirds, have become a rarity in the region after being drained or dammed for agriculture.

The largest parcel of land bought in the past year – the 7,145-hectare Broughton Vale Station adds to the Langidoo-Metford State Conservation Area east of Broken Hill. The new acquisition brings ecosystems not previously protected into the national parks estate. Its ephemeral waterways are lined with river red gum and its rocky valleys support ancient white cypress pines. The property also contains significant Aboriginal heritage sites.

NSW Rewilding Initiative

The aim of this 10-year project, now in its fourth year, is to secure 45,000 hectares of feral-predator-free land over 4 locations and to reintroduce native animal species. The project is supported by a \$20.289 million grant awarded by the Trust. The 4 locations selected for this project are within either national parks or nature reserves – Yiraaldiya National Park, Ngambaa Nature Reserve, Yathong Nature Reserve and Nungatta in South East Forest National Park.

The rewilding follows a careful 4-step process: fencing, feral-animal eradication, reintroduction of native animals and monitoring of their progress. Fencing is being carried out in stages and has begun at all of the sites. Feral eradication has also begun at most project sites and includes the use of Felixer grooming traps for feral cats. This year, New Holland mice were released at the Yiraaldiya site after 4 male eastern bettongs and 3 koalas were introduced in 2023. The long-footed potoroo will be introduced to the Nungatta site next year. Following their release into these specially prepared zones, the native animals will be monitored to assess their success.

Seabirds to Seascapes

Now in its second year, this project aims to improve marine ecosystem health and support important marine species. The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water was awarded \$6.6 million by the Trust in August 2022. With its project partners – Sydney Institute of Marine Science (SIMS), Taronga Conservation Society Australia, and the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) – they are studying the impact of coastal restoration on marine habitat, animals and biodiversity.

This year planning commenced for the installation of environmentally friendly moorings in Sydney Harbour. The heavy chains of the older-style moorings will be replaced with flexible, buoyant mooring lines. This should markedly reduce damage to seagrass meadows, which are important nurseries for marine animal life.

Volunteers helped to carry out a census of little penguins on both the mainland and on 5 islands. Artificial nesting boxes for the penguins have been installed at several locations and their use will be monitored. Five New Zealand fur seals were released into the sea post-rehabilitation and have since been tracked, providing useful information about their range.

Biocontrol research for weed management

The Biocontrol Research Program is being delivered by the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO). With

Trust funding since 2016, the program targets invasive plants which, if allowed to flourish, may reduce biodiversity by outcompeting native species. Biocontrol uses a plant's natural enemies as weed control agents, a method often preferable to the use of herbicides or time-consuming and laborious manual removal.

The Trust awarded a new grant of \$499,224 to the CSIRO in August 2023 as part of the final stage of the biocontrol program. It will enable the broadscale use of several biocontrol agents in New South Wales, including the stem-boring weevil (*Hydrothimetes natans*) to combat the spread of cabomba weed, and the rust fungus (*Puccinia rapipes*) for African boxthorn. A different rust fungus, *Uromyces pencanus*, is being tested for its effectiveness against Chilean needle grass.

The project has held training sessions on how to handle and monitor biocontrol agents so that registered community stakeholders can operate independently.

Beyond Fencing

The Beyond Fencing project is part of a larger 10-year project, Wild Deserts, which plans to restore the desert ecosystem within Sturt National Park. Wild Deserts, supported by a \$500,000 Trust grant, is now in its fourth year. Beyond Fencing is contributing to the project by gradually reintroducing 7 locally extinct mammals.

These small mammal species are first introduced to a fenced 'wild training zone'. Some feral cats are also within the fenced area, but their numbers are kept low. The greater bilby, burrowing bettong, western quoll and crest-tailed mulgara have been chosen for release. During the past year the western quoll was released and trials with the greater bilby will follow. So far there has been no predation by the feral cats.

Researchers will monitor the behaviour of the native mammals to see if they develop skills to avoid the predators. The Felixer grooming trap has been a highly effective tool in keeping cat numbers under control.

Safe Havens for large forest owls

In 2022 the Nature Conservation Council was awarded a Trust grant of \$1,193,759 for the Large Forest Owls – Safe Havens Project to help the birds and their prey recover from the loss of tree hollows to bushfires. Twenty properties in the Richmond–Clarence Lowlands are now taking part in the project and a workshop was held for participating landholders and other partners to learn about owl ecology and the impact of bushfires. The project includes monitoring small arboreal animals that are important prey for the owls.

Passive acoustic monitoring sites are providing valuable information about both owls and small nocturnal animals. This includes evidence of owl chicks at one of the nesting sites and encouraging signs of the presence of gliders. Nest boxes for arboreal mammals have been installed across 10 properties and recent monitoring shows that up to 78% of the boxes are being used. Artificial hollows, specially designed for the owls, will be tested soon.

River Connections Program

The River Connections Program is providing \$8,999,220 to Murray Local Land Services to support its project Refreshing River Management: New partnership and stewardship pathways for improving river health.

The project is delivering revegetation of riverbanks, better livestock management, fencing to protect riparian zones, and pest removal. It is supporting landholders and the community to increase water quality and river health along more than 320 kilometres of Billabong Creek in the Murray region.

Clean Technology Research and Development

The \$40-million Clean Technology Research and Development contestable grants program is administered by the Trust. Its aim is to foster the development of commercially viable technologies that can substantially decrease emissions from high-emitting sectors across the NSW economy. The program encourages a robust research and development environment for early-stage clean technology projects.

Round 1 projects continue to work on research spanning diverse technology areas such as photovoltaics, hydrogen catalysts and sustainable fuels.

Round 2 projects have been approved and will start in the second half of 2024. They will focus on various areas, such as electrification, energy systems, land and primary industries, and power fuels including hydrogen.

Contestable grant programs

During 2023-24 the Trust awarded almost \$10.5 million under its contestable grant programs, including:

- \$2,107,384 to support environmental education
- \$1,133,834 for applied research to address contemporary environmental problems
- \$213,680 to help Aboriginal organisations protect and restore culturally significant land, share cultural knowledge and educate the community about the importance of the environment in Aboriginal culture
- \$7,009,118 million for grants supporting clean technology research and development projects.

Land Acquisition Program

Funding the acquisition of land for national parks and other reserves for the national parks estate through s7(d) of the *Environmental Trust Act 1998*.

To ensure value for money each property considered for purchase is assessed individually and collectively against a set of conservation (natural, cultural and land management values) and other criteria (economic, social) which informs the acquisition priorities each year.

Properties acquired in 2023–24 will expand:

Doodle Comer Swamp Nature Reserve	by 40.61 hectares
Little Llangothlin Nature Reserve	by 18.41 hectares
Langidoo-Metford State Conservation Area	by 7,145 hectares

Purchases in 2023–24

The 3 properties in western New South Wales bought in 2023–24 have made an exceptional contribution towards filling gaps in the national parks system. They contain landscapes and ecosystems that were not protected, or were inadequately protected, in the existing parks and all have significant Aboriginal cultural significance. The properties adjoin the following reserves:

- **Doodle Comer Swamp Nature Reserve** has a total area of 1,099 hectares and is located on the outskirts of Henty, in southern New South Wales. The reserve encompasses about half of Doodle Comer Swamp, an ephemeral wetland listed in the National Directory of Important Wetlands. Forming part of a larger network of swamps and lagoons across the Riverina, the landscape holds cultural significance, sustaining the Wiradjuri with an extensive range of resources for thousands of years. When inundated, the swamp provides foraging and breeding habitat for waterbirds, amphibians, reptiles, fish and invertebrates and when dry it provides habitat for the endangered bush stone-curlew. This acquisition of 40.61 hectares secures extra wetland habitat, as well as 2 threatened ecological communities and habitat for several threatened bird species including the superb parrot, Australasian bittern and bush stone-curlew.
- **Little Llangothlin Nature Reserve** has a total area of 258 hectares and is located on the New England Tablelands between Armidale and Glen Innes. The reserve contains one of the few remaining high-altitude freshwater lagoons on the New England Tableland. It supports a range of habitats for waterfowl and other fauna and is a drought refuge for

\$13.7 million paid to NPWS for land acquisition in 2023–24



7,204 hectares of land acquired in 2023–24 using Trust funds



3 properties acquired in 2023–24

waterbirds. The reserve is listed as a Ramsar site – a Wetland of International Importance – and currently includes Little Llangothlin Lagoon and part of the smaller Billy Bung Lagoon. The 18.41-hectare property, comprising the remaining section of Billy Bung Lagoon, was acquired to secure its permanent protection as part of the nature reserve. Many similar lagoons and swamp depressions in the region have been either drained or dammed for agriculture.

- **Broughton Vale Station**, located 75 kilometres east of Broken Hill in the far north-west of New South Wales, covers a total of 31,534 hectares (7,145 hectares paid by the 2023–24 grant). It adjoins Langidoon-Metford State Conservation Area (a Trust-supported acquisition). The property

contains landscapes and ecosystems that were not found in any other NSW national park or reserve. It supports a diversity of ecosystems, including floodout country, the rolling gibber hills of the Scopes Range, sandstone escarpment and rocky valleys supporting large ancient white cypress pines, and major ephemeral waterways lined with river red gum. Over 60% of the property supports *Acacia loderi* shrublands, listed as an endangered ecological community in New South Wales, at threat from clearing and excessive grazing by livestock. Importantly, the property contains a highly significant Aboriginal heritage site for Barkindji women and rock-shelf caves with art. Broughton Vale Station was acquired with a Trust grant and a special NSW Treasury allocation.



Billy Bung Lagoon is part of Little Llangothlin Nature Reserve and was acquired to secure its permanent protection

Restoration and Rehabilitation Program

This \$4 million annual contestable grants program funds projects dedicated to the sustainable management of significant environmental assets and services. Its goals include reducing environmental degradation, safeguarding critical ecosystems and enhancing environmental restoration capacity.

Key achievements 2023–24

- The MidCoast Council's Smiths Lake Yellow-Bellied Glider Habitat Protection and Enhancement project successfully combined ecological restoration with community engagement, creating a more hospitable environment for the gliders and promoting conservation efforts. Approximately 40 hectares was weeded by expert bush regenerators, who also planted 550 native seedlings with the help of 25 community volunteers. Also, 25 nesting boxes were installed for yellow-bellied gliders and other arboreal species in areas lacking natural hollows. Educational fact sheets were developed to help the community protect yellow-bellied gliders and to understand the value of public bushland reserves.
- Fingal Head Coastcare's project Restoring and Protecting Fingal Headland Themeda Grasslands and Significant Bird Habitats, involved collaboration with Tweed Byron Local Aboriginal Land Council, Fingal Head Community Association and the local Surf Life Saving Club. Such extensive community involvement garnered support from locals who were at first reluctant to lose unrestricted access to the headland for recreation. The project installed pathways to protect the endangered ecological community from human impact, and 108 volunteers helped in weeding and planting efforts to restore the Themeda Grasslands.
- Western Local Land Services is collaborating with 3 landholders to regenerate and protect 134 hectares of the Sandhill Pine Woodland Endangered Ecological Community. The sites vary in condition, ranging from those completely devoid of shrub and tree layers to reasonably healthy areas that need some understorey species. The project set up a partnership with Down the Track, a youth organisation whose members helped to collect seeds. A number of young people from remote communities were trained in seed harvesting techniques, spending significant time on Country and collecting about 80 kilograms of seed. They have given very positive feedback about their experience. Landholders have fenced the sandhills, prepared the sites for direct seeding and established monitoring points. Aboriginal cultural heritage surveys were carried out before any fences were built.

The Restoration and Rehabilitation program is next due to open in mid 2025. No new grants were awarded in this financial year. Instead, Trust administration focused on implementing recommendations from the program evaluation.

Restoration and Rehabilitation Program outcomes



8,331 hectares regenerated by native regrowth after weeding, fencing, erosion control or pest control



45 organisations and/or businesses adopting positive environmental action



8,378 people attended **544** training and other events



401.3 hectares revegetated by planting or direct seeding



4,732 volunteers contributed **97,082 hours** with **868 contractors** employed for **78,750 hours**



1,454 students (primary and secondary) involved for over **3,736 hours**



277 Conservation and Land Management **Agreements** set up with landholders

Note: This data is drawn from 130 projects that were funded in the 2019–21 grant years, with 52 of these projects (40%) now complete. There were 2 funding rounds offered during 2019, so there is a higher number of projects than usual over this 3-year period.

Saving our Species Partnership Grants Program

The Saving our Species (SoS) Partnership Grants Program is a \$10 million, 10-year program that funds collaborative projects for the conservation and recovery of threatened species across New South Wales.

Funded projects focus on threat mitigation, habitat restoration and species recovery, combining scientific research with on-ground activities. By encouraging cooperation and involving diverse expertise, the program aims to achieve significant, long-term biodiversity conservation.

All projects in this program are currently in the stakeholder-funded maintenance phase. Maintenance, monitoring and reporting will continue until 2025–26 for these 10-year projects.

Key achievements 2023–24

- In the Shoalhaven region, as part of the Partnerships Protecting Shoalhaven Plants project, threatened species officers have worked with the Jerrinja Local Aboriginal Land Council to carry out targeted surveys for the endangered pretty beard orchid (*Calochilus pulchellus*). The partnership intends to learn more about this rare species and how it can best be protected. Also, on-ground weeding has been carried out in areas where the endangered shrub Bombaderry zieria (*Zieria baeuerlenii*) was translocated earlier in the project. These efforts are crucial in maintaining the habitat and supporting the survival of the species. The data collected guides decision making and shapes future conservation strategies to ensure the longevity and viability of these endangered species.
- The Turtles Forever: Securing the NSW population of Bell's Turtle project, managed by Northern Tablelands Local Land Services, continued to protect and boost wild populations of the endangered Bell's turtle (*Myuchelys bellii*). In 2023–24, 19 temporary electrified fox exclusion fences were installed to protect high-quality Bell's turtle nesting areas; 254 lab-reared turtle hatchlings were released into the wild, and 89 sites were surveyed as part of an annual mark-recapture monitoring program. During the survey period 529 turtles were captured, and information on their age, size, growth, movement and survival were added to a long-term monitoring dataset. Analysis of the dataset revealed sites with high and low levels of immature turtles being recruited into the population.

SoS Partnership Grants Program outcomes



1,700 hectares of degraded habitat **regenerating** after weeding



534 hectares by of native habitat **revegetated** with **159,125 seedlings** planted



4,060 hectares of habitat **protected** through fencing



2,772 people participated in **186 training events** in conservation or regeneration activities



2,186 volunteers contributed **90,129 hours** of work towards conservation or regeneration activities



337 educational resources developed so far

Note: This data reflects the program outcomes to date, coming from stage 8 reports submitted by the 5 SoS partnership projects awarded in 2014 and the stage 7 reports from the 4 SoS partnership projects awarded in 2015. These 10-year projects are now all in their maintenance phase.

Saving our Species Contestable Grants Program

The Saving our Species Contestable Grants Program provides \$9 million across 26 long-term projects aimed at protecting and recovering threatened species in New South Wales.

The projects involve a diverse range of stakeholders including community groups, non-government organisations and government agencies, helping them to carry out on-ground conservation, research and community engagement activities.

The projects are now in their sixth year, with most transitioning to the stakeholder-funded maintenance phase for 2024–25.

Key achievements 2023–24

- Shrub augmentation across 6 sites has been a key activity under the Re-aging the Temperate Woodlands of Central West NSW project. The project's aim is to improve the habitat for threatened woodland birds, and with some recent plantings the project has surpassed its target for increasing the number of shrubs. Landholder interest inspired a community event at which 2,500 trees and shrubs were planted on an extra 2.5 hectares of private property. The participants learnt about the importance of woodland habitat for birds, and helped with plantings. This increased the area of newly established high-density mixed plant species habitat by 3% (from 85.3 hectares to 87.8 hectares).
- The on-ground component of the Saving our Saltmarsh project has finished, and included assessment of saltmarsh health indicators, drone monitoring, feral animal tracking and weeding. Work was carried out on 2 more sites than originally planned, which increased the project area by 67 hectares. Also, 2 new installations have protected the saltmarsh and allowed it to recover. One is a boom gate that restricts the entry of vehicles, the other is 430 metres of stock-exclusion fencing at 2 locations. The grantee, OzFish Unlimited, is currently working on a promotional video to show the achievements made possible by Trust funds. This will be accompanied by a call to action to reduce the threat of human activities, including dumped rubbish, to saltmarsh communities. Additional weed follow-up work is also planned at priority sites in the final year of the project, along with continued monitoring and clean-up efforts from OzFish volunteers to ensure the long-term success of this project's restoration efforts.

SoS Contestable Grants Program outcomes



1,852 hectares regenerated by native regrowth after weeding, fencing, erosion control or pest control



73,725 seedlings planted and 567.5 hectares revegetated by planting or direct seeding



102 organisations actively collaborating



1,184 volunteers contributed **20,113 hours**



139 contractors employed for **38,096 hours**



16 partnerships with Aboriginal groups



143 educational products developed



6,541 people attended **262 training and other events**

Note: This data reflects the program outcomes to date, collated from 25 stage 5 reports from the 25 continuing projects.

CASE STUDY

Bungendore travelling stock reserves

In the Bungendore region, as with most of eastern Australia, grassy woodlands and the birds and animals that depend on them are under threat. Several factors put pressure on woodland ecosystems and particularly on small woodland birds. The birds' habitat may become fragmented because of land clearing and urbanisation, or human intervention in woodland vegetational layers may make a crucial difference. Introduced pests and weeds or the removal of habitat also have a damaging effect.

The Molonglo Conservation Group, with help from the Trust, has been working for 6 years on its Saving our Woodland Birds on Travelling Stock Reserves (TSRs) in the Bungendore Region project. Now largely vacant, TSRs are historic reserves drovers once used to move stock between towns and long before that, for thousands of years, they were often Aboriginal travel and trade routes. Many TSRs have become hotspots for biodiversity and a refuge for patches of remnant woodland – but also for weeds and pests. The project's aims were to choose 6 TSRs in the Bungendore region and restore their threatened grassy woodland ecological communities for woodland birds.

Much of Molonglo Conservation Group's on-ground work – building 'stepping-stone' enclosures and planting otherwise under-represented mid-storey vegetation – was finished earlier in the project. The aim of the final funded year was to consolidate the project's achievements as a legacy that would carry the project beyond its funding period.

This year, working with the local community was a principal focus with volunteers, including students from the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT), members of the Small Farms Network and the Carwoola Landcare Group assisting. CIT Conservation and Ecosystem Management students helped remove more than 350 kilograms of rubbish to improve ground-cover diversity in their target TSRs. The Small Farms Network and Carwoola Landcare Group partnered with Molonglo Conservation Group

to give workshop presentations, for their own members and local small landholders, about woodland birds and the preservation and restoration of grassy woodland habitat. Molonglo Conservation Group also expanded the call for wildlife conservation activities resulting in 14 new Land for Wildlife assessments conducted on small farms in the area.

Weed control was another focus this year. Four TSRs were treated for various noxious weeds, including serrated tussock, St John's wort, blackberry and Paterson's curse. Funding was put towards developing an integrated pest management plan including the use of chemical and non-chemical control methods to reduce the amount of herbicide used in environmentally sensitive areas. Over 100 hectares were treated using a mix of chemical applications, steam weeding and manual removal, and disposal.

As part of the final monitoring phase, local ecologists were employed to monitor the TSRs and experts in botany and ornithology carried out the final Rapid Biodiversity Assessment Method surveys on flora biodiversity and bird life.

The Molonglo Conservation Group was awarded \$279,959 for its project, under the SoS Contestable Grants Program.



The Molonglo Conservation Group is working to restore threatened grassy woodland ecological communities for woodland birds such as the scarlet robin

Bush Connect Program

The aim of this program is to build partnerships between the community, industry and government to improve the condition and connectivity of ecosystems within the Great Eastern Ranges corridor, from the Sunshine Coast hinterland to Central Victoria. This is a 10-year, \$8-million program with 15 projects.

Most projects are in the grantee-funded stage of their implementation and are expected to be completed by 2026.

CASE STUDY

Yarrahapinni to Killiekrankie (Y2K) Biodiversity Alliance

The plants and animals living in the coastal landscape across the Nambucca and Macleay valleys are supported by diverse ecological communities that form important biodiversity corridors. Logging and clearing of vegetation have fragmented these vital links, putting a strain on wildlife movement, migration and breeding.

The Y2K Biodiversity Alliance, with \$492,120 in funding from the Trust's Bush Connect Program, began a 10-year project to improve habitat condition and connectivity for threatened species within its area. This work also contributes to the broader Great Eastern Ranges initiative. The region is known as a stronghold for species such as the yellow-bellied glider, koala, rufous bettong and brush-tailed phascogale, and the project's work in protecting, restoring and reconnecting vegetation will help these populations to survive and thrive.

Despite facing extreme conditions due to drought, the 2019 bushfires, floods and COVID-19, which restricted some planned activities, the project has achieved great results in community engagement, revegetation, bush regeneration and habitat connectivity. Installing fencing and off-stream water for cattle has helped to ensure that important riparian corridors are

protected from grazing and trampling by stock. Targeted removal of weeds and their replacement with native plants has improved the condition and extent of natural habitat.

There has been strong collaboration across community and government with the Macleay and Nambucca Landcare networks, Local Land Services, Kempsey Shire Council, Nambucca Valley Council and the National Parks and Wildlife Service involved in planning and delivering the project.

Significant achievements are now being maintained by Y2K Biodiversity Alliance members and participating landholders, including:

- 50 hectares of habitat corridors actively managed to restore connectivity
- 13,340 native seedlings planted (over 2,300 seedlings lost to bushfires have also been replaced)
- 15 properties with project works in place (13 properties are still actively participating, with some changes of ownership)
- 11 kilometres of fencing installed to protect riparian corridors, reduce erosion and improve water quality.

Bush Connect Program outcomes



1,825 hectares of degraded bushland **regenerating**



109 contractors employed for **46,066 hours** on conservation activities



2,476 volunteers contributed **141,361 hours** to on-ground works



139 kilometres of **fencing** installed, protecting **1,695 hectares**



220,969 seedlings planted and **66 kilograms** of native seed sown, helping to revegetate **812 hectares**



393 conservation and land management agreements established



5,989 hectares of bushland **corridors** created



194 educational products developed

Note: This data comes from 15 projects, with 9 reporting on stages 7 or 8, with the balance coming from earlier reports. Several projects have had extensions in recent years due to drought, bushfires, floods and the COVID-19 pandemic impacting their progress. All but one of these projects is now in the maintenance phase of implementation.

River Connections Program

The River Connections Program provides \$8,999,220 in funding over 10 years to Murray Local Land Services to support its project Refreshing River Management: New partnership and stewardship pathways for improving river health.

The project, now in its third year, is a large, landscape-scale, long-term collaboration between community and government which will develop new approaches for integrated river management to improve riparian and river health across 3 target areas in the Murray and Riverina regions.

Key achievements 2023–24

- Baseline monitoring was a key priority for the Refreshing River Management project this year. Building on completed waterway management plans, project officers developed work priorities for 2023–24 and drafted monitoring plans for each of the 3 target areas: Lower Billabong Creek, South West Slopes, and Riverina Highlands. The plans set out monitoring priorities, including baseline remote sensing of changes in ground cover, fish surveys (focusing on southern pygmy perch in Upper Billabong and Macquarie perch in Riverina Highlands), and baseline monitoring of water quality.
- Relationship building and stakeholder engagement were also central to the project in 2023–24. Activities this year included an Indigenous Culture in the Paddock walk, a platypus talk, seed collection, and Macquarie perch spotlighting in the Riverina Highlands. Upper Billabong had events such as a kids' fishing day, in-stream habitat restoration, and farm-scale natural capital account field days. In Central Billabong, activities included the Hartwood Wetland Field Day, the release of golden perch fingerlings and a Women's Yarning Circle.
- Carbon Roadshow events were hosted in 3 locations: Tumut (Riverina Highlands), Holbrook (Upper Billabong) and Wanganella (Central Billabong).
- The [Refreshing Rivers website](#), launched in July 2023, has extensive information about the program, including a rewards page offering free natural capital profiles for landholders in the 3 target areas. To date, 10 natural capital profiles have been completed, each providing landholders with a baseline assessment of their farm's natural assets.
- Works have begun to create demonstration sites that show best practices in riparian and in-stream habitat restoration, erosion management and habitat improvement for critical fish species. These sites will also be used as training venues for stakeholder capacity-building workshops.
- Fact sheets have been developed, informing landholders and the community about the project and highlighting the benefits of enhancing, protecting and improving water health.

Major restoration and rehabilitation projects

Accelerating Hawkweed Eradication

In 2018–19 the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service was awarded \$7,270,500 to deliver the 10-year Accelerating Hawkweed Eradication project. The project aims to eradicate orange and mouse-ear hawkweeds from New South Wales.

If successful, the project would be the first to bring about the documented eradication of a weed from New South Wales.

The project is being delivered collaboratively through the NSW Hawkweed Taskforce, chaired by the NSW Department of Primary Industries. It involves NPWS, Local Land Services, Snowy Monaro Regional Council, community volunteers and local landholder representatives.

During the 2023–24 eradication season there was a strong focus on the delimitation of both hawkweed species. Drones were used to survey for orange hawkweed across more than 22,500 hectares, and 59 new orange hawkweed sites were identified within the core infestation area. People on the ground, and detector dogs, surveyed more than 200 hectares for mouse-ear hawkweed, but no new sites were found. The orange hawkweed imagery dataset, the largest collection of flowering imagery to date, was used to develop improved remote-detection algorithms.

The project will continue until 2029.



Project staff surveying the ground in Kosciusko National Park for hawkweed

Flying-fox Habitat Restoration Program

Flying-foxes are keystone species critical to Australian ecosystems. The grey-headed flying-fox is listed as vulnerable to extinction under both federal and state legislation and is the subject of a National Recovery Plan.

To reduce conflict between people and flying-foxes and to improve conservation outcomes, \$5 million was awarded to Local Government NSW in 2018 for the Flying-fox Habitat Restoration Program. It is designed to improve and/or restore roosting and foraging habitat for flying-foxes, particularly at currently contentious camp sites and in mostly urban areas. The program, which supports 16 projects delivered by 14 participating local councils across New South Wales, is due to end in 2030.

During 2023–24, the program has continued to support on-ground restoration work and has shared its findings with councils through workshops, online networks and through the NSW Flying-fox Consultative Committee.

Habitat restoration monitoring data for the program is being shared through the BioCollect Habitat Restoration Hub, under the Atlas of Living Australia Ecoscience program.

Contaminated Land Management Program

In 2018, the Trust approved \$3 million in funding for the Contaminated Land Management Council Gasworks Program.

The program funds 4 eligible councils – Tamworth Regional Council, Parkes Shire Council, Dubbo Regional Council and Orange City Council to investigate and remediate legacy council gasworks sites where these councils are the former operators and polluters.

The program covers up to 50% of investigation costs, with a maximum of \$200,000 per site, and up to 50% of remediation costs, capped at \$500,000 per site.

Major restoration and rehabilitation projects

During 2023–24 the final stages of the investigations were underway in Wellington, Orange and Parkes. They are due to finish in 2024–25.

NSW Rewilding Initiative

The aim of the 10-year \$20.3 million NSW Rewilding Initiative is to establish 45,000 hectares of feral-predator-free areas at 4 locations across New South Wales – Yiraaldiya National Park (Western Sydney), Ngambaa Nature Reserve (north-east New South Wales), Yathong Nature Reserve (Central West New South Wales) and Nungatta (South East Forest National Park).

The project is in its fourth year and has made significant progress, including:

Yiraaldiya National Park (Western Sydney)

- Completion of stage 1 fencing and declaration as feral free (56 hectares) and commencement of stage 2 fencing (500 hectares).
- Reintroduction of the first tranche of 18 New Holland mice in May 2024.
- Successful monitoring of 4 male eastern bettongs and 3 koalas reintroduced in 2023, all of which are in good health and condition.

Ngambaa Nature Reserve (north-east New South Wales)

- Construction of fencing across the 2,000 hectare site.
- Feral eradication program begun, with one round of aerial baiting completed and 4 Felixer traps installed to eradicate cats.
- Partnerships with several organisations (Hidden Vale Wildlife Centre, Turner Family Foundation, Forestry NSW) in place for a captive breeding program for the rufous bettong.

Yathong Nature Reserve (Central West New South Wales)

- Vegetation management and civil works completed, with fence construction to protect 8,200 hectares begun and expected to be complete by August 2024.

- Eradication planning completed and the first round of aerial baiting and shooting conducted.

Nungatta (South East Forest National Park, south-east New South Wales)

- Stage 1 fencing (240 hectares) completed, with feral-free status expected in July–August 2024.
- Stage 2 (1,840 hectares) fencing is nearing completion after delays caused by poor weather conditions and challenging terrain.
- Launch of a 12-month research project (in partnership with the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, Biodiversity Conservation Division) for the long-footed potoroo across the NSW–Victorian border to prepare for a translocation in 2025–26.

Safe havens for large forest owls

In December 2022, the Trust awarded the Nature Conservation Council a 3-year \$1,193,759 grant to deliver the Large Forest Owls – Safe Havens project. This supports the recovery of native large forest owls, such as the barking owl, masked owl and powerful owl, in the Richmond–Clarence Lowlands. The project will also benefit other hollow-dependent threatened species affected by the catastrophic 2019–20 bushfires.

This year, 20 properties were actively involved in the project, covering an area of 6,400 hectares. A project workshop, focusing on owl ecology and impacts of bushfires, was held in November 2023 and included participating landholders, partner organisations and other environmental/community groups.

Thirty-eight passive acoustic monitoring sites have been set up across the 20 properties to survey for large forest owls and other nocturnal fauna. The results are providing valuable data on the occurrence and recovery of owl and glider populations.

Nest boxes for arboreal mammals are an important part of the project and of the 400 boxes bought for the project, more than 250 have now been installed across 10 properties. Monitoring carried out in autumn 2024 of boxes installed in 2023 has shown they are already

being used by target species. The occupancy rate, which varies across sites, is between 44% and 78%. Squirrel gliders were the primary species using boxes, followed by brushtail possums and sugar gliders. Monitoring of all nest boxes will continue on a biannual basis in autumn and spring throughout the project. For more information, visit the [Nature Conservation Council's Large Forest Owls Project](#).



The Large Forest Owls Project supports the recovery of large forest owls, including the barking owl

Seabirds to Seascapes

In August 2022, the Trust awarded a \$6,598,958 grant to the then Department of Planning and Environment (now the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water) for the Seabirds to Seascapes project. The aim of the project is to improve marine ecosystem health and support important

marine species by learning how coastal restoration influences and benefits marine habitat, animals and biodiversity. Project partners include the Sydney Institute of Marine Science (SIMS), Taronga Conservation Society Australia and NSW National Parks and Wildlife Services (NPWS).

There have been some significant achievements in the past year, including:

- The Great Big Little Penguin Count brought together scientists and citizen volunteers to count penguins. They counted the Manly mainland colony and also visited 5 NSW islands, capturing footage on Bowen Island of little penguins coming to shore. New materials and designs have been developed to improve penguin nest boxes, which were installed at 3 sites this year.
- Taronga scientists made a field trip to Montague Island in September 2023 and tracked 18 little penguins, assessing the penguins' foraging locations in relation to oceanographic conditions such as sea-surface temperature.
- To date, 5 New Zealand fur seals have been tracked post rehabilitation and release. Two were rehabilitated by Dolphin Marine Conservation Park and released from Coffs Harbour, 2 were rehabilitated by Sea World and released from Sydney, and one rehabilitated by Taronga Zoo was released from Sydney.

Protecting Our Places Program

Protecting Our Places is a \$500,000 program, offered annually. Individual grants of up to \$80,000 are made available to help eligible Aboriginal organisations protect and restore culturally significant land, share cultural knowledge and educate the community about the importance of the environment in Aboriginal culture.

Key achievements 2023–24

- Through the Employing Bundjalung People to Showcase the Youngman Creek Watershed Rehabilitation project the Bundjalung Tribal Society has established 3 cultural mosaic sites where ecological restoration is being focused. Removal and management of priority weed species is ongoing across the 3 sites through physical removal and cultural cool burns. Ten cubic metres of biomass has also been recycled onsite. Four cultural and educational events were held to showcase project work and they attracted 180 participants, over half of whom were Aboriginal.
- As part of the Garguree Stage 5-Restoring the Cultural and Environmental Values of the Gully Aboriginal Place project the Gully Traditional Owners continue to carry out priority work at this important site, with a focus this year on McRaes Paddock. Volunteers are essential contributors to the project, with 356 volunteers contributing 870 hours of effort. Species of Eucalyptus and Allocasuarina were among the 300 seedlings planted at The Gully Lake. Cultural events such as Welcomes and talks are a wonderful way for The Gully Traditional Owners to share The Gully story.
- Budjiti Traditional Owners completed their Cultural burning program to protect woodland and wetlands on Naree and Yantabulla Stations project, achieving employment and training in fire and ecological surveys. The project allowed the community to capture and preserve Budjiti knowledge. A bush tucker poster and booklet were developed using art by Budjiti people. Over 50 Budjiti people, including students from Enngonia Public School, attended 2 culture camps at Naree Station Reserve on Budjiti Country. Attendees learnt about land management, Budjiti cultural knowledge, local plants and animals, artefacts, art, fishing, and how to monitor and manage feral animals. Budjiti Elders shared stories and cultural knowledge with the children.

Protecting Our Places Program outcomes



126 hectares regenerating

with native regrowth after weeding, fencing, erosion control or pest control



196 Aboriginal people on country who contributed over **3,045 hours**



12.5 hectares treated with fire (cultural burns)



393 volunteers have contributed over **1,665 hours**



5.3 hectares revegetated with **2,098 trees, shrubs & grasses** planted (including bush tucker)



168 people participated in **22 training events** in cultural, conservation or regeneration activities



19 organisations actively collaborating on these projects

Note: This data is drawn from 17 projects that have been approved to progress to Stage 2 implementation after being funded in the 2019–2021 grant years, with 7 (41%) of these projects now complete.

TABLE 1

Protecting Our Places grants awarded 2023–24

Organisation	Title	LGA	Amount
Coonabarabran Local Aboriginal Land Council	Burra Bee Dee Murrumbala Dhawun project	Warrumbungle Shire Council	\$66,630
Jaanyмили Bawrrungga Aboriginal Corporation	Caring for Bollanolla project	Nambucca Valley Council	\$68,050
Tubba-Gah (maing) Wiradjuri Aboriginal Corporation	Tubba-Gah (maing) Wiradjuri Jinchilla Restoration and Rejuvenation	Dubbo Regional Council	\$79,000
Total			\$213,680

Grants awarded in 2022–23



Applications received
12



Funding sought
\$886,625



Grants funded
3



Funding awarded
\$213,680

Environmental Education Program

Environmental Education is an annual \$1-million program to fund individual projects up to \$250,000 that develop, broaden and transform the community's knowledge, skills and motivation to engage in sustainable behaviour and encourage participation in protecting the environment.

Key achievements 2023–24

- Eurobodalla Shire Council's We Care project helped 150 businesses to reduce their impact on the environment by eliminating single-use plastics from their operations. The We Care project encouraged people to CARE:

- **C**arry their own reusable items
- **A**void single-use plastics
- **R**euse
- **E**ncourage others to do the same.

Council staff developed starter kits and visited businesses to watch operations and help find alternatives to single-use plastics. The We Care program received a Keep Australia Beautiful – Tidy Towns Award for litter prevention in 2022, and also won the NSW Government Excellence in Environment Award for Behaviour Change in Waste.

- Macquarie University's Enabling Healthier Gomeroi/Kamilaroi Country through On-Country Classrooms project provided a way for Gomeroi/Kamilaroi custodians to access Country more easily. It also helped create a more sustained input into climate change adaptation by creating 'On-Country Classrooms'. First Nations people and multiple state and federal government stakeholders worked together on the project.

Highlights included:

- visits to Gwydir wetlands for intergenerational learning and cross-cultural knowledge shared on-Country
- interdisciplinary learning and sharing at Gingham Waterhole
- activities led by Gomeroi/Kamilaroi custodians such as native foods workshops, tree marking, painting and weaving
- a [website](#) for the project.

Environmental Education Program outcomes



522 training and awareness raising **events** delivered to **9,303** people



277 educational **products** and resources produced



1,003 school **students** involved for **3,654** hours



2,650 volunteers contributed over **14,788** hours



194 organisations involved and/or collaborating on these projects



4,787 Individuals adopting positive environmental action

Note: This data is drawn from 25 continuing projects that were funded in the 2019–2021 grant years with 9 (36%) of these projects now complete.

TABLE 2

Environmental Education grants awarded 2023–24 (2022 round)

Organisation	Title	LGA	Amount
Australian Association for Environmental Education (NSW)	Empowering NSW Teachers Climate Action Journey through the Sustainability Connect Platform	Wollongong City Council	\$228,550
Australian Association of Bush Regenerators Inc	Environmental Restoration Integrated Knowledge and Learning Platform	Statewide	\$250,000
Carbon 8 Fund Limited	Farming in Fragile Threatened Ecosystems of Nandewar Region	Inverell Shire Council	\$250,000
Muswellbrook Shire Council	Muswellbrook Sustainable Futures Network	Muswellbrook Shire Council	\$53,440
North Coast Regional Landcare Network (NSW)	Native Bee Project Stage 1	Clarence Valley Council	\$59,950
OzFish Unlimited	OzFish Experience	Ballina Shire Council	\$171,565
Positive Change for Marine Life	River Warriors – a community-driven approach to the recovery and resilience of the Brunswick River	Byron Shire Council	\$57,096
Upper Murrumbidgee Landcare Committee	Landcare Tree Start: Growing the next generation of plants for the Monaro	Snowy Monaro Regional Council	\$56,245
Total			\$1,126,846

Note: Decisions on grant applications for the 2022 Environmental Education round were finalised in 2023.

Grants awarded in 2023-24 (2022 round)



Applications received
48



Funding sought
\$6,587,416



Grants funded
8



Funding awarded
\$1,126,846

TABLE 3

Environmental Education grants awarded 2023–24 (2023 round)

Organisation	Title	LGA	Amount
Coffs Coast Wildlife Sanctuary	Eco Rangers Educational Program	City of Coffs Harbour	\$59,775
Cumberland City Council	Creating Change One Seed at a Time	Cumberland City Council	\$60,000
Hunter Region Landcare Network	Dry Rainforest Revival Lower Hunter	Maitland City Council	\$243,220
Mid Coast 2 Tops Landcare Connection	Eco Burn Education –Phase 2	MidCoast Council	\$247,583
Murrumbidgee Landcare Inc	Linking Generations for Threatened Species Conservation – Murrumbidgee Landcare Inc.	Wagga Wagga City Council	\$60,000
Tweed Shire Council	Cultivating Tomorrow: Empowering Tweed Shire Farmers through Regenerative Agribusiness Mastery	Tweed Shire Council	\$60,000
Western Sydney Parklands Trust	Guardians of the Park: Habitat Restoration Program for Western Sydney’s Adolescents	Blacktown City Council	\$249,960
		Total	\$980,538

Grants awarded in 2023–24 (2023 round)



Applications received
66



Funding sought
\$10,856,928



Grants funded
7



Funding awarded
\$980,538

CASE STUDY

Take Your Lead project protects ground-nesting birds

The Northern Rivers region of New South Wales is rich in high-conservation-value parks and beaches that are a haven for native wildlife, including threatened ground-nesting birds. These areas are also used by people for recreation, and some of them are close to Tweed Shire Council's designated Take Your Lead project dog-walking areas. Around 75% of dog owners were exercising their dogs off-leash, resulting in injuries to dogs, people and endangered ground-nesting birds and their chicks.

Through the Take Your Lead project, supported by a Trust grant of \$60,000, Tweed Shire Council worked closely with the local community to get a better understanding of the issues involved and to develop effective ways to gradually change people's behaviour. Take Your Lead selected 4 priority, high-conservation-value beach locations as practice sites for changing entrenched behaviour, using a combination of communication, reminders and enforcement to increase the community's understanding of why leashing is important in these places.

Council developed targeted communication tool kits for external stakeholders and council staff, and launched a social media campaign to get key messages across.

These alerted dog-walkers about upcoming beach patrols and provided information about the number of fines issued. Various methods were used to ensure the message was received. Signage was certainly helpful as was the use of community voices to promote messages about leashing behaviour, the location of designated off-leash areas, and information about the potential fines for off-leash dog owners.

Take Your Lead had an effective impact on changing people's behaviour and the project achieved good results. There was:

- a 30% increase in dogs observed on-leash in 4 priority intervention locations (above the project's target of 20%)
- an increase in the population of endangered ground-nesting birds and shorebirds, including beach and bush stone-curlews
- increased awareness in the community of the danger that off-leash dogs pose to wildlife, people and other pets.

Take Your Lead's successful model is expanding to other areas in the Tweed Shire and beyond.

Major education projects

Keeping Cats Safe at Home

This project began in October 2021 with a \$2.54-million grant provided to the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) NSW and is due to finish in December 2024. Its aim is to reduce the impact of domestic cats on native wildlife by encouraging cat owners to keep their cats safe at home.

The project includes 11 partner councils from urban, regional, remote, coastal and inland areas, which have a variety of cat management challenges.

During 2023-24 the project delivered:

- a website landing page
- information resources
- a social marketing campaign
- targeted desexing programs
- partner packages
- a school incursion package.

The project has taken a place-based and stakeholder-driven approach to meet the unique needs of each partner council.

Walgett, a remote council area in north-west New South Wales, is one example. It has a population of 5,250 people, and very limited access to veterinary services. It also has a large population of unowned cats, high rates of cat semi-ownership, and a steady influx of unsocialised cats into the townships from surrounding rural areas.

Through the Keeping Cats Safe at Home project, RSPCA NSW partnered with Walgett Shire Council, Dharriwaa Elders Group and NorthWest Vets to offer free desexing and microchipping for all cats across the local government area. A council ranger helped the community with trapping and transporting cats when needed and, to encourage community engagement and awareness, Healthy Pet Days and school education visits were held in Walgett, Collarenebri and Lightning Ridge.

To date, 249 cats in Walgett – all passively acquired by people who had not planned to be cat owners – have been desexed. In 90% of these cases the cats were making their first visit to a vet.

Since the start of the program, cat-related nuisance complaints to the Walgett Shire Council have decreased by 91% and the cat intake at the local pound has gone down substantially. Council confirms that the program has had a significant impact on unwanted litters and roaming cats.

Performance scorecards

In April 2021, the Trust awarded \$7 million to the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service to set up the National Park Performance Scorecards project. The project is designed to make a scientific assessment of the health of national parks over time through establishing and using key ecological indicators. It was recently extended for a further 12 months, until November 2025, to provide for more ecological monitoring in the field. The resulting data will help guide management decisions on spending.

Key milestones achieved in 2023–24 include:

- a year of park-wide surveillance monitoring carried out at the 40 Royal–Heathcote–Garawarra (19,144 hectares) sites and 100 Kosciuszko (689,627 hectares) sites
- the first scorecards for the Royal–Heathcote–Garawarra and Kosciuszko aggregates were prepared for public access in June 2024
- establishment of park-wide monitoring sites and commencement of first-year monitoring at:
 - Myall Lakes (nearly 48,000 hectares) – 57 sites established
 - Great Divide–Northern Forests (over 243,563 hectares) – 67 sites established (despite a fire in Willi Willi National Park)
 - Greater Blue Mountains (845,178 hectares) – 100 sites established
 - Pilliga–Warrumbungle (232,496 hectares) – 87 sites established.

Plant Sure Environmentally Safe Ornamental Plant Scheme

In 2017, the Trust awarded \$1 million to the Nursery and Garden Industry NSW & ACT to develop a voluntary certification scheme to examine the environmental impacts of escaped ornamental garden plants. The project was delivered in two phases: Phase 1 focused on research and development and Phase 2 focused on running an 18-month small-scale trial in New South Wales to see if the scheme, named Gardening Responsibly, would be viable, credible and self-sustaining. The project finished in July 2023.

There were several key achievements over the life of the grant:

- The project developed the [Gardening Responsibly](#) website to provide information about the scheme and the research underpinning it. The portal provides easy access for consumers to 'Check Your Choice' and find certified low-risk plants, as well as resources and educational materials to understand and manage invasive plant risk.
- The 'certified gardening responsibly' eco-label was developed, backed by a robust certification process.
- The portal currently contains 773 risk-assessed species and cultivars, exceeding the project target of 665 assessments.

Wildlife Heroes

In 2019, the Foundation for National Parks and Wildlife was granted \$1.47 million through its Wildlife Heroes Program to provide aid for wildlife carers. The funding was used to:

- expand the capabilities of the volunteer-run wildlife rehabilitation sector
- enhance animal care standards
- arrange training for veterinarians and volunteer wildlife carers
- ensure the long-term sustainability of the sector.

Achievements over the life of the project included:

- \$400,000 awarded to wildlife rehabilitators through a series of devolved grants for protective equipment, vaccinations against zoonotic diseases, and a variety of assets
- developing training standards for wildlife rehabilitation across New South Wales, incorporating emergency response plans, initial treatment and care guidelines, as well as practical techniques in wildlife rehabilitation
- providing specialist training in venomous snake handling and raptor rehabilitation
- setting up websites, newsletters and social media platforms, including Facebook groups
- forming a community of over 100 NSW wildlife veterinary professionals
- the Caring for Carers campaign, providing wildlife rehabilitators with mental, emotional and physical health resources including first aid training, online tools, and personal protective equipment.

The Wildlife Heroes project finished in December 2023, however, the long-term outcomes from grants, training and resources will benefit the sector well into the future.

Environmental Research Program

The Environmental Research Program provides annual funding for applied research in priority areas for contemporary environmental problems in New South Wales. The priority areas align with the Trust's Strategic Plan 2020–24.

Key achievements 2023–24

- The Optimising Biodiversity Sampling by Citizen Scientists project carried out research to strengthen the contribution citizen scientists can make to environmental research. Scientists from the University of New South Wales and the Australian Museum surveyed nearly 1,300 citizen scientists who contributed data to the Museum's FrogID project. The aim of the survey was to find out what motivated them to contribute, if there were any barriers to involvement and their willingness to change their sampling behaviour if it would help provide quality data for priority scientific studies. The project showed that once citizen scientists knew what the researchers were aiming to do, they were more willing to engage in targeted surveys rather than contributing only incidental sightings. This means that more meaningful data has now been gathered in under-sampled areas of New South Wales, helping to improve the success of management actions.
- Through the Opportunistic Physiology of Harmful Algal Blooms in Port Stephens project, researchers from the University of Newcastle wanted to expand their understanding of the threat posed by Cyanobacterial blooms in waterways and how they could be better managed. These algal blooms have become more frequent because of pollution, excess nutrients and climate change. The researchers analysed the blooms across different seasons and locations to check the diversity and composition of bacterial communities. They found patterns in species' seasonal richness, composition and abundance. This information will help scientists design more effective management strategies, ensuring healthier waterways and aquatic habitats.

Environmental Research Program outcomes



20 innovative technologies

or new methods or approaches to previously known work generated



55 scientific or technical conferences and other events where the research has been presented



25 resources and articles produced including items published in academic journals and other scientific publications



195 people contributed, including **23 post-graduate students** and **87 volunteers**



51 organisations involved and/or collaborating on these projects

Note: This data is drawn from 13 projects that continued after being funded in the 2019–21 grant years, with 6 of these projects (43%) now complete.

Projects awarded under the 2023–24 round will support applied research to:

- foster threatened species recovery
- address climate change impacts on the natural environment – both mitigation and adaptation.

TABLE 4
Environmental Research grants awarded 2023–24

Organisation	Title	LGA	Amount
Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust	Developing an evaluation protocol to assess, monitor and improve seed production areas to deliver climate-resilient restoration outcomes	City of Sydney	\$135,435
Macquarie University	Living boulders for reviving marine life on coastal defences	North Sydney Council	\$199,981
Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water	Securing the threatened southern greater glider (<i>Petauroides volans</i>) in the wild using innovative drone technology	Shoalhaven City Council	\$199,867
Australian National University	Illuminating the pollination biology of the cryptic underground orchids of New South Wales: New tools for monitoring and ensuring successful future translocation	Dungog Shire Council	\$199,824
University of Wollongong	Determining the resilience of Australia's natural alpine dams (peatlands) to climate change: sustaining water security and carbon sequestration	Snowy Monaro Regional Council	\$198,727
Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals New South Wales	Co-design of a project with First Nations communities to reduce the impact of cats and dogs on threatened species	Brewarrina Shire Council	\$200,000
Total			\$1,133,834

Grants awarded in 2023–24



Expressions of interest received
70



Funding sought
\$2,490,061



Applications invited
13



Grants funded
6



Funding awarded
\$1,133,834

CASE STUDY

Animal conservation in post-fire environments

Australia's native animals are threatened by the high frequency of bushfires and predation by feral cats and foxes, and evidence shows that the number of introduced predators increases in recently burnt forest. This puts even greater pressure on native animals because they are searching for scarce resources but have fewer places to hide.

Through the Advancing fauna conservation in post-fire environments project, researchers from the University of Sydney studied interactions between feral and native animals to better understand and manage this problem. One aspect of the study explored how ground-dwelling mammals respond to both natural and artificial refuges after a bushfire.

Working with the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, the World Wildlife Fund and Rewilding Australia, researchers installed cameras to monitor the impacts of fire on the presence of feral animals, and to see their impacts on the behaviour, number and species diversity of native animals.

The project team was affected by COVID-19 restrictions and torrential rain in the Murrumbidgee National Park where the work took place, but they were still able to:

- install 40 camera sites and 18 trapping sites in burnt and unburnt forest
- study 442 small mammals, including bush rats, agile antechinuses, brown antechinuses and eastern pygmy possums, which were weighed, measured, sexed and marked
- conduct habitat surveys
- analyse more than one million photos from 2 years of continuous monitoring
- install 54 nest boxes to understand how artificial habitat can play a role in the recovery of arboreal species.

The researchers also attached GPS collars to 15 greater gliders in Tallaganda State Forest to understand how this threatened species changed its movements and habitat use in response to fire.

The project began in 2019, after the Black Summer fires. By November 2021, 17% of the nest boxes in unburnt sites were occupied by one species, but no occupancy was recorded in the burnt sites. By February 2023, 44% of the unburnt site nest boxes were occupied by 3 species and 55% of the burnt site nest boxes were occupied by 5 species.

The project team's work has produced one of the earliest and longest-running post-fire datasets of wildlife after the 2019–20 fires and these important results will help to guide fire management planning and species recovery in the future.



Researchers monitoring animals, including the pictured juvenile greater glider, to better understand native species recovery in post-fire environments

Clean Technology Research and Development Grants Program

All of the clean technology programs funded by the Trust align with the NSW Net Zero Plan.

Grants awarded under the \$40 million Clean Technology Research and Development contestable grants program are administered by the Trust and support the development of commercially viable technologies that can substantially decrease emissions from high-emitting sectors across the NSW economy.

The program encourages a robust research and development environment for early-stage clean technology projects.

Eligible applicants, whether from the public or private sector, must demonstrate expertise in innovative clean technology solutions to qualify for funding under this program.

Key achievements 2023–24

Round 1

- The Development of Copper-based Solar Modules for Ultra Low-Cost Utility Scale Deployment project completed a comprehensive optical and electrical analysis and made progress on module processing and testing activities.
- In the Solar powered E-Kerosene production module for the Sustainable Aviation Fuel project, a trailer carrying solar panels, with an e-kerosene module on top, has been fabricated. The trailer will be used as a demonstration module to show stakeholders. A draft road map for e-kerosene in New South Wales has also been finished and shown to stakeholders.
- The Energy Efficient Water Electrolyser for Low-Cost Green Hydrogen project has successfully manufactured cell-frame prototypes. It has also completed the mould development needed to manufacture injection mould frames.
- The Intelligent Composite Hydrogen Storage System project has successfully produced prototype hydrogen storage tanks for the emerging advanced air mobility sector. This project employs automated fibre placement technology to create intelligent hydrogen storage vessels tailored specifically for unpiloted aerial systems.

TABLE 5

Clean technology research and development Round 2 – grants awarded 2023-24

Organisation	Title	LGA	Amount
Rux Energy Pty Ltd	Advanced metal-organic-framework hybrids for high efficiency hydrogen storage for aerospace	City of Sydney	\$2,999,963
Allegro Energy Pty Ltd	Long-duration energy storage prototype	City of Newcastle	\$2,128,196
Number 8 Bio Pty Ltd	Scalable cattle methane mitigation technology	City of Parramatta	\$292,000
PlasmaLeap Technologies Pty Ltd	On-demand green ammonia production	Inner West Council	\$1,588,959
Total			\$7,009,118

Grants awarded in 2023–24



Expressions of interest received
79



Funding sought
\$100,623,409



Applications invited
20



Grants funded
4



Funding awarded
\$7,009,118

Major research projects

Low Emissions Specifications Program

In 2021, the Trust awarded approximately \$15 million to the Office of Energy and Climate Change, now part of the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, to deliver the Low Emissions Specifications Program over 8 years.

Now in its second year, this program works with industry to develop, accelerate and support the adoption of low emissions specifications in specific industry and government sectors with the aim of reducing greenhouse gas emissions in New South Wales.

Because of the complex nature and length of the program, and the expected development in industry sectors, the program is being delivered in stages.

Stage 1 (July 2022–December 2023) focused on developing electric vehicle charger specifications, low-emission building material specifications and guidance tools, and a residential industry road map. All of the planned outcomes for Stage 1 were achieved including:

Workstream 1 – Transport:

- Technical specifications were developed for electric vehicle chargers for both residential and commercial use and are now ready for publication through Standards Australia.

Workstream 2 – Industry and Manufacturing:

- Specifications and guidance tools for low-emissions concrete were completed for 3 participating government agencies. These are to be used in future procurement processes.

Workstream 3 – Residential:

- Reports on the findings of 2 energy-efficient pilot projects were delivered in July 2023 and shared with project stakeholders.
- Information on how to reduce energy consumption has been made available.

Stage 2 (January 2024–June 2026) was approved by the Trust in December 2023 and focuses on developing:

- net zero and circular economy guidelines for the transport sector
- specifications for low-emissions concrete and an innovative concrete framework for NSW government agencies and councils
- an energy performance baseline and energy improvement guides for apartment buildings and owners' corporations.

NSW Decarbonisation Innovation Hub

In 2021, the Trust awarded approximately \$15 million to the Office of the NSW Chief Scientist and Engineer to deliver the NSW Decarbonisation Innovation Hub (the hub). The project is expected to end in 2031.

Led by networks of stakeholders, the hub is coordinating work in 3 areas:

- electrification and energy systems
- land and primary industries
- power fuels, including hydrogen.

Now that the hub has been established and formally launched, the project's third year has focused on implementation.

In 2023–24 the achievements included:

- design of devolved grant programs across all networks to coordinate funding bids and provide seed funding
- road-mapping emissions reduction pathways in the Land and Primary Industries Network
- development of solutions to power fuels barriers and policy gaps
- road-mapping emerging power fuels technology and infrastructure requirements.

Biocontrol research for weed management

Since 2016, the Trust has provided approximately \$3.5 million to the CSIRO to deliver the Biocontrol research program. Biocontrol uses an invasive plant's natural enemies for weed control and is often more appropriate than herbicides or manual removal.

Major research projects

The program has three components:

1. nominating priority weeds as targets for biocontrol
2. research into new candidate biocontrol agents to assess if they are suitable for release into the Australian environment
3. release, monitoring and evaluation of new biocontrol agents approved for release.

A new grant of \$499,224 was awarded to the CSIRO in August 2023 as part of the final stage of the biocontrol program. The funding will provide for the mass rearing, release, monitoring and evaluation of several biocontrol agents across New South Wales. These include the stem-boring weevil (*Hydrotimetes natans*) and its effect on cabomba weed, the rust

fungus *Puccinia rapipes* for African boxthorn and supplementary host-specificity testing of the rust fungus *Uromyces pencanus* for Chilean needle grass.

This year the project:

- continued the mass-rearing and maintenance of a healthy and viable culture of the cabomba weevil to help control problematic cabomba infestations
- established a secondary weevil colony at the NSW Department of Primary Industry's biological control rearing facility in Grafton, which supported the identification of 4 sites where up to 500 cabomba weevils were released.

TABLE 6

Biocontrol research grant awarded in 2023-24

Organisation	Title	LGA	Amount
CSIRO	Biocontrol Research for Weed Management Stage 3 – Implementation Plan 5 (2023)	Statewide	\$499,224
Total			\$499,224

Effective feral cat management

In 2019, the University of New England, in partnership with the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and the NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, was awarded \$14.68 million for a project, to develop and test strategies to manage feral cat populations in the north-east, south-east and western regions of New South Wales. The project is testing all available options for managing feral cats, as well as developing new tools to help land managers.

In the project's fifth year, predator and prey monitoring continued at 10 sites across New South Wales. Winter baiting trials were carried out to assess the relative safety and efficacy of Eradicat (a feral cat bait developed by the Western Australian government) for use in NSW environments. The project team also continued to trap and collar feral cats and to collect telemetry data. This information will help with management planning, refine monitoring results

and improve understanding of feral cat ecology. Pen trials were conducted to see whether Felixer devices – intended for feral cat control – are safe for the endangered spotted-tailed quoll. The results of these trials were [published](#). The project is expected to be completed in 2025.

Feral deer management

In 2019, the Trust awarded a \$9.2 million grant to the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service for the Feral Deer Management Project. The project is being implemented at the 280 kilometre square Moonbah demonstration site, which is on land within the Kosciuszko National Park and on adjoining private land. It is currently in its fifth year of operation.

Key results recorded over the past 12 months:

- The testing of innovative target-selective deer feeders resulted in successful lethal baiting of fallow deer while mitigating the impact on non-target species.

Major research projects

- Valuable insights into the movement of deer were gained from continuous GPS tracking of collared deer, thermal aerial surveys and remote camera analyses. These results emphasised the need to increase control on private land.
- Horse-and deer-exclusion plots were monitored and showed a decrease in freshly browsed plants, suggesting an increase in the abundance of plant species and other positive effects of exclusion.
- A [peer reviewed paper](#) was published, evaluating aerial net gunning and chemical immobilisation for the capture of sambar deer and red deer in alpine Australia.

Beyond Fencing

The Beyond Fencing project is supported by a \$500,000 Trust grant and is part of the larger Wild Deserts project led by the University of NSW and Ecological Horizons, in collaboration with the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service. The broad aim of Wild Deserts is to restore the desert ecosystem, and Beyond Fencing's contribution is to gradually reintroduce 7 locally extinct mammals in Sturt National Park.

Four of these small mammal species – the greater bilby, burrowing bettong, western quoll and crest-tailed mulgara – are being introduced to an adjacent fenced 'wild training zone' where there are controlled low densities of feral cats. Researchers monitor the animals' behaviour to see if the native mammals develop the skills needed to live in proximity to predators. Innovative control techniques keep the predators' impact low, and their densities are monitored. The hope is that the reintroduced species can overcome predator naivety and develop prey responses.

During the fourth year of the 10-year project, the Felixer grooming trap trials showed that this tool is effective and highly target-specific, providing a 99.93% target accuracy on feral cat populations. It was this sustained cat suppression that paved the way for the release of locally extinct mammals into the training zone.

The pilot release of western quoll into the wild training zone in April 2024 has been successful, with no cat predation to date. Trials involving the greater bilby began in mid-2024.

The project uses media and online platforms to spread an understanding of the issues involved in ecosystem restoration.



The Beyond Fencing project aims to reintroduce 7 locally extinct mammals in Sturt National Park, including the greater bilby (pictured)

Untangling the causes of tree dieback

In 2019, the Trust awarded a \$1.342 million grant to help find more information about the causes of eucalyptus tree dieback so that effective land management strategies could be developed to deal with it. Of the total grant, \$1 million was provided to the Trust's Contestable Grants team in 2020 to run a competitive dieback research grants stream. The Natural Resources Commission was granted \$342,000 to manage the project, which is set to conclude in June 2025.

In 2023–24, researchers reconstructed previous dieback events using tree samples and mapped its incidence over time, focusing on the Perisher Valley and Snowy River Rapids.

They also identified a volatile compound, potentially attracting insects linked to dieback, though further testing is required. Rhizosphere soil samples from healthy and affected trees have been collected to explore biotic factors influencing tree health.

While researchers are nearing the end of their projects, they continue to make considerable progress.

Waste Less, Recycle More

The Waste Less, Recycle More initiative was one of Australia's largest waste and recycling funding initiatives. It has helped communities and businesses reduce the waste they send to landfill while keeping materials within the circular economy.

Although it has now ended, the Trust continues to administer a range of contestable grants funded by the initiative, in partnership with the NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA) some of which are co-funded by the Australian Government.

Supporting industry's response to the waste export ban

To support the Council of Australian Governments' waste export bans, the Australian Government announced a \$250 million Recycling Modernisation Fund (RMF) that would generate a \$1 billion investment in recycling infrastructure and transform Australia's waste and recycling capacity.

Remanufacture NSW and Remanufacture NSW Regional and Remote programs – are co-funded by the RMF and delivered by the Trust in partnership with the NSW EPA. As part of the NSW contribution, the Australian Government agreed to recognise \$19.2 million of grant funding previously awarded by New South Wales to recycling infrastructure projects. The Trust will contribute a further \$10.3 million to meet its remaining co-funding requirement.

Remanufacture NSW helps the NSW resource recovery sector respond to changes brought about by the waste export bans. Banned materials include unbeneficiated waste plastic, cardboard and paper, as well as glass and tyres. Remanufacture NSW ensures New South Wales leads by example and maximises recycling and re-use while keeping materials within the productive economy.

Since 2013, \$802 million in funding has been offered through *Waste Less, Recycle More* I and II.

The Trust has made \$57 million available through grant funding under *Waste Less, Recycle More* II.

The Australian Government is providing \$29.5 million through its Recycling Modernisation Fund to match NSW Government funding under *Waste Less, Recycle More*, delivered through the Remanufacture NSW grants program.

The Australian Government is providing \$5 million through its Food Waste for Healthy Soils Fund to match NSW Government funding under *Waste Less, Recycle More* and the Alternative Waste Treatment Transition package funding.

CASE STUDY

The re-use of plastics in a circular economy

SULO, a manufacturer of mobile garbage bins (MGBs), was awarded a \$2,083,606 grant from the Trust through Remanufacture NSW. The funds allowed SULO to make a significant upgrade to its waste container moulding equipment plant in Somersby, NSW with the integration of new moulding machines. A groundbreaking achievement has now been unlocked: the ability to incorporate up to nearly 90% recycled content in the manufacture of MGBs. This is a substantial increase over the previous average of 30%, increasing SULO's demand for locally recycled high-density polyethylene (HDPE) to unprecedented levels.

A genuine circular economy solution has now been established – plastics are sourced primarily from end-of-life MGB bodies, supplemented with material from plastic bottles and bottle caps picked up in kerbside collections. So, this innovative approach:

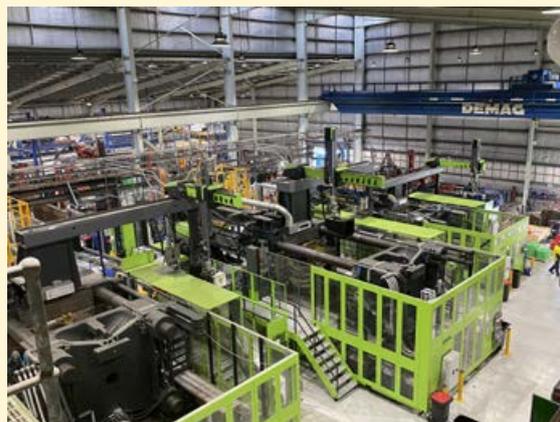
- deals with the pressing issue of plastic waste
- contributes significantly to environmental conservation and resource efficiency.

The project is an exemplar of commitment to sustainability and circular economy principles.

The project shows the NSW Government's and SULO's shared dedication to driving sustainable practices within the waste management industry, while fostering economic growth and environmental stewardship in the community.

After installing state-of-the-art machinery, SULO conducted a material trials program that included meticulous testing. These trials explored the use of alternative post-consumer recycled materials and additive recipes, aiming to achieve mixed recycled content levels of up to 93.5%.

This endeavour shows SULO's dedication to trying new sustainable practices and its willingness to work towards redefining industry standards. By funding innovation that meets such challenges, the Trust is supporting the resource recovery industry in shaping a more sustainable future.



The upgraded plant, funded by the Trust, now produces mobile garbage bins with up to 90% recycled content

A close-up photograph of a small, light purple flowering plant growing in a rocky, arid environment. The plant has several thin, upright stems with small, clustered flowers. The ground is composed of reddish-brown soil and various sized rocks. A dark, charred log or branch lies on the ground to the right of the plant. The overall scene is a natural, rugged landscape.

MANAGEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Activity indicators for Trust Administration

	2023–24	2022–23
Total expenditure on environmental initiatives and support	\$58 million	\$66 million
Number of contestable programs and other small grant programs running	21	22
Number of major programs and projects running	22	22
Number of new contestable grant projects approved	28	52
Number of new major programs and projects approved	1	2
Number of applications/expressions of interest processed	308	240
Number of grant payments processed	238	213

Variations to grants

Under the *Environmental Trust Act 1998*, grants should be expended within 3 years, however, the Trust may approve or delegate an extension. Section 15 (4) of the *Environmental Trust Act* allows the Trust to waive the condition of requiring a grant to be expended within 3 years.

Extensions and variations were approved for the following projects:

- Albury City Council – AWMC C&I and C&D MRF
- Barragal Landcare Group Inc. – Connecting Woodland Communities in Barragal Lagoon Catchment
- Batemans Bay Local Aboriginal Land Council – Cultural land management – protecting threatened flora & fauna
- Batemans Bay Local Aboriginal Land Council – Cultural land management – protecting threatened flora & fauna
- Bathurst Regional Council – River Connections – knowing and caring for the Wambool/Macquarie River
- Bathurst Regional Council – Wetlands Enhancement – Bathurst Brick Pits
- Bayside Council – Bayside Council Organics Collections Harmonisation
- Bellinger Landcare Inc. – Building the Bellinger Shire Regenerative Farming Network
- BirdLife Australia – Birds on Farms – Re-ageing the Temperate Woodlands of Central West NSW
- BirdLife Australia – Southern NSW Birds On Farms Project
- Bowling-Bookham Districts Landcare Group Incorporated – Habitat Hops From Burrinjuck to Bango – Stages 4-6
- Brickwood (NSW) Pty Ltd – Blacktown food grade recycled HDPE integration
- Byron Coastal and ICOLL Centre Inc. – Byron Bay ICOLL (Intermittently Closed and Open Lake Lagoon) rehabilitation through citizen science.
- Camden Council – Nepean River Bank Restoration
- Central Tablelands Local Land Services – Swamped by threats: conserving threatened species of upland swamps
- City of Canada Bay Council – The Rhodes to FOGO: FOGO Trial in MUDs
- City of Canada Bay Council – Building Biodiversity – Protecting Coastal Saltmarsh and Migratory Shorebirds in Canada Bay
- City of Newcastle Council – Summerhill Organics Recycling Facility
- Coffs Harbour Paper and Oil – Coffs Region Plastics Recycling
- CSIRO Biosecurity Flagship – Biocontrol Research for Weed Management Stage 3 – 2022 Implementation Plan
- CSIRO Land and Water – Untangling the role of mycorrhizal mutualisms in Eucalypt dieback to enhance revegetation outcomes

- Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water – Performance Scorecards – Improving the ecological health of NSW National Parks
- Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water – Low Emissions Specifications
- Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water – Land Acquisition
- Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water – Creating Community through Communication: a Systems-based Framework to Foster Community Engagement
- EarthPower Technologies Sydney Pty Ltd – Earthpower Expansion – AD upgrade
- Envite Environment – Community Conservation of the Emu in the Bungawalbin Stage 2
- Eurobodalla Shire Council – Wagonga Inlet Living Shorelines Project
- Federation University Australia – Ensuring long-term survival of *Halosarcia Lylei* low-open shrubland
- Fingal Head Coastcare Incorporated – Restoring and Protecting Fingal Headland Themeda Grasslands and significant bird habitats
- Foundation for Green Future Australia Ltd. – Restoration of Eastern Suburb Banksia Scrub at Henry Head Lane, Kamay Bay National Park
- Gilgandra Shire Council – Enhancement of the Gilgandra MRF
- GLENRAC Inc. – Protecting and Enhancing Catchment Headwaters – Glen Innes
- GLENRAC Inc. – Increasing Biodiversity to Enhance Endangered Ecological Communities Glen Innes
- Goonengerry Landcare Group – “Restoration and Linkage of Wilsons and Coopers Creeks, including Upper Coopers Creek Extension”.
- Goterra Pty Ltd – Upcycling organic waste in regional NSW using Black Soldier Fly larvae
- Greater Sydney Landcare Network Inc. – Cumberland Plain Restoration Program
- Griffith University – Promoting Renewable Energy Adoption Through E-Waste Upcycling
- Grima Environmental Services Pty Ltd – Grima Resource Recovery Facility expansion
- Hawkesbury City Council – Protection of Shale Sandstone Transition Forest
- Hay Shire Council – Hay Shire organics processing facility
- Holbrook Landcare Network – Upper Murray Creek and Gully Woodlands
- Hunter Local Land Services – Wollombi Brook Habitat Restoration – Linking Communities with Icon Species
- Jerrinja Local Aboriginal Land Council – Grow Harvest Heal – saving our species through traditional food stories
- Lord Howe Island Board – Regeneration ecology and a secure future for *Lagunaria* Swamp Forest on Lord Howe Island
- Mackellar Range Landcare Inc. – Mackellar Range Corridor Restoration
- Macquarie University – Predicting the impacts of groundwater abstraction on groundwater ecosystems
- Macquarie University – Enabling Healthier Gomerai/Kamilaroi Country through On-Country Classrooms
- Minyumai Land Holding Aboriginal Corporation – Restoring Minyumai’s Rainforest Gullies and Grassy Slopes
- Murrumbidgee Landcare Association Inc. – Connecting young people with nature: Benefits for biodiversity, mental health and social connection
- Mutawintji Board of Management – Mutawintji Country Repair: Paliirra Pantji, Paliirra Marnti.
- National Parks and Wildlife – Accelerating Hawkweed Eradication
- Nature Conservation Council of NSW – Large Forest Owls – Safe Havens
- Nature Glenelg Trust – Minyumai wetland restoration project, adjacent to Bundjalung National Park
- North Coast Local Land Services – Yaegl Cultural Burning Project
- Northern Beaches Council – Saving Sydney’s Freshwater Wetlands on Sydney’s Northern Beaches

- Nowra Chemical Manufacturers Pty Ltd – Direct Re-Use Drum Washer
- NSW Office of Chief Scientist and Engineer – NSW Decarbonisation Innovation Hub (Stages 1 & 2)
- Orange City Council – Contamination Investigation and Remediation of former Orange Gasworks Site
- Palm Grove Ourimbah Creek Landcare Inc. – Ourimbah Creek Riparian Zone Rehabilitation
- Parkes Shire Council – Investigation and remediation of former Parkes Council Gasworks site
- Polytrade Recycling – Sydney glass beneficiation plant
- Port Macquarie-Hastings Council – CSU Organics Recovery Project
- Port Stephens Council – Birubi Headland Sand Dune Restoration
- Port Stephens Council – Cultural burning for Tomaree Koala habitat improvement
- Queensland University of Technology – Promoting stewardship: identifying pathways to greater participation
- Quickstep Technologies Pty Ltd – Intelligent composite hydrogen storage system
- Riverina Local Land Services – Box Gum Grassy Woodlands – transforming the value for land-holders from bush to generational asset
- Shoalhaven City Council – Glass, plastic and textile re-manufacturing MICROfactorie
- Shoalhaven Landcare Association Incorporated – Restoring and enhancing ecological functioning in remnant vegetation in the Northern Shoalhaven
- Southern Cross University – Regenerative Agriculture Mentorship Program
- SWR Community Dune Care Group Incorporated – To enhance the resilience of coastal dune systems and protect Littoral Rainforest communities at Smoky Beach and Trial Bay
- The Mulloon Institute Limited – Molonglo Catchment Rehydration Initiative Stage 2 – Foxlow
- The Mulloon Institute Limited – Molonglo Catchment Rehydration Initiative
- Trees in Newcastle Inc. – Restoration in the Shire: Littoral Rainforest Rehabilitation in Port Stephens
- Tweed Shire Council – Take Your Lead
- Tweed Shire Council – Tweed & Kyogle Community on Feral Deer Alert
- University of Canberra – Environmental Sustainability Education Program for the NSW Construction Industry
- University of New England – Managing the community viability and genetic integrity of woodland TECs
- University of New England – Dynamic Lagoons: building knowledge and public support to secure threatened Upland Wetlands
- University of New England, School of Environment and Rural Science – Developing Strategies for Effective Feral Cat Management
- University of Newcastle – Improving conservation of vulnerable amphibian fauna in protected habitats
- Upcycled Building Materials Australia Pty Ltd – Save Board Australia
- Upper Hunter Shire Council – Organic waste collection – Upper Hunter Shire
- VIP Packaging – Pail rationalisation and incorporation of recycled content trial
- Western Landcare NSW Incorporated – Seed collection/dispersal nurseries for Rangelands rehabilitation
- Western Landcare NSW Incorporated – FWRRA Landscape Erosion Filters
- Western Local Land Services – Willandra Creek landholders protecting Sandhill Pine Woodland
- Western Local Land Services – Create and Enhance Greenspots (Mesic Refugia) for Threatened Species Conservation
- Western Sydney University – Determining the physiological underpinnings of Eucalypt dieback in NSW
- Worimi Local Aboriginal Land Council – Worimi LALC Mallabula Point Restoration

Assets

The Trust has no physical assets that require risk management or associated insurance activities.

Consultants

No consultants were used.

Risk management and insurance activities

Prior to 1 January 2024 the Trust was administered by the NSW Department of Planning and Environment and adopted their Environment Risk Management Framework and Business Continuity Management Framework. After this date the Trust was administered by the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water which continued to use the same frameworks.

During the financial year the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure provided business continuity services to the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water. For more information, please see the NSW Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure Annual Report 2023-24.

The Trust is covered by a range of insurances held by the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water with the NSW Treasury Managed Fund.

Audit and review

Internal audit

Before the Machinery of Government changes on 1 January 2024, the Trust was supported by the NSW Department of Planning and Environment's internal audit function. After this date, the Trust was supported by the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water's internal audit function in accordance with the *Internal Audit and Risk Management Policy for the General Government Sector* (TPP20-08).

During the reporting period, the relevant departments provided the chief audit executive and internal audit function for the Trust.

The internal audit function provides independent and objective review and advisory services designed to improve operations, risk management, controls and governance processes.

Audit and Risk Committee

Seven Audit and Risk Committee meetings have been held during the 2023-24 financial year in support of the Trust.

External reviews

The Trust's competitive grants programs are evaluated every 5 years and major project grants are evaluated at the completion of each project. Evaluations are based on extensive research, comparative analysis of similar grant offerings and stakeholder engagement with grantees, applicants, Trust staff and Technical Review Committee members. The reviewers consider each program's performance for its appropriateness, effectiveness, efficiency, equity and legacy.

The following contestable programs were evaluated:

Environmental Restoration and Rehabilitation

The evaluation found that the program was much needed to meet New South Wales's current environmental problems, but its administration could be streamlined and improved. Trust administration will progressively implement the accepted recommendations.

Environmental Research

The evaluation found that this program was in high demand and would benefit from a higher funding allocation to bolster research outcomes. Many of the accepted recommendations have already been implemented.

Protecting Our Places

The evaluation found that the Protecting Our Places program is unique in what it offers Aboriginal organisations in New South Wales, but its administration, promotion and accessibility could be improved to better support current grantees and to attract a wider and larger group of future applicants. Trust administration will progressively implement these recommendations.

The final evaluation reports, including the Trust's responses for these 3 programs, will be published on the Trust's website in the 2024-25 financial year.

The following major projects were evaluated:

Bushfire Relief Fund for Wildlife Rehabilitators

The evaluation showed that this project achieved notable outcomes. These included training for 200 wildlife rehabilitators and veterinarians, and strategic funding for rehabilitation organisations aligned with government priorities.

Healthy Seeds, Phase 1

The evaluation found that this project achieved a better understanding of the most effective and efficient interventions to improve the genetic health and reliable supply of native seed.

Grow Sustainable Nature Based Tourism Program

The Grow Sustainable Nature Based Tourism Program was evaluated on 3 of its 4 projects: Young Adults Brand Campaign, Commercial Tour Operator Grants and WilderQuest Learning. The evaluation showed that these projects made a unique contribution to nature-based tourism. The fourth project will be evaluated in 2024–25.

Corporate governance

Public access to information

Under Schedule 3 of the Government Information (Public Access) Regulation 2018 (the Regulation), the Trust is a subsidiary agency for the purposes of the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* (the Act). Therefore, all statistical information about access applications required to be included in an annual report regarding the Trust, in

compliance with Section 125 of the Act and Clause 8 of the Regulation, is included in the annual report for the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure for the period of 1 July 2023 to 31 December 2023, and the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water for the period of 1 January 2024 to 30 June 2024.

Privacy

Under TPG23-10 Annual Reporting Requirements, the Trust must provide a statement of its actions to comply with the requirements of the *Privacy and Personal Information Protection Act 1998* (PPIP Act). It must also provide statistical details of any reviews conducted by or on behalf of the agency, under Part 5 of the PPIP Act.

The Trust relies upon the Privacy Management Plan for the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water. The Plan outlines how the department and its associated agencies comply with the principles of the PPIP Act and the *Health Records and Information Privacy Act 2002*. Officers in the department's Information Access & Privacy unit also provide specialist privacy advice and training to staff.

In 2023–24, the Trust received no applications for review under Part 5 of the PPIP Act.

For other issues of compliance please refer to the annual report for the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure for the period of 1 July 2023 to 31 December 2023, and the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water for the period of 1 January 2024 to 30 June 2024.

Internal audit and risk management statement

Internal Audit and Risk Management Attestation Statement for the 2023-2024 Financial Year for the NSW Environmental Trust

I, Katie Robinson, Secretary, NSW Environmental Trust (the Trust) am of the opinion that the NSW Environmental Trust has internal audit and risk management processes in operation that are compliant with the seven (7) Core Requirements set out in the *Internal Audit and Risk Management Policy for the General Government Sector*, specifically:

Core Requirements

Risk Management Framework

- | | | |
|-----|---|-----------|
| 1.1 | The Accountable Authority shall accept ultimate responsibility and accountability for risk management in the agency. | Compliant |
| 1.2 | The Accountable Authority shall establish and maintain a risk management framework that is appropriate for the agency. The Accountable Authority shall ensure the framework is consistent with AS ISO 31000:2018. | Compliant |

Internal Audit Function

- | | | |
|-----|--|-----------|
| 2.1 | The Accountable Authority shall establish and maintain an internal audit function that is appropriate for the agency and fit for purpose. | Compliant |
| 2.2 | The Accountable Authority shall ensure the internal audit function operates consistent with the International Standards for the Professional Practice for Internal Auditing. | Compliant |
| 2.3 | The Accountable Authority shall ensure the agency has an Internal Audit Charter that is consistent with the content of the 'model charter'. | Compliant |

Audit and Risk Committee

- | | | |
|-----|---|-----------|
| 3.1 | The Accountable Authority shall establish and maintain efficient and effective arrangements for independent Audit and Risk Committee oversight to provide advice and guidance to the Accountable Authority on the agency's governance processes, risk management and control frameworks, and its external accountability obligations. | Compliant |
| 3.2 | The Accountable Authority shall ensure that the Audit and Risk Committee has a Charter that is consistent with the 'model charter'. | Compliant |

Membership

For the 2023-24 reporting period, the independent Chair and members of the Audit and Risk Committee were:

From 1 July 2023 to 31 December 2023:

Role	Name	Start Term Date	Finish Term Date
Independent Chair	Penny Hutchinson	1 February 2020	31 January 2025
Independent Member	Brian Blood	1 February 2020	31 January 2025
Independent Member	Julie Elliott	1 February 2020	31 October 2024

From 1 January 2024 to 30 June 2024:

Role	Name	Start Term Date	Finish Term Date
Independent Chair	Penny Hutchinson	1 January 2024	30 September 2024
Independent Member	Brian Blood	1 January 2024	30 September 2024
Independent Member	Julie Elliott	1 January 2024	30 September 2024

Shared Arrangements

I, Katie Robinson, Secretary, NSW Environmental Trust (the Trust), advise that:

- For the period 1 July 2023 – 30 December 2023 the Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) provided a shared arrangement including the Audit and Risk Committee, the Chief Risk Officer, the Chief Audit Executive, and the internal audit function for the following:
 - NSW Department of Planning and Environment
 - NSW Environmental Trust and
 - Lord Howe Island Board.
- For the period 1 January 2024 – 30 June 2024 the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water entered into an approved shared arrangement comprising the following:
 - NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
 - NSW Environmental Trust and
 - Lord Howe Island Board.

The resources shared included the Audit and Risk Committee, the Chief Audit Executive and the internal audit function. The shared Audit and Risk Committee is a Principal Department Led Shared Audit and Risk Committee.

Katie Robinson  _____

Date: 23.08.2024 _____

Secretary

NSW Environmental Trust

Agency Contact:

Geoff Campbell

Director, Audit and Ethics

Membership of Trust technical review committees

Under Section 9 of the Environmental Trust Act, technical review committees (TRCs) assess and recommend grant applications and business plans to the Trust. This year 11 TRCs assisted the Trust in managing its grant programs. Membership of the TRCs that met in 2023–24 is as follows:

Biodiversity Technical Review Committee

Dr James Brazill-Boast (Chairperson)

Principal Ecologist, Biodiversity Conservation Trust, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

Michael Vyse

Science and Planning Manager, Greening Australia

Katie McRobert

General Manager, Australian Farm Institute

Nicole Maher

Community representative, Regional Landcare Coordinator, Murrumbidgee Landcare Inc

Dr Bryony Horton

Director, Science, Strategy and Impact, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

Clean Technology Technical Review Committee

Suzanne Toubourou (Chairperson)

Chief Executive Officer, Australian Council of Recycling

Dr Stephen White

Energy Efficiency Domain Leader, CSIRO

Douglas McCloskey

Program Director, Energy and Water Consumers' Advocacy Program, Justice and Equity Centre

Alison Scotland

Executive Director, Australian Sustainable Built Environment Council

Clean Technology Research and Development Technical Review Committee

Hugh Durrant-Whyte (Chairperson)

NSW Chief Scientist and Engineer

Megan Fisher

Chief Executive Officer, Energy Lab

Margaret McDonald

Principal, National Corporate Analysis Pty Ltd

Roger Swinbourne

Founder, Positive Futures Advisory Pty Ltd

Contaminated Land Management Technical Review Committee

Phillippa Biswell (Chairperson)

Environmental Project Officer – Earth Scientist, Sutherland Shire Council

Ian Gregson

Principal Environmental Consultant, GHD

Dr Alexandra Pulkownik

School of Life Sciences, University of Technology Sydney

Community and Sustainability Technical Review Committee

Richard Davies (Chairperson)

Manager, Strategic Policy & Programs, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

Andrew Rawson

Adjunct Associate Professor, Charles Sturt University

Denise Anderson

Senior Policy Officer, Local Government NSW

Gillian Graham-Crowe

Director, Sustainability, University of Sydney

Paul Flemons

Manager, Digital Collections and Citizen Science, Australian Museum

Nature Based Tourism Technical Review Committee

Julie Emerson (Chairperson)

Various positions on associations and councils related to tourism

Nadine Schramm

Certification Manager, Ecotourism Australia

Sonia McIvor

Community representative

Invasive Species Technical Review Committee

Quentin Hart (Previous Chairperson)

Manager, Invasive Species Strategy and Planning, Department of Primary Industries

Susy Cenedese (Current Chairperson)

Strategy Manager, Local Government NSW

Professor Kristine French

Centre for Sustainable Ecosystem Solutions, School of Earth, Atmospheric and Life Sciences, University of Wollongong

Dr Paul Downey

Community representative, Paul Downey Consulting

Bob Makinson

Community representative, Bob Makinson Consulting

Santi Lolicato

Community representative, Invasive Species Council (Board Member)

Dr Julie Old

Associate Professor, Western Sydney University

Environmental Research Technical Review Committee

Professor Pauline Ross (Chairperson)

Deputy Head of School of Life and Environmental Sciences, University of Sydney, Sydney Institute of Marine Sciences

Dr Rebecca Colvin

Community representative

Dr Bryony Horton

Director, Science, Strategy and Impact, Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

Dr Rai Kookana

Honorary Fellow, CSIRO, Affiliate Professor, University of Adelaide

Environmental Education Technical Review Committee

Professor Phillip McIntyre (Chairperson)

University of Newcastle

Mark Edwards

Subject matter expert, Department of Lands

Caitlin Lawrence

Business, Partnerships and Programs Manager, Petaurus Education Group

Beth Medway

Principal Environmental Consultant, Restore Environmental Consultants

Andrew Snedden

Partnerships Coordinator, Australian Association for Environmental Education – NSW Chapter

Protecting Our Places Technical Review Committee

Allan Teale (Chairperson)

Lecturer, University of Technology Sydney and Director, Yibirrimarra Paints

Jane Anderson

Bushcare Officer, Blue Mountains City Council

Constance Chatfield

Community representative

Deborah Lennis

Subject matter expert

Whitney Ridgeway

Traditional knowledge holder, Firesticks Alliance

Kayne Morton

Senior Conservation Officer, Deerubbin Local Aboriginal Land Council

Aquatic Technical Review Committee

Graeme Enders (Chairperson)

Subject matter expert

Emma Bradbury

Subject matter expert

Rory Treweeke

Industry representative

Craig Copeland

Community representative

A vibrant green and yellow parrot, possibly a cockatiel, is perched on a thick, weathered wooden branch. The bird has a bright green body with a yellow and red patch on its chest and a red beak. Its long tail feathers are brown and pointed. The background is a solid, muted green color. A semi-transparent dark grey horizontal band is overlaid across the middle of the image, containing the word "SUSTAINABILITY" in white, uppercase, sans-serif font.

SUSTAINABILITY

Prior to 1 January 2024, the Trust was administered by the NSW Department of Planning and Environment. However, due to Machinery of Government changes that took effect on that date the Trust is now administered by the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water.

For compliance issues relating to disability inclusion action plans, work health and safety, and workforce diversity please see the annual report for the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure for the period of 1 July 2023 to 31 December 2023, and the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water for the period of 1 January 2024 to 30 June 2024.

The Trust receives procurement services from NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, which operates under the procurement framework of, and receives procurement services from Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure.

All *Modern Slavery Act 2018* (NSW) requirements for Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water are managed through this procurement framework, and activities to support and uphold the intent of the *Modern Slavery Act 2018* are reported in Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure's Annual Report 2023-2024.

FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE





INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

Environmental Trust

To Members of the New South Wales Parliament

Opinion

I have audited the accompanying financial statements of Environmental Trust (the Trust), which comprise the Statement by the Accountable Authority, the Statement of Comprehensive Income for the year ended 30 June 2024, the Statement of Financial Position as at 30 June 2024, the Statement of Changes in Equity and the Statement of Cash Flows, for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including a Statement of Material Accounting Policies, and other explanatory information.

In my opinion, the financial statements:

- have been prepared in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards and the applicable financial reporting requirements of the *Government Sector Finance Act 2018* (GSF Act), the *Government Sector Finance Regulation 2024* (GSF Regulation) and the Treasurer's Directions
- presents fairly the Trust's financial position, financial performance and cash flows

My opinion should be read in conjunction with the rest of this report.

Basis for Opinion

I conducted my audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. My responsibilities under the standards are described in the 'Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements' section of my report.

I am independent of the Trust in accordance with the requirements of the:

- Australian Auditing Standards
- Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 'Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (including Independence Standards)' (APES 110).

Parliament promotes independence by ensuring the Auditor-General and the Audit Office of New South Wales are not compromised in their roles by:

- providing that only Parliament, and not the executive government, can remove an Auditor-General
- mandating the Auditor-General as auditor of public sector agencies
- precluding the Auditor-General from providing non-audit services.

I have fulfilled my other ethical responsibilities in accordance with APES 110.

I believe the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my audit opinion.

The Members of the Trust's Responsibilities for the Financial Statements

The Members of the Trust are responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards, the GSF Act, GSF Regulation and Treasurer's Directions. The Members of the Trust's responsibility also includes such internal control as the Members of the Trust determine is necessary to enable the preparation and fair presentation of the financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the Members of the Trust are responsible for assessing the Trust's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statements

My objectives are to:

- obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error
- issue an Independent Auditor's Report including my opinion.

Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but does not guarantee an audit conducted in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards will always detect material misstatements. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error. Misstatements are considered material if, individually or in aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions users take based on the financial statements.

A description of my responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located at the Auditing and Assurance Standards Board website at: www.auasb.gov.au/auditors_responsibilities/ar4.pdf
The description forms part of my auditor's report.

The scope of my audit does not include, nor provide assurance:

- that the Trust carried out its activities effectively, efficiently and economically
- about the assumptions used in formulating the budget figures disclosed in the financial statements
- about the security and controls over the electronic publication of the audited financial statements on any website where they may be presented
- about any other information which may have been hyperlinked to/from the financial statements.



Min Lee
Director, Financial Audit

Delegate of the Auditor-General for New South Wales

24 October 2024
SYDNEY

Environmental Trust
Statement by the Accountable Authority
for the year ended 30 June 2024

Pursuant to section 7.6(4) of the *Government Sector Finance Act 2018* ("GSF Act"), we state that these financial statements:

- have been prepared in accordance with the Australian Accounting Standards and the applicable requirements of the GSF Act, the Government Sector Finance Regulation 2024 and the Treasurer's directions, and
- present fairly the Environmental Trust's financial position, financial performance and cash flows.



Hon. Penny Sharpe MLC
Chair

Date: 23/10/24



Shane Eccleston
Trust Member

Date: 23/10/2024

BEGINNING OF AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024

	Notes	Actual 2024 \$'000	Budget 2024 \$'000	Actual 2023 \$'000
Expenses excluding losses				
Operating expenses	<u>2(a)</u>	5,664	6,874	5,234
Grants and subsidies	<u>2(b)</u>	52,390	84,049	61,273
Total expenses excluding losses		58,054	90,923	66,507
Revenue				
Grants and contributions	<u>3(a)</u>	67,212	93,314	61,472
Other income	<u>3(b)</u>	1,619	1,095	3,531
Total revenue		68,831	94,409	65,003
Other gains/(losses)	<u>4</u>	-	-	(298)
Net result		10,777	3,486	(1,802)
Total comprehensive income/(loss)		10,777	3,486	(1,802)

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

AS AT 30 JUNE 2024

	Notes	Actual 2024 \$'000	Budget 2024 \$'000	Actual 2023 \$'000
ASSETS				
Current assets				
Cash and cash equivalents	<u>6</u>	16,928	10,139	6,653
Receivables	<u>7</u>	762	625	624
Total current assets		17,690	10,764	7,277
Total assets		17,690	10,764	7,277
LIABILITIES				
Current liabilities				
Payables	<u>8</u>	1,752	2,116	2,116
Total current liabilities		1,752	2,116	2,116
Total liabilities		1,752	2,116	2,116
Net assets		15,938	8,648	5,161
EQUITY				
Accumulated funds		15,938	8,648	5,161
Total equity		15,938	8,648	5,161

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST

STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024

	Accumulated Funds \$'000	Total \$'000
Balance at 1 July 2023	5,161	5,161
Net result for the year	10,777	10,777
Total comprehensive income/(loss) for the year	10,777	10,777
Balance at 30 June 2024	15,938	15,938
Balance at 1 July 2022	6,963	6,963
Net result for the year	(1,802)	(1,802)
Total comprehensive income/(loss) for the year	(1,802)	(1,802)
Balance at 30 June 2023	5,161	5,161

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024

	Notes	Actual 2024 \$'000	Budget 2024 \$'000	Actual 2023 \$'000
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES				
Payments				
Grants and subsidies		(50,946)	(84,049)	(59,892)
Operating expenses		(7,613)	(6,874)	(7,214)
Total payments		(58,559)	(90,923)	(67,106)
Receipts				
Grants and other contributions		67,212	93,314	61,122
Other income		1,622	1,095	4,606
Total receipts		68,834	94,409	65,728
NET CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES	<u>12</u>	10,275	3,486	(1,378)
NET INCREASE/(DECREASE) IN CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS		10,275	3,486	(1,378)
Opening cash and cash equivalents		6,653	6,653	8,031
CLOSING CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS	<u>6</u>	16,928	10,139	6,653

The accompanying notes form part of these financial statements.

ENVIRONMENTAL TRUST

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2024

1. STATEMENT OF MATERIAL ACCOUNTING POLICIES

(a) Reporting entity

The Environmental Trust (the Trust) is a NSW government entity, as constituted by the *Environmental Trust Act 1998*, and is a reporting entity under the *Government Sector Finance Act 2018* (GSF Act).

The Trust is an independent GSF agency established by the NSW government to fund a broad range of organisations to undertake projects that enhance the environment of NSW. The Trust administers grants across a diverse range of programs, including contestable grants, major projects and various NSW Government initiatives. The Trust contributes to the *connecting of communities to resilient and sustainable local environments and heritage*. Refer to note 5.

The Trust is chaired by the NSW Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment and Minister for Heritage. At 30 June 2024, the members of the Trust were the Executive Director, Office of the Secretary, within Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW), and representatives from local government, the Nature Conservation Council of NSW and NSW Treasury.

Under the *Administrative Changes – Miscellaneous – Order (No 6) 2023* effective from 1 January 2024, the Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) was split into two departments, the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure (DPHI) and DCCEEW. DCCEEW is now administratively responsible for providing staffing and facility resources to the Trust.

The Trust is a not-for-profit entity (as profit is not its principal objective) with no cash generating units. The reporting entity is controlled by the State of New South Wales which is the ultimate parent and is consolidated as part of the NSW total State Sector Accounts.

The Trust's financial statements have been authorised for issue by the Chair and a Trust Member on the date the accompanying statement was signed.

(b) Basis of preparation

The Trust's financial statements are general purpose financial statements which have been prepared on an accruals basis and in accordance with:

- applicable Australian Accounting Standards (which include Australian Accounting Interpretations);
- the requirements of the GSF Act; and
- Treasurer's Directions issued under the GSF Act.

Financial statement items are prepared in accordance with the historical cost convention, except where specified otherwise. Judgements, key assumptions and estimates made by management are disclosed in the relevant notes to the financial statements.

All amounts are rounded to the nearest one thousand dollars and are expressed in Australian currency, which is the Trust's presentation and functional currency.

(c) Statement of compliance

The financial statements and notes comply with the Australian Accounting Standards, which include Australian Accounting Interpretations.

(d) Accounting for the Goods and Services Tax (GST)

Income, expenses and assets are recognised net of the amount of GST, except that the:

- amount of GST incurred by the Trust as a purchaser, that is not recoverable from the Australian Taxation Office, is recognised as part of the cost of acquisition of an asset or as part of an item of expense, and
- receivables and payables are stated with the amount of GST included.

Cash flows are included in the Statement of Cash Flows on a gross basis.

(e) Comparative information

Except when an Australian Accounting Standard permits or requires otherwise, comparative information is disclosed in respect of the previous period for all amounts reported in the financial statements.

(f) Budgeted amounts

The budgeted amounts are drawn from the original budgeted financial statements presented to Parliament in respect of the reporting period. Subsequent amendments to the original budget are not reflected in the budgeted amounts. Major variances between the original budgeted amounts and the actual amounts disclosed in the primary financial statements are explained in note 11.

(g) Changes in accounting policies, including new or revised Australian Accounting Standards

(i) Effective for the first time in the 2023-24 financial year

The accounting policies applied in 2023-24 are consistent with those of the previous year however AASB 2021-2 Amendments to Australian Accounting Standards-Disclosure of Accounting Policies and Definition of Accounting Estimates is effective for the first time in financial year 2023-24 and accordingly, the Trust has revised its notes to the financial statements information to disclose material policy information. No other new accounting standards or interpretations that applied to the Trust for the first time in 2023-24 had a material impact on the recognition and measurement of financial statement transactions and balances.

(ii) Issued but not effective in the 2023-24 financial year

NSW public sector entities do not early adopt new Australian Accounting Standards unless the Treasury determines otherwise. The Trust has assessed any potential impact on the financial statements due to the new accounting standards or interpretations and find that there will be no material financial impact when implemented.

(h) Impact of Climate-related matters on Financial Reporting for 2023-24

The Trust has assessed and determined that there are no material impacts of potential climate related matters on the financial statements.

(i) Deemed appropriations

The Trust controls the Environmental Trust Fund which is a special deposits account established under section 18 of the *Environmental Trust Act 1998* into which is paid all of the money that is expended by the Trust in the exercise of its functions. The Trust therefore does not have any deemed appropriations and hence no disclosure under section 4.7 of the GSF Act on movement of deemed appropriations is required. Refer note 6.

(j) Going concern

The 2023-24 financial statements have been prepared on a going concern basis. The Trust received Treasury funding via grants from the DPE to 31 December 2023 and then from DCCEEW from 1 January 2024 onwards. At the date of this report there is no reason to expect that this funding will not continue.

2. EXPENSES EXCLUDING LOSSES

(a) Operating expenses	2024 \$'000	2023 \$'000
Corporate and specialist support	5,138	4,553
Fees for services	476	630
Auditor's remuneration - audit of the financial statements	42	40
Travel	1	8
Legal costs	1	-
Other	6	3
	5,664	5,234

Recognition and measurement

Corporate and specialist support

As of 1 January 2024, specialist and administrative services, including administration of grants will be provided by DCCEEW and DPHI. Prior to this date this was provided by the former DPE. The fair value of corporate and specialist services is charged to the Trust under a Service Agreement.

(b) Grants and subsidies	2024 \$'000	2023 \$'000
State and Local Governments	32,147	45,205
Other Non-government organisations	19,756	15,988
Commonwealth Government	487	80
	52,390	61,273

Recognition and measurement

Grants are recognised as an expense when the Trust transfers control of the contribution. The Trust is deemed to have transferred control when the grant is paid or is payable.

3. REVENUE

Income is recognised in accordance with the requirements of AASB 15 *Revenue from Contracts with Customers* (AASB 15) or AASB 1058 *Income of Not-for-Profit Entities* (AASB 1058), dependent on whether there is a contract with a customer defined by AASB 15.

(a) Grants and other contributions	2024 \$'000	2023 \$'000
Grants without sufficiently specific performance obligations	67,212	61,472
	67,212	61,472

The above grants include recurrent funding of \$17.5 million (2023: \$53.8 million) from DPE, \$49.71 million (2023: Nil) from DCCEEW and nil from the Environment Protection Authority (EPA) towards the *Waste Less Recycle More* program (2023: \$7.7 million).

Recognition and measurement

Grants are received by the Trust to support its service delivery objectives and the funding agreements typically specify the purpose of the grants. Revenue from grants with sufficiently specific milestones/performance obligations and agreed funding against each milestone is recognised as and when the Trust satisfies its performance obligation by transferring promised goods/achieving milestones.

Where the total funding amount in a contract is not allocated to distinct milestones or performance obligations and specifies the purpose of the grants only, then revenue is recognised when the Trust obtains control over the funds i.e. obtains cash.

No element of financing is deemed present as funding payments are usually received in advance or shortly after the relevant obligation is satisfied. Revenue is only recognised to the extent that it is highly probable that a significant reversal will not occur. This is based on past experience and terms specified in the contract.

(b) Other income	2024 \$'000	2023 \$'000
Fines (Court awarded)	458	298
Refunds by grantees of unspent grants	1,161	3,233
	1,619	3,531

Recognition and measurement

(i) Fines (Court awarded)

Fines are recognised in the period in which the Land and Environment Court orders payment of fines to the Trust for an environmental offence.

(ii) Refunds by grantees of unspent grants

Refunds are recognised by the Trust in the period in which the unspent grant amounts paid to grantees gets identified by or advised to the Trust through the grant acquittal process. Refer note 7 and note 10. The Trust receives refunds from a number of grantees from its contestable grants and major grants programs due to factors such as withdrawals by grantees and the inability of grantees to achieve milestones within acceptable timeframes.

4. OTHER GAINS/(LOSSES)

	2024 \$'000	2023 \$'000
Impairment gains/(losses) on receivables	-	(298)
	-	(298)

Impairments relate to debtors where court fines have been issued or the Trust has requested the return of unspent grants. Refer note 7 and note 3(b).

Recognition and measurement

Impairment of receivables

Impairment gains/(losses) may arise on non-financial assets held by the Trust from time to time. Accounting for impairment gains/(losses) is dependent upon the individual asset (or group of assets) subject to impairment. Refer note 7 for accounting policies and events giving rise to impairment gains/(losses).

The amount allowed for impairment is the difference between the carrying amount of the receivables and the present value of estimated future cash flows, discounted at the original effective interest rate. The amount of an impairment gain/(loss) is recognised in the net result for the year. If due to any event an impaired receivable regains its value, the Trust realises an impairment gain. Refer note 7.

5. DISAGGREGATED DISCLOSURE STATEMENTS

The operations of the Trust contribute to the following Major Activity Group:

Connecting communities to resilient and sustainable local environments and heritage – Protecting and preserving the quality of our environment and heritage through active stewardship to support a resilient and sustainable New South Wales.

Disaggregated disclosure statements are included in the financial statements of DCCEEW.

6. CURRENT ASSETS – CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS

	2024 \$'000	2023 \$'000
Cash at bank and on hand	16,928	6,653
	16,928	6,653

For the purposes of the statement of cash flows, cash and cash equivalents include cash at bank and on hand.

Cash and cash equivalent assets recognised in the statement of financial position are reconciled at the end of the financial year to the statement of cash flows as follows:

	2024 \$'000	2023 \$'000
Cash and cash equivalents (per statement of financial position)	16,928	6,653
Closing cash and cash equivalents (per statement of cash flows)	16,928	6,653

Refer note 13 for details regarding credit risk, liquidity risk and market risk arising from financial instruments.

All cash and cash equivalent balances of the Trust are restricted. Restricted cash represents the cash held by the Trust in the special deposits account established under section 18 of the *Environmental Trust Act 1998*. Refer note 1(i).

7. CURRENT ASSETS – RECEIVABLES

	2024 \$'000	2023 \$'000
Trade debtors	809	613
Expected credit loss	(489)	(489)
Prepayments	141	-
Accrued income	-	52
Net GST receivable	301	448
	762	624
Movements in allowance for expected credit losses:		
Balance as at 1 July	489	191
Increase/(decrease) in allowance recognised in net results	-	298
Balance at 30 June	489	489

Details regarding credit risk of trade debtors that are neither past due nor impaired, are disclosed in note 13.

Recognition and measurement

All purchases or sales of financial assets are recognised and derecognised on a trade date basis.

Receivables are initially recognised at fair value plus any directly attributable transaction costs. Trade receivables that do not contain a significant financing component are measured at the transaction price.

Subsequent measurement

The Trust holds receivables with the objective to collect the contractual cash flows and therefore measures them at amortised cost using the effective interest method, less any impairment. Changes are recognised in the net result for the year when impaired, derecognised or through the amortisation process.

Impairment

The Trust recognises an allowance for expected credit losses (ECLs) for all debt financial assets not held at fair value through profit or loss in statement of comprehensive income. ECLs are based on the difference between the contractual cash flows and the cash flows that the Trust expects to receive, discounted at the original effective interest rate.

For trade receivables, the Trust applies a simplified approach in calculating ECLs. It recognises a loss allowance based on lifetime ECLs at each reporting date. The Trust has established a provision matrix based on its historical credit loss experience for trade receivables, adjusted for forward-looking factors specific to the receivables. If due to any event an impaired receivable regains its value, the Trust realises an impairment gain. Any gains or losses on impairment are recognised through statement of comprehensive income.

8. CURRENT LIABILITIES – PAYABLES

	2024 \$'000	2023 \$'000
Creditors	7	636
Accrued expenses	1,745	1,480
	1,752	2,116

Details regarding liquidity risk, including a maturity analysis of the above payables, are disclosed in note 13.

Recognition and measurement

Short-term payables with no stated interest are measured at the original invoice amount where the effect of discounting is immaterial.

9. COMMITMENTS

There were no commitments as at 30 June 2024 (2023: nil).

10. CONTINGENT LIABILITIES AND CONTINGENT ASSETS

Contingent liabilities:

There were no contingent liabilities as at 30 June 2024 (2023: nil).

Contingent assets:

The Trust may be entitled to receive refunds of unspent grant monies from grantees. These refunds may occur in circumstances such as withdrawals from grant programs by grantees or where grantees are unable to achieve milestones within acceptable timeframes. It is not practical to accurately estimate the financial amounts of these contingent assets. Refer note 3(b).

11. BUDGET REVIEW

The budgeted amounts are drawn from the original budgeted financial statements presented to Parliament in respect of the reporting period. Subsequent amendments to the original budget are not reflected in the budgeted amounts. Major variances between the original budgeted amounts and the actual amounts disclosed in the primary financial statements are explained below.

(a) Net result

The actual net surplus of \$10.8 million was higher than the budgeted surplus of \$3.5 million by \$7.3 million. This favourable variance was a result of lower than budgeted expenses of \$32.9 million, partly offset by reduced revenue of \$25.6 million.

Major expenses and revenue variances were due to:

Expenses	\$ million
- Reduction in grant expenses were due to delayed commencement by the Trust of some of its grants programs and slower than expected progress by grantees due to resourcing and approvals issues. As part of the 2024-25 State Budget process, the Trust obtained approval to reallocate majority of these grant payments to future years.	31.7
- Minor variances in operating expenses across a range of categories.	1.2
Total under expenditure	32.9
Revenue	
- Lower revenue mainly due to the reallocation of government funding to future years to correspond with the timing of expenses (refer above) and lower than budgeted return of unspent grant funding by grantees.	(25.6)
Total lower than budgeted revenue	(25.6)
Variance in net result	7.3

12. RECONCILIATION OF CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES TO NET RESULT

	2024 \$'000	2023 \$'000
Net cash used on operating activities	10,275	(1,378)
Increase/(decrease) in receivables	138	(1,023)
Decrease/(increase) in creditors	364	599
Net result	10,777	(1,802)

13. FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

The Trust's principal financial instruments are outlined below. These financial instruments arise directly from the Trust's operations. The Trust does not enter into or trade financial instruments, including derivative financial instruments, for speculative purposes.

The Trust's main risks arising from financial instruments are outlined below, together with its objectives, policies, and processes for measuring and managing risk. Further quantitative and qualitative disclosures are included throughout these financial statements.

The Trust has an overall responsibility for the establishment and oversight of risk management and reviews and agrees policies for managing each of these risks. Risk management policies are established to identify and analyse the risks faced by the Trust, to set risk limits and controls and to monitor risks. Compliance with policies is reviewed by the Trust on a continuous basis.

(a) Financial instrument categories

Class:	Note	Category	Carrying Amount	
			2024 \$'000	2023 \$'000
Financial Assets				
Cash and cash equivalents	6	Amortised cost	16,928	6,653
Receivables ¹	7	Amortised cost	320	176
			17,248	6,829
Financial Liabilities				
Payables ²	8	Financial liabilities (at amortised cost)	1,752	2,116
			1,752	2,116

Notes

1. Excludes statutory receivables and prepayments (i.e., not within the scope of AASB 7).

2. Excludes statutory payables and unearned revenue (i.e., not within the scope of AASB 7).

(b) Derecognition of financial assets and financial liabilities

A financial asset is derecognised when the contractual rights to the cash flows from the financial assets expire; or if the Trust transfers the financial asset:

- where substantially all the risks and rewards have been transferred; or
- where the Trust has neither transferred nor retained substantially all the risks and rewards of the asset but has transferred control.

Where the Trust has neither transferred nor retained substantially all the risks and rewards or transferred control, the asset continues to be recognised to the extent of Trust's continuing involvement in the asset. In that case, Trust also recognises an associated liability. The transferred

asset and the associated liability are measured on a basis that reflects the rights and obligations that the Trust has retained.

A financial liability is derecognised when the obligation specified in the contract is discharged or cancelled or expires. The difference in the respective carrying amounts is recognised in the net result.

(c) Offsetting financial instruments

Financial assets and financial liabilities are offset and the net amount is reported in the Statement of Financial Position if there is a currently enforceable legal right to offset the recognised amounts and there is an intention to settle on a net basis, or to realise the assets and settle the liabilities simultaneously.

(d) Financial risks

(i) Credit risk

Credit risk arises when there is the possibility that the Trust's debtors will default on their contractual obligations, resulting in a financial loss to the Trust. The maximum exposure to credit risk is generally represented by the carrying amount of the financial assets (net of any allowance for impairment).

Credit risk arises from the financial assets of the Trust, including cash and receivables. No collateral is held by the Trust. The Trust has not granted any financial guarantees.

The Trust seeks to minimise its credit risk associated with financial assets through the selection of counterparties and establishment of minimum credit rating standards.

Cash

Cash comprises bank balances within the NSW Treasury Banking System.

Receivables – trade debtors

Collectability of trade debtors is reviewed on an ongoing basis. Procedures, as established in the Treasurer's Directions, are followed to recover outstanding amounts, including letters of demand. The Trust applies the AASB 9 simplified approach to measuring expected credit losses which uses a lifetime expected loss allowance for all trade debtors.

To measure the expected credit losses, trade receivables have been grouped based on shared credit risk characteristics and the days past due. The expected loss rates are based on historical observed loss rates. The historical loss rates are adjusted to reflect current and forward-looking information on macroeconomic factors affecting the ability of the customers to settle the receivables. The Trust has identified that the GDP and economic growth outlook are the most relevant factors, and accordingly adjusts the historical loss rates based on expected changes in these factors.

Trade debtors are written off when there is no reasonable expectation of recovery. Indicators that there is no reasonable expectation of recovery include, amongst others a failure to make contractual payments for a period of greater than 90 days past due. The loss allowance for trade debtors was determined as follows:

	30 June 2024					
	\$'000					
	Current	<30 days	30-60 days	61-90 days	>90 days	Total
Expected credit loss rate	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	94.9%	
Estimated total gross carrying amount		-	294	-	515	809
Expected credit loss	-	-	-	-	(489)	(489)

30 June 2023						
\$'000						
	Current	<30 days	30-60 days	61-90 days	>90 days	Total
Expected credit loss rate	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	84.2%	
Estimated total gross carrying amount	32	-	-	-	581	613
Expected credit loss	-	-	-	-	(489)	(489)

Notes:

The analysis excludes statutory receivables, prepayments, as these are not within the scope of AASB 7.

(ii) Liquidity risk

Liquidity risk is the risk that the Trust will be unable to meet its payment obligations when they fall due. The Trust continuously manages risk through monitoring future cash flows and ensures to hold adequate cash to meet its obligations.

During the current and prior year, there were no defaults of loans payable. No assets have been pledged as collateral. The Trust's exposure to liquidity risk is deemed insignificant based on prior periods' data and current assessment of risk.

Liabilities are recognised for amounts due to be paid in the future for goods or services received, whether or not invoiced.

Amounts owing to suppliers (which are unsecured) are settled in accordance with the policy set out in NSW TC 11-12. For registered small business suppliers, where terms are not specified, payment is made not later than 5 days from date of receipt of a correctly rendered invoice. For other suppliers, if trade terms are not specified, payment is made no later than the end of the month following the month in which an invoice or a statement is received.

\$'000							Maturity Dates		
Interest Rate Exposure									
	Weighted average effective interest rate	Nominal amount	Fixed interest rate	Variable interest rate	Non-interest bearing	<1 yr	1-5 yrs	>5 yrs	
At 30 June 2024									
Payables	-	1,752	-	-	1,752	1,752	-	-	
At 30 June 2023									
Payables	-	2,116	-	-	2,116	2,116	-	-	

Notes

The amounts disclosed are the contractual undiscounted cash flows of each class of financial liabilities based on the earliest date on which the Trust can be required to pay.

(iii) Market risk

Market risk is the risk that the fair value or future cash flows of a financial instrument will fluctuate because of changes in market prices. The Trust has no exposure to foreign currency risk and does not enter into commodity contracts.

(iv) Interest rate risk

Exposure to interest rate risk arises primarily through the Trust's cash balances held. Under the Treasury banking system, the Trust does not earn any interest and does not account for any fixed rate financial instruments at fair value through profit or loss or at fair value through other comprehensive income. Therefore, for these financial instruments, a change in interest rates would not affect the carrying value or interest earned.

14. RELATED PARTY DISCLOSURES

Key management personnel

Key management personnel are those persons who have authority and responsibility for planning, directing and controlling the activities of the Trust, directly or indirectly.

(i) The Trust's key management personnel compensation is as follows:

	2024 \$	2023 \$
Trust sitting fees	1,430	971
Total	1,430	971

Trust sitting fees are paid to the members of the Trust, who are external to the NSW government agencies. The key management personnel compensation excludes the Minister for Environment and Heritage and the DCCEEW member on the Trust. Ministerial compensation is paid by the NSW Legislature, not by the Trust. No compensation is paid by the Trust to the DCCEEW member.

The Trust did not enter into any transactions with key management personnel, their close family members and any entities controlled or jointly controlled by them during the year (2023: nil).

ii) Other transactions with key management personnel and related entities

During the year, the Trust entered into transactions, mainly payments of grants, with other agencies that are controlled/jointly controlled/significantly influenced by the NSW Government.

Grant payments allow the Trust to meet its Major Activity Group targets (refer note 5) and grants to the NSW government agencies in aggregate are a significant component of its operations. In 2023-24, total grants in the amount of \$23.6 million (2023: \$37.8 million) were paid to DPE/DCCEEW, whose Executive Director, Office of the Secretary is a member of the Trust. Refer note 2(b). The Trust members approve the award of grants to recipients based on documented processes and procedures, which include evidence-based support such as grant guidelines, application forms, business cases, business plans and independent technical reviews. Where a grant application from DCCEEW is identified, a conflict of interest is disclosed by the DCCEEW member of the Trust at the meeting, which is minuted. The member also refrains from voting in these instances. In 2023-24, the Trust also paid \$5.1 million (2023: \$4.6 million) to DPE/DPHI for specialist and administrative services as well as its share of corporate services. The fair value of these services is charged to the Trust under a Service Agreement and disclosed in note 2(a). The Trust receives government funding as a recurrent grant through DCCEEW and receives further grants from other government agencies to support its service delivery objectives. Refer note 3(a).

15. EVENTS AFTER THE REPORTING PERIOD

There are no other known events that would impact on the state of the Trust or its financial statements.

End of audited financial statements.

Contact information

Public access and Trust offices

The Trust's contact details are:

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Publications

Visit the Trust's website for grant program guidelines, application forms and annual reports from 2018–23.

Abbreviations

CIT	Canberra Institute of Technology	MERI	monitoring, evaluation, reporting and improvement
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation	MGBs	mobile garbage bins
DCCEEW	Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water	NPWS	(NSW) National Parks and Wildlife Service
DPE	Department of Planning and Environment	PPIP	Personal Information Protection Act 1998
DPHI	Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure	RMF	Recycling Modernisation Fund
EPA	(NSW) Environment Protection Authority	RSPCA	Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
GPS	global positioning system	SIMS	Sydney Institute of Marine Science
HDPE	high-density polyethylene	SoS	Saving Our Species
IT	information technology	TPG	Treasury Policy and Guidelines
LALC	Local Aboriginal Land Council	TRC	technical review committee
LGA	Local Government Area	TSR	travelling stock reserve

Photographs

Page Title and source

1	Heavenly Highlands at Kosciuszko National Park. Ben Chubb/DCCEEW
5	Kosciuszko National Park. Shzen Yee Lee/DCCEEW
7	New Zealand fur seal at Lake Illawarra. Helen Jessup/DCCEEW
12	Billy Bung Lagoon is part of Little Llangothlin Nature Reserve and was acquired to secure its permanent protection. Gabriel Anderson/DCCEEW
17	The Molonglo Conservation Group is working to restore threatened grassy woodland ecological communities for woodland birds such as the scarlet robin. Jackie Miles/DCCEEW
21	Project staff surveying the ground in Kosciusko National Park for hawkweed. Bruce Mitchell/DCCEEW
23	The Large Forest Owls Project supports the recovery of large forest owls, including the barking owl. Michael Jarman/DCCEEW
34	Researchers are monitoring animals, including the pictured greater glider, to better understand native species recovery in post-fire environments. Vivianna Miritis, The University of Sydney
39	The Beyond Fencing project aims to reintroduce 7 locally extinct mammals in Sturt National Park, including the greater bilby (pictured). Thomas Hunt, Wild Deserts
42	The upgraded plant funded by the Trust now produces mobile garbage bins with up to 90% recycled content. Phillip Robson, SULO MGB Australia Pty Ltd
43	<i>Ptilotus obovatus</i> (Silver-Tails) on Langidoon-Metford. John Spencer/DCCEEW
54	Superb Parrot (<i>Polytelis swainsonii</i>) juvenile male. Helen Fallow/DCCEEW
56	Myall Lakes, National Parks, Broughton Island campground. John Spencer/DCCEEW