

Appendix B Bush for Wildlife

Sally Stephens⁵

Background

'*Bush for Wildlife*' is a Commonwealth initiative aimed at supporting and encouraging conservation and restoration of wildlife habitat on private land. It includes, but is not restricted to, national facilitation of State-based *Land for Wildlife* Schemes.

'*Land for Wildlife*' was established in 1981 by the Victorian Government (in partnership with the Bird Observers' Club) to recognise and assist landholders wishing to provide wildlife habitat on rural holdings. The *Land for Wildlife* Scheme has been widely adopted within Victoria, with over 5000 properties now registered. Due to its considerable contribution to the conservation of wildlife habitat in Victoria, and also to its positive and recognisable image, it has been identified as a suitable model for implementation nationally.

In 1997, the Victorian Department of Natural Resources and Environment, in conjunction with other jurisdictions represented on the Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council's (ANZECC) Working Group on Nature Conservation on Private Land, developed the 'Arrangement to coordinate *Land for Wildlife* Schemes'. The 'Arrangement' is intended to facilitate a national approach to *Land for Wildlife* by setting out the principles and minimum standards that govern a *Land for Wildlife* scheme. The 'Arrangement' has been signed by the governments of Tasmania, Western Australia, New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, the Commonwealth, and by a coalition of councils in south-east Queensland.

The 'Bush for Wildlife' National Coordinator Project

The 'Bush for Wildlife' national coordination project has been established to facilitate a cooperative national approach to *Land for Wildlife* Schemes (as agreed in the Arrangement) and also to build on other programs and activities aimed at nature conservation on private rural land. It aims to enhance links between programs, networks and jurisdictions, and to collaborate in the transfer of expertise and the uptake of best practice approaches.

The Commonwealth has appointed Humane Society International (HSI) and Community Solutions as consultants to undertake the role of national coordinator. The project is funded by the Natural Heritage Trust through its Bushcare Program.

Project scope

The project is being undertaken in the context of current programs and activities relating to nature conservation on private land in Australia, including:

- Improving wildlife and habitat conservation on rural land through the coordination of extension, protection and other related approaches at the national level;
- Building on existing work undertaken at Commonwealth, State/Territory and local government levels and by non-government organisations, including the State-based *Land for Wildlife* Schemes; and
- Working closely with existing Natural Heritage Trust programs, and other relevant programs.

The project has a rural focus and aims to build on existing Commonwealth program activities, including implementation of Natural Heritage Trust programs and *The national strategy for the conservation of Australia's biological diversity* to:

⁵ This paper was presented to the workshop organisers but is not being presented formally. Sally would like comments and any feedback. Her contact details are given in Appendix C.

- Coordinate and support State-based *Land for Wildlife* schemes as set out in the Arrangement, in cooperation with State *Land for Wildlife* Coordinators and their networks of practitioners;
- Support and encourage wildlife habitat conservation activities on private land across Australia (including best practice approaches in the areas of protection and land management), in cooperation with and through State/Territory and local government and non-government programs, coordinators, facilitators and networks (including electronic networks and web pages) by:
 - promoting the development of integrated approaches to wildlife conservation by government, non-government organisations and communities;
 - working with Environment Australia to identify Bushcare projects that provide good examples to communicate through the Bush for Wildlife initiative; and
 - providing relevant advice to Environment Australia about wildlife conservation issues as they relate to native vegetation protection and management and the design and delivery of the Bushcare Program.

Project delivery

In consultation with Environment Australia and key stakeholders, the Bush for Wildlife National Coordinator will develop an action plan to guide the implementation of the project. The project is largely a facilitation project, building on existing networks, conservation activities and conservation partnerships.

The implementation of the project will also be guided by a Project Management Group, a Reference Group (providing specialist advice in key areas) and the National *Land for Wildlife* Steering Committee (dealing with *Land for Wildlife* issues).