Australian Association of Bush Regenerators
(NSW) Inc.
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REVEGETATION POLICY

1. RELATED POLICIES

None

2. CURRENCY

This policy came into effect in 2005 and will remain current until amended or revoked.

3. INTRODUCTION

This policy may be used freely by any AABR member or others with the proviso that the policy title is cited as "Revegetation Policy, Australian Association of Bush Regenerators (NSW) Inc. 2005" and that the wording is reproduced in full, without paraphrasing or condensing.

4. BACKGROUND

4.1 Australia has lost much of its native vegetation since European settlement. Many native vegetation types and plant species are now threatened with extinction at the regional, state or national levels. Areas of remnant vegetation are important for many reasons including providing habitat for native fauna, nutrient and water cycling, retaining topsoil and minimising erosion.

4.2 Areas of remnant bushland contain more than just visible vegetation. The soil in even small and disturbed areas of bushland is likely to contain seeds and other propagules of native plants as well as important microfauna such as fungi. Most types of native vegetation rely on the soil for their seedbank, structure, invertebrate fauna and other organisms. Areas of remnant vegetation also contain dead and decaying plant material and surface rock. These features are habitat for many species of fauna upon which continued ecosystem function relies.

4.3 Remnant native vegetation and ecosystems should be retained as most can not be recreated. Some may only be rehabilitated with substantial, long term resources and commitment. The biodiversity benefits of protecting and enhancing existing remnant vegetation far outweigh those of "compensatory" planting in cleared areas.

5. POLICY DETAIL

5.1 All existing indigenous vegetation on a site should be retained where possible and protected from degrading influences such as weeds, grazing, stormwater, mowing, etc.

5.2 The benefits of protecting and rehabilitating existing native vegetation far outweigh those of establishing new vegetation in previously cleared areas. Regeneration can occur where the soil is relatively undisturbed and native vegetation and/or it's propagules (eg. seeds) are present. Regeneration may be assisted by human interventions such as weed removal. It is quicker and cheaper to protect healthy sites by regeneration than to revegetate degraded sites. It is cheaper and easier to revegetate degraded sites than to revegetate totally cleared land.

5.3 Revegetation (planting or seed introduction) should be considered only where

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- a site has failed to respond to attempts to trigger regeneration over a period of at least two effective growing seasons
- the regeneration potential (resilience) of a site has been severely depleted or completely lost.
- key missing species can not be naturally recruited to an area
- there is insufficient genetic diversity amongst surviving species
- a buffer is required to reduce the 'edge effect' on a remnant.

5.4 An important attribute of a restored ecosystem is that it is integrated into the larger landscape to minimise fragmentation. A remnant should be connected to other areas of vegetation wherever possible.

5.5 Revegetation projects need clear and realistic goals and objectives with a time line that is likely to go for several years.

5.6 Degrading influences such as erosion, salinity, nutrient inflows or weed infestations should be adequately controlled prior to revegetation work.

5.7 If these influences cannot be adequately controlled the revegetation project may need to shift to using species that can cope with the prevailing environmental conditions. This community may not be the same as the original vegetation.

5.8 Revegetation projects should aim to restore a range of ecosystem functions eg fauna habitat, even where it may not be possible to restore the original vegetation community.

5.9 Species used in a revegetation site should include all the strata of the community eg. shrubs and groundcovers as well as trees and they should be grouped or spaced in a way that resembles the native vegetation community.

5.10 Plant species may be introduced by various techniques: direct planting of tube stock, propagating by division or cuttings then transplanting, direct seeding or brush-matting.

5.11 Planning should be started well in advance of the commencement of on-ground work so that there is sufficient time to allow

- the sustainable collection (following FloraBank guidelines) and propagation of a range and quantity of local provenance material for the planting
- all necessary site preparation eg weed and erosion control, fencing, dealing with soil compaction, etc.

5.12 Sufficient resources must be available to prepare a site adequately, implement the revegetation work, monitor and report on the successes and failures and carry out ongoing maintenance work.

5.13 Plantings in or near bushland should ensure that no plant pathogens or weed propagules are introduced via potting media, on boots, gloves, tools, materials, equipment, vehicles, etc.

5.14 After planting watering may be required if rain is inadequate. Weeding around the plantings may be required to suppress competition from weeds. Mulch should only be used if it can be guaranteed to be weed free.

5.15 Plantings in or near remnant vegetation should be recorded, including a map, date, names of species planted, number of plants of each species installed, provenance of each species, source nursery and a record of follow up work and any replacement plantings.

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Definitions

In this policy,

Revegetation refers to planting, transplanting, seeding, brushmatting or other human introduction of plant propagules to establish native vegetation.

Regeneration refers to allowing natural processes to establish native vegetation, with or without assistance, without introducing plant propagules.

Reconstruction is where resilience has been depleted and conditions require major works before the ecosystem can function again.

Fabrication is the construction of a vegetation community at a site where conditions are permanently changed and the original ecosystem lost.

Comment: