

Getting there - Restoring a complex 789 ha site on the Gold Coast

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Lower Beechmont Conservation Area (LBCA) is a 789 hectare site situated in the Gold Coast hinterland forming part of a State Regional Corridor. The site was purchased by the City of Gold Coast between 2001 and 2003 for the purpose of nature conservation and is owned and managed by that local government. The site contains 10 Regional Ecosystems ranging from rainforest on alluvium soils to wet sclerophyll systems, mixed open Eucalypt systems, Acacia regrowth and cleared areas as a result of previous farming. It contains 440 native plant species including an endangered ecosystem and 12 threatened or rare flora species. In addition, there is a wide range of fauna including the vulnerable koala.

Restoration works commenced on site in mid 2006 and have continually been applied since. A range of restoration approaches, techniques, management decisions and the application of multiple funding opportunities has assisted the continued recovery of this large and complex site. A fire management plan was developed in 2009, a full management plan developed in 2010 and an ecological restoration plan was completed in 2012. The planning process assisted the identification of clear management zones, priorities, strategies and ultimately with funding.

The main approach to restoration on this site has been assisted regeneration. Large scale weed control using a range of techniques on more than 70 weed species has resulted in 9 separate areas being worked simultaneously. The strategic and well planned fuel reduction burns have assisted bush regeneration teams working across larger and very steep areas efficiently and safely, while protecting sensitive parts of the site. These efforts combined with the utilisation of different funding sources including the negotiation and installation of two offsets, has assisted with consolidating five of the nine areas, and restoration works covering more than 250 hectares.