

Review of Private Land Conservation Programs against the Australian National Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measures (OECMs) Framework

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Executive Summary

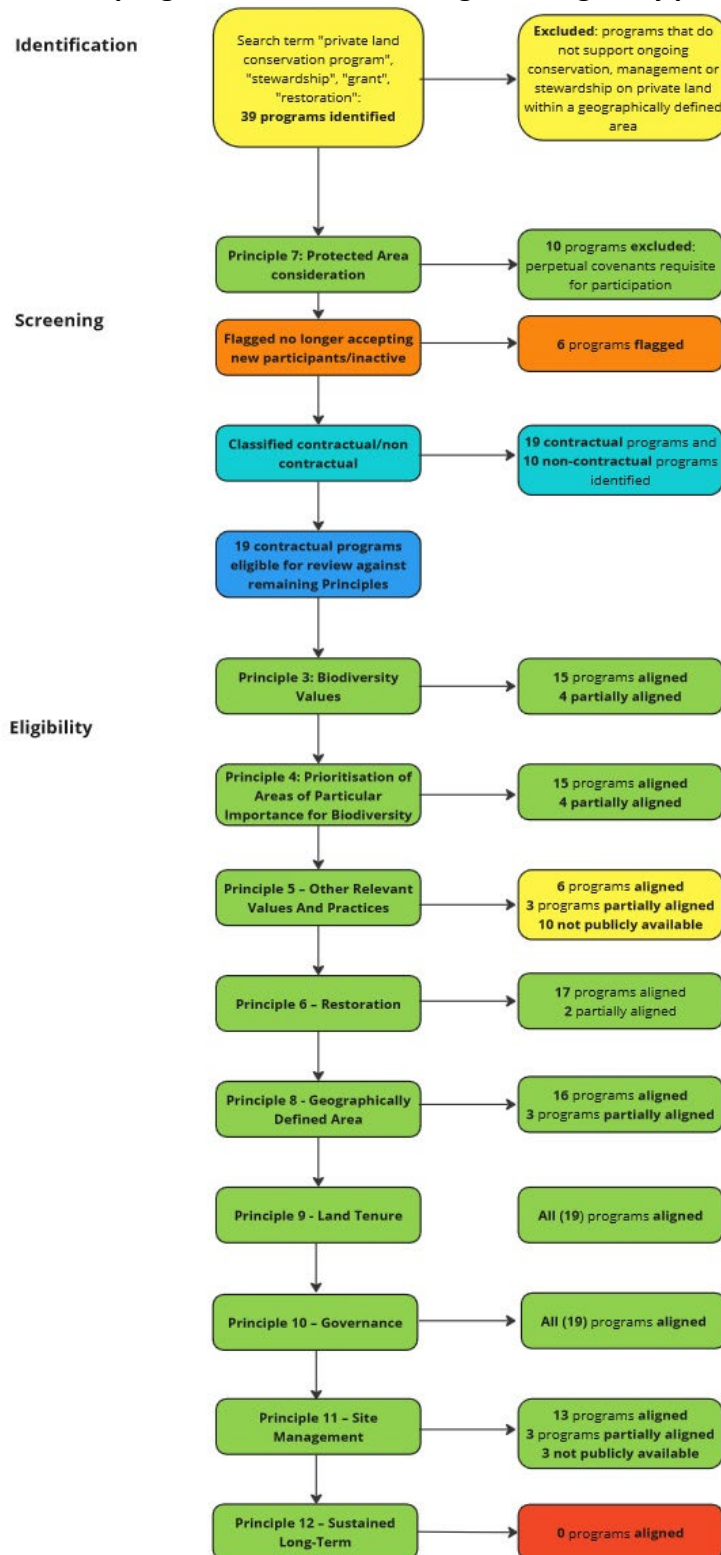
The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) outlines key goals and targets that specifically acknowledge the importance of protecting, conserving, and managing land and water effectively (CBD 2022). To this end, 'other effective area-based conservation measures' (OECMs; termed here 'conserved areas') will contribute alongside protected areas (PAs) to meet area-based measures of the GBF Target 3 (to protect and conserve 30% of land and sea by 2030). Signatory countries of the GBF are developing relevant frameworks and policies for recognizing conserved areas and the ways in which they can contribute to such targets. Protected and conserved areas will necessarily work in tandem to improve landscape-scale habitat quality and connectivity and, ultimately, overall persistence of biodiversity.

While protected areas are well understood and studied, other types of conserved and managed lands and their role in delivering environmental and social outcomes are not. Australia has developed the National Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) Framework (DCCEEW 2024) which includes 12 principles for recognizing conserved areas. In Australia conserved areas, where recognized, will contribute to targets to protect and conserve 30% of land (DCCEEW 2024). The potential alignment of tenure types (in particular those managed by Commonwealth, state, territory, and local governments) with OECM recognition principles have been addressed in other studies (Carly et al. 2024; Fitzsimons et al. 2024); however private land conservation programs have received less attention. Here, we exclusively review private land conservation programs against the National Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECMs) Framework (DCCEEW 2024), hereafter the Framework, to identify types of conservation programs that establish and support areas that are likely to qualify as conserved areas.

The aim of this review was to identify private land conservation programs that target areas not yet protected and thus with properties potentially eligible to apply to be assessed as conserved areas. To achieve this, we used publicly accessible national, state and territory, and local government websites as well as key NGO websites to identify a comprehensive list of relevant private land conservation programs.

Figure 1 summarises the systematic identification of programs and subsequent review of alignment with each OECM principle and minimum standard (Figure 1). Each of these stages and key results is further discussed below. A key finding is that of the 29 programs reviewed none currently meet OECM recognition requirements.

Figure 1 Identification protocol for selecting programs for review. Of 39 programs identified, 10 were excluded in early screening as the programs resulted in perpetual covenants which are recognized as protected areas, and a further 10 were excluded as non-contractual programs with no ability to meet Principle 12. This early screening resulted in 19 programs for full review against eligibility principles.



Private land conservation program identification

Private land conservation programs [hereafter PLCPs] implemented at the national, state, and territory government levels are well-documented and are thus an appropriate case for this review (e.g. Cocklin 2007; Moon & Cocklin 2011; Adams & Moon 2013; Morrison & Lockwood 2014; Stoudmann et al. 2024). Principle 12 of the OECM framework requires that a conserved area have a long-term commitment, ideally in perpetuity, but where not possible of at least 99 years. Where there are legal or land tenure restrictions that constrain in-perpetuity conservation, there should be a formal or legal (contractual) commitment of at least 25 years coupled with long-term conservation management commitment of at least 99 years. We therefore first categorized programs as:

- A) binding contractual programs such as stewardship contracts (such as BushTender, Territory NRM conservation agreements, Midlands Conservation Partnership);
- B) non-contractual programs (such as Land for Wildlife [hereafter LfW])

Where programs had no contractual requirement we note that properties within these programs do not to meet the Framework minimum standards and principles of having a long-term commitment (of at least 99 years) via legal or other-effective means. We therefore termed, for the purpose of this review, non-contractual properties as managed lands. Managed lands can be considered part of the broader matrix of managed lands that support biodiversity conservation. To this end a key result is identifying the alignment of private land conservation as part of the suite of protected, conserved, and managed areas. Where programs were contractual in nature we considered these further as potential conserved areas. Within these, we assessed the overall alignment of these programs with the OECM Framework principles and minimum standards (DCCEEW 2024). In doing so we highlight those principles for which programs do not currently meet minimum standards and thus would need to be addressed at program and property level for those properties wishing to be recognised as OECMs.

Alignment of Programs against OECM principles and minimum standards

After excluding 10 programs identified as protected areas, we considered the remaining 29 programs (current, inactive and under review) across Australian jurisdictions, primarily PLCPs, that support activities potentially eligible for OECM recognition. These programs demonstrate varying degrees of alignment with the principles and minimum standards outlined in the Framework. Our approach involved including all relevant programs and assessing their current attributes against the Framework's principles. Of the 29 programs, 19 are contractual, while 10 are non-contractual (all falling under the LfW program) and considered within this review as better considered as managed lands (Figure 1).

We considered the 19 contractual programs as potential candidates for conserved area recognition and further reviewed these against the OECM principles. In general, core characteristics of the reviewed PLCPs aligned with the principles and minimum standards defined in the Framework (Figure 1 eligibility by principle largely green indicating strong program alignment but with some principles, namely 5 and 12 with poor alignment).

However, our review of the 19 contractual programs against the Framework principles found that none of the programs are currently aligned with all principles and thus unlikely to have properties

eligible for recognition as conserved areas. This is due to Principle 12 which requires a conserved area have a long-term commitment, ideally in perpetuity, but where not possible of at least 99 years. The longest contract durations identified in our review were 25-year contractual agreements, but without any existing means of coupling these with a long-term management commitment of at least 99 years.

From our review, the four programs that demonstrated the best fit with the principles currently defined in the Framework are:

- ❖ Trust for Nature Victoria's 'Biodiversity Offsets'
- ❖ Queensland's 'Cassowary Credits' (in pilot)
- ❖ Tasmania's 'Midlands Conservation Partnership'
- ❖ NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust's 'Conservation Tenders'

We note that Principle 12 requires demonstration of long-term (99+ years) management arrangements, which no programs currently meet. We recommend, as a result of our review, that these programs and the potential for future program design which enables longer contract durations be investigated. We also recommend further review and research of the interplay between Principle 1, 2, and 12.

1 Background

Other Effective area-based Conservation Measures (OECM) first appeared in CBD frameworks and guidelines in 2010, with Aichi Target 11 specifying ‘17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water, and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas ... are conserved through ... protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures’ (CBD 2010). In 2018, CBD parties adopted a formal definition for OECMs as ‘A geographically defined area other than a Protected Area (PA), which is governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained long-term outcomes for the *in-situ* conservation of biodiversity with associated ecosystem functions and services and where applicable, cultural, spiritual, socio-economic, and other locally relevant values’ (IUCN 2019). Unlike PAs, which must be ‘dedicated’ or ‘designated or regulated and managed to achieve specific conservation objectives’, according to definitions provided by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and CBD, OECMs are defined by their effectiveness in conserving biodiversity rather than by their objectives (Dudley et al. 2018). Also termed ‘conserved areas’, OECMs are seen as an important policy tool for achieving inclusive and equitable biodiversity conservation outcomes (Gurney et al. 2021; Jonas et al. 2021). The Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework Target 3 (known as the ‘30x30 target’) calls on Parties to conserve at least 30% of terrestrial, inland waters, and coastal and marine areas by 2030 and includes both PAs and OECMs within this target. To support good practice in identifying, reporting, monitoring and strengthening OECMs the IUCN has provided criteria for identifying OECMs as well as good practice guides to support application of these criteria (Jonas et al. 2023; Jonas et al. 2024).

The OECM concept thus provides opportunities to recognise or enhance existing or new managed areas that sustain biodiversity, irrespective of their primary management objectives. Globally, countries have begun to develop policies for recognising conserved areas. All Australian Environment Ministers agreed the National OECM framework, including a site-assessment tool in June 2024. The framework and tool support the evaluation of which managed areas are likely to meet national criteria aligned with the global definition (DCCEEW 2024). The Framework describes:

- International historical context to the development of OECMs as a key concept to meeting global conservation targets;
- Justification for the Framework as a key instrument to guide recognition of OECMs in Australia;
- Detailed, nationally-consistent principles that align with IUCN guidelines;
- Minimum requirements for OECM recognition with an included site assessment tool;
- Detailed exposition on application of the assessment tool and workflow for evaluating sites for OECM recognition in practice.

The Framework and site-assessment tool spans all land tenures, with the exception of sites already designated as a PA (as set out in Principle 9). Other tenures defined as inappropriate for recognition as an OECM include areas with unresolved Native Title claims, and leasehold arrangements with terms shorter than 25 years, and/or conditions incompatible with biodiversity conservation. The alignment of state and crown land tenure as well as leasehold provisions and programs have been well covered elsewhere (Fitzsimons et al. 2024). Academic studies have contributed to this work by considering current policy mechanisms (Cook 2024; Cook et al. 2024), and the extent to which they

do or do not result in observable biodiversity outcomes (e.g. with remote sensed data on ecosystem change) as a primary requirement for OECMs (Carly et al. 2024; Donald et al. 2019).

Within Australia, currently managed areas that could be recognised as OECMs are diverse; however most emphasis to date in the academic literature has been on government owned or managed tenures (Fitzsimons et al. 2024). Yet, conservation priorities are distributed across multiple land tenures (Kearney et al. 2022); critically, where a species is confined to a single tenure it is most frequently on freehold land or within an existing PA (Figgis et al. 2005; Kearney et al. 2022). This emphasises that to deliver on biodiversity conservation goals: 1) management within existing conservation areas is essential (Kearney et al. 2018), and 2) that future conservation must expand within freehold land to conserve areas important for biodiversity (Figgis et al. 2005; Kearney et al. 2022).

Within freehold land, private land conservation programs are therefore an essential policy and management mechanism for conserving biodiversity, of which Australia has many well-studied programs and policy instruments (Fitzsimons 2006; Fitzsimons 2015; Fitzsimons et al. 2024; Fitzsimons and Wescott 2004, 2005). However, questions of which programs on private land may be aligned with principles for OECM recognition have not been addressed (Lewis et al. 2023; Mitchell et al. 2018). Further research is required to understand the extent to which existing programs align with the Framework's principles and minimum requirements; furthermore, where key principles are frequently not met, how private land conservation program characteristics might be refined to comply with OECM minimum standards and principles. The focus of this review is on private land conservation programs and their alignment with the Framework. We chose this focus because of the distribution of threatened species on freehold land, and the relative gap in understanding of how OECMs might be operationalised within this tenure in Australia.

2 Methods

2.1 Program identification classification for inclusion in review

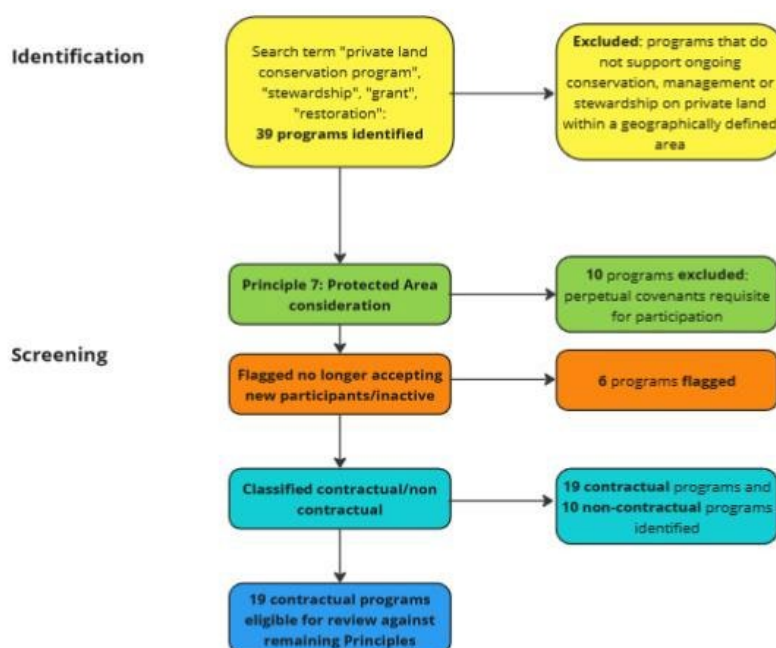
To identify potential PLCPs, we used Google to locate openly available program documentation for Australian programs, due to its efficiency and usability for public-facing information. From the results retrieved, we reviewed public websites and publicly available documents for all state and territory governments, NRMs, and NGOs (Figure 2). From this initial screening a total of 39 programs were recorded.

An OECM must first not be a PA and thus we only recorded those programs which do not meet eligibility requirements for PA designation. Based on our initial screening 10 of the programs were identified as protected areas and thus excluded. Furthermore, OECMs may be on properties where the primary objective is not conservation, but where conservation management has demonstrated effective biodiversity outcomes.

We first considered the overall alignment of PLCPs with these core principles. PLCPs in Australia are typically targeted at freehold and leasehold landholders where primary and secondary land uses are mixed and frequently include uses such as residence, production, grazing of native vegetation, and conservation. At a program level PLCPs are focused on conserving biodiversity on private lands and thus we assume that biodiversity conservation is at minimum a secondary objective for participating landholders. Furthermore, while most programs target high value conservation areas and seek to improve their overall management, some programs also support restoration as an extreme form of land management.

At a property level, we note that property owners will frequently hold additional objectives that may hierarchically be their primary objectives, for example deriving livelihoods from their land. Hence, for the purposes of this review, we must assume that property owners/governance authorities in these areas are not focused on conservation as the primary objective of their properties but in choosing to participate in PLCPs, they hold intrinsic conservation objectives or manage their properties for conservation outcomes. This is explicitly acknowledged in the program design and incentive mechanisms of many of the highly aligned programs in this review that target properties with a range of uses, for example: the BushTender and EcoTender programs (Victoria), Biodiversity Stewardship Agreements and BCT Offsets (NSW), Territory Agreements (NT) and the Midlands Conservation Partnership (Tasmania).

Figure 2 Identifying and screening eligibility of Australian PLCPs



Process of identifying, screening and analysing eligibility of Australian private land conservation programs against principles and minimum standards as defined in the Framework.

2.2 Types of PLC Programs reviewed

Here we broadly categorise voluntary PLC programs as contractual or non-contractual.

Contractual programs are binding in nature between a program administrator and a private land holder. An example of a contractual program is Territory NRM's Conservation Agreements which specify duration, management obligations and performance measures for participants. These are typically short term and are not recorded on the land title, as opposed to conservation covenants which are recorded on land titles.

Non-contractual programs are characterised by the absence of formal contractual agreement and incentive payment mechanism, relying solely on the landholder's goodwill and motivation to remain active in the scheme, carrying out management actions for restoration or to support biodiversity. Such programs may have other defined criteria for inclusion, such as target values or geographical context within a threatened landscape high in threatening processes or qualify under criteria for a one-off funding award (e.g. thematically aligned projects under National Landcare small grants). Examples of contractual and non-contractual programs in scope for this review are detailed below.

2.2.1 Contractual arrangements

The majority of programs in our review (19, Figure 2) are contractual in nature, typically offering support (of financial or other incentives) for conservation management. Incentives are typically delivered through grants or payment schemes.

Grant incentives are common in stewardship agreements, providing financial and/or in-kind support to landholders for protecting or improving the condition of natural values on private land under an agreed set of conditions. Grant agreements typically specify the values present, plan of management, duration, indicators and criteria for support (e.g. (Adams et al. 2011; Hajkowicz 2009)). We note that Grant agreements can be coupled with other mechanisms (both protected and conserved areas) and thus differentiate programs in our review to ensure they are considering only unique areas.

Stewardship payment (including reverse auction) schemes refer to programs that support landholders in land management and conservation activities. Such schemes allow landholders to bid for an agreed fixed price or ongoing rate for undertaking management actions, which are typically evaluated in terms of impact to conservation of biodiversity, threatened species or ecological communities (Hajkowicz 2007; Hajkowicz 2009). Evaluation by program administrators may rank proposals against a biodiversity impact score or index and may consider criteria such as: presence of threatened values, adjacent land use, extent of proposed actions, duration of commitment and likelihood of success. Rank or result will determine a price or rate at which the landholder is compensated for undertaking the actions in their proposal, or meeting performance indicators. Reviews programs that feature a reverse auction model include BushTender and EcoTender (Victoria), Conservation Tenders (NSW) and BushBids (SA) (Hajkowicz 2009; Hajkowicz et al. 2007).

2.2.2 Non-contractual arrangements

Non-contractual programs are those for which individuals sign up with no conditions for participation. Via participation individuals have access to support from technical or in-kind support scheme administrators or regional facilitators, without detailed participation criteria, typically lacking specific monitoring requirements at program level for performance and conservation outcomes, and without a formal mechanism to incentivise ongoing participation. Regional and local implementation of non-contractual conservation programs differ significantly in terms of their entry criteria and monitoring arrangements. In this review we consider non-contractual programs (10, figure 2) as best considered as 'managed lands' which complement protected and conserved areas.

2.3 Reviewing attributes of programs against OECM principles and minimum requirements

Given Principle 12 of the Framework requires a conserved area have a long-term commitment, ideally in perpetuity, but where not possible of at least 99 years, we focus on contractual programs in our subsequent analysis of alignment of program attributes against OECM principles. However, we

note that the National OECM Framework and IUCN criteria allow for broader interpretation that may feasibly include non-contractual management arrangements (IUCN 2019, pp 4-6). We therefore return to non-contractual programs and their alignment with management objectives and conservation outcomes in the final section.

The Framework has been used to guide this national review of Australian private land conservation programs. We identified all programs with adequate publicly available information and considered those programs in scope for review. For each program we categorised program type (contractual or non-contractual) and then reviewed the documentation of each program against the Framework principles and minimum standards. We then summarised at program type patterns of alignment with the Framework principles. Based on publicly available program materials we assigned each program a rating for each principle: 1) strongly aligned, 2) partially aligned, 3) not aligned, 4) n/a – no publicly available information by which to review.

Based on this categorisation of programs against principles we provide a narrative review of overall alignment against the key criteria, emphasising where there are major similarities or differences in programs against the principles and minimum standards.

For those programs which were most closely aligned (4 of 29 reviewed) we then compiled a complete set of details using the Conserved Areas Site Assessment Tool for two programs with sufficient publicly available information and program officers willing to provide feedback (DCCEEW 2024, p. 42).

3 Results

3.1 Private Land Conservation Programs Identified

In reviewing jurisdiction websites to identify PLCPs, we found that within jurisdictions a number of program administrators identify that they provide options for covenants on title (as opposed to contracts which sit with property owner) with finite or negotiable terms of duration (e.g. covenants made available to LfW participants by some of the LfW Southeast Queensland member councils). These appear to be highly variable across level of authority of the granting agency, or purpose (e.g. Western Australia's covenants under the *Soils and Land Act 1945*, which also facilitate biodiversity stewardship arrangements of negotiable term via the Agreement to Reserve Program (Fitzsimons 2024)).

While represented in multiple jurisdictions, term- or condition-limited covenants had little publicly available documentation. As such, including them in the level of detail required for this analysis requires a detailed survey or individual personal communication with administering agencies of each instrument, an investigation out of scope for the terms of this study. These were therefore excluded in the first screening stage on the basis of insufficient public program details.

However, we flag that these may be relevant for targeted research given their relevance and alignment to the OECM Framework, and IUCN guidance on evaluating the “sustained long-term” clause of the IUCN's OECM definition, which notes: ‘in some cases short-term regulatory instruments, renewed continuously, may provide de facto long-term measures,’ (IUCN 2019, p. 6).

After the first stage of screening, 39 programs were identified for further investigation. Within these, 10 were further excluded after identifying that they were perpetual covenant and thus already recognised as PAs.

This left a final 29 PLCPs in Australian jurisdictions that demonstrated a range of fit across Framework principles (Figure 1). All states and territories supported PLCPs and there were also nationally coordinated Commonwealth programs identified. Of the 29 programs identified, 19 were contractual (Table 1) and 10 were non-contractual (Table 3).

3.2 Summary of PLCPs by Jurisdiction

We summarise below programs identified for each jurisdiction (Table 1).

3.2.1 Commonwealth

We identified six candidate conservation mechanisms at the Commonwealth level. These included two grant schemes run under the National Landcare Program: Regional Land Partnerships and Environmental Small Grants which are centrally managed by DCCEE. We also considered the Enhancing Remnant Vegetation Pilot, Conservation Agreements (as a tool under the EPBC Act), and the Environmental Stewardship Program (which is not currently accepting new participants).

3.3 Australian Capital Territory

In the Australian Capital Territory, we identified two non-contractual LfW programs, one coordinated by the ACT NRM, and one independently coordinated. No other private land conservation programs (either territory or NGO run) were identified.

3.4 New South Wales

New South Wales hosts eight potential candidate OECM schemes, including a non-contractual Land for Wildlife program with statewide coverage, locally- and regionally administered by a range of councils and local not-for-profits. The other seven contractual and incentive-based programs are administered by NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust and NSW Environmental Trust, and four are currently active or open for applications.

3.5 Northern Territory

We identified four programs within the Northern Territory – non-contractual programs Land for Wildlife Top End, coordinated by Territory NRM, and Land for Wildlife Alice Springs administered by independent NRM group Low Ecological Services P/L. Territory NRM also operates the Conservation Agreements stewardship program, with Bush Heritage Australia coordinating a partnerships program with First Nations groups.

3.6 Queensland

We identified two candidate programs within Queensland that potentially qualify: Cassowary Credits, a restoration stewardship-focused scheme currently in trial, and a joint LfW program in Southeast Queensland, administered by the region's 13 local councils. Two state-administered protected area incentive programs, Nature Refuge agreements and associated NatureAssist grants, require in-perpetuity covenants to be recorded on title. and noted as protected areas.

3.7 South Australia

South Australia has hosted two programs that may meet OECM criteria, principally the state administered BushBids reverse auction stewardship scheme that ran in regional rounds for ten years to 2018. The LfW program has relatively low geographic coverage and uptake in the state, with a program on Kangaroo Island operated by a small not-for-profit as the only representation. Other South Australian private land conservation incentive schemes require perpetual covenants on title.

3.8 Tasmania

Two candidate schemes were found in Tasmania, the Midlands Conservation Partnership program operated by Tasmanian Land Conservancy (TLC), Bush Heritage Australia with tailored agreements to individual landholders, and a voluntary LfW scheme, also operated by TLC.

3.9 Victoria

Four programs were found in Victoria. The first, 'Biodiversity Offsets', is managed by Trust for Nature and offers funded agreements for landowners to manage biodiversity. The second is a voluntary, regionalised LfW scheme centrally administered by the Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action. The now-defunct, long-running BushTender and EcoTender programs have been included in our review due to their close alignment against the criteria and minimum requirements.

3.10 Western Australia

We identified two contractual conservation schemes in Western Australia, operated by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions (DBCA). These two stewardship programs require flexible covenanting of participant properties, for an agreed term or in perpetuity and is revokable for Agreements to Reserve. The DBCA also centrally administers the non-contractual LfW program in partnership with regional NRM organisations.

Table 1 Contractual agreements (sorted by state/territory) identified in the review

This includes any program that met the broader definitions listed in the methods. In reviewing programs, we identified some targeting regeneration in partially degraded but largely natural landscapes containing biodiversity values. As these programs target biodiversity values with the goal of improving these values they were considered as in scope for the review. * Denote programs that are currently inactive or under review.

Program name	Program administrator of contractual agreements	Duration of contracts (<i>Principles 3, 12</i>)	Values targeted (<i>Principles 3, 4, 6, 8</i>)	Monitoring & Evaluation (<i>Principles 3, 6, 11</i>)	Renewal arrangements (<i>Principles 3, 7, 12</i>)
National					
Environmental Stewardship Program *	DCCEEW	Negotiable up to 15 years	Endangered ecological communities in SE Qld, NSW and SA	Self-reported using online MERIT tool	Option to covenant in perpetuity following the contract and funding term
Regional Land Partnerships *	DCCEEW: National Landcare Program	5 years	Listed species under Threatened Species Strategy or EPBC, Ramsar wetlands, WHAs	Project specific, outcomes mapped in RLP Program Logic, tracked via MERI and monitoring frameworks	Option to covenant in perpetuity within two years of signing an agreement
Environmental Small Grants *	DCCEEW: National Landcare Program	Negotiable	Projects aimed at community-level conservation	Project specific	Unspecified
EPBC Conservation Agreements *	DCCEEW	Negotiable	Established under EPBC Act ¹	Project specific	Unspecified in the EPBC Act (Ch 5, part14)

¹ Presumably for EPBC listed values, though not explicitly stated.

Program name	Program administrator of contractual agreements	Duration of contracts (<i>Principles 3, 12</i>)	Values targeted (<i>Principles 3, 4, 6, 8</i>)	Monitoring & Evaluation (<i>Principles 3, 6, 11</i>)	Renewal arrangements (<i>Principles 3, 7, 12</i>)
Enhancing Remnant Vegetation Pilot	DCCEEW	Currently in pilot phase in six regional locations	Managing native vegetation for biodiversity with locally adapted methods	Market-based quantification, M&E measures unspecified	Unspecified
First Nations agreements					
Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs)	National Native Title Tribunal	Negotiable	Traditional Use and of Country and management of Culturally significant values ²	N/A or project specific	Unspecified, agreement specific
New South Wales					
Conservation Tenders	Biodiversity Conservation Trust	Minimum 15 years	Areas of high conservation value as assessed by BCT	Management plans and bids initially evaluated against a Biodiversity Value Score. Annual reporting required. Ongoing M&E as defined in MP and agreed.	In perpetuity by default unless term specified, option to covenant in perpetuity following term
Environmental Restoration and Rehabilitation grants *	NSW Environmental Trust	Minimum 3, Maximum 4 years	Restoration projects aligned with the trust's strategic objectives. Themes of most recent round were threatened species and climate change impact mitigation	Mandatory \$1k budget item for audit post-planning phase before further funding. Otherwise as defined per project agreement	Grants are phased over planning and implementation stages. New orgs can receive up to \$1m over 3 years and experienced orgs up to \$3m over 4 years. Orgs can re-apply in subsequent rounds.

² For agreements facilitating activities that may constitute OECMS, given the breadth of ILUAs as an instrument

Program name	Program administrator of contractual agreements	Duration of contracts (<i>Principles 3, 12</i>)	Values targeted (<i>Principles 3, 4, 6, 8</i>)	Monitoring & Evaluation (<i>Principles 3, 6, 11</i>)	Renewal arrangements (<i>Principles 3, 7, 12</i>)
Protecting Our Places grants *	NSW Environmental Trust	3 years	Environmental management of Culturally important places by First Nations (FN) organisations, sharing & protection of Cultural Knowledge, protection and restoration of Culturally significant land	Defined per project. 80% of project funds must be disbursed to FN groups, companies, or in employment of FN people	Grants are phased over planning and implementation stages. No specific renewal clauses published.
Victoria					
Biodiversity Offsets Program	Trust for Nature (Victoria), DEECA/DCCE EW ³	10 years	Management for biodiversity, improvement of remnant vegetation. Must meet covenant requirements as determined by TfN and independent DEECA-approved site assessment	As determined by TFN and set out in 'Offset Management Plan' (OMP). TFN staff to conduct minimum 5 site visits during establishment and first 10 years, visiting triennially once established. Annual reporting.	Participating sites transition to TFN's perpetual stewardship program following 10-year management agreement

³ Dependent on choice of Biodiversity Offset scheme participation and registration (Victoria or federal). Participants can also participate in the state scheme without Trust for Nature stewardship, by establishing a site directly with DEECA under a covenanting agreement under Section 69 under the *Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987*, or through a Council under Section 173 of the *Planning and Environment Act 1988*.

Program name	Program administrator of contractual agreements	Duration of contracts (<i>Principles 3, 12</i>)	Values targeted (<i>Principles 3, 4, 6, 8</i>)	Monitoring & Evaluation (<i>Principles 3, 6, 11</i>)	Renewal arrangements (<i>Principles 3, 7, 12</i>)
BushTender*	DEECA	5 years, with plantings and fencing to be maintained for 10 years	Conservation and biodiversity outcomes as pitched in bid proposal. No minimum land size requirement.	Periodic surveys by Field Officer to evaluate compliance with management commitment and progress towards targets	Options for in-perpetuity covenanting at start and end of agreement.
EcoTender*	DEECA	Assumed to be as above	Expansion of BushTender to include accounting for carbon retention, erosion and water quality.	More detailed initial assessment than BushTender. M&E arrangements assumed to be improved to include measures for the new values under management.	Not publicly listed, assumed to be same as above.
Northern Territory					
Territory Conservation Agreements	Territory NRM	10 years	High conservation values on private holdings, as assessed.	Initial survey to establish baseline condition. Routine monitoring of agreed indicators at agreed photo points. Locally explicit agreements cover individual areas for conservation/restoration. More than one agreement may be held by a landowner on the same holding.	Not specified -- continued management is encouraged but no publicly available documentation of renewal options.

Program name	Program administrator of contractual agreements	Duration of contracts (<i>Principles 3, 12</i>)	Values targeted (<i>Principles 3, 4, 6, 8</i>)	Monitoring & Evaluation (<i>Principles 3, 6, 11</i>)	Renewal arrangements (<i>Principles 3, 7, 12</i>)
Bush Heritage Partnerships	Bush Heritage Australia	10 years	First Nations groups managing Country in the NT.	Built on Healthy Country Planning process – M&E guided by HCP 10-year plans.	Not specified.
Tasmania					
Midlands Conservation Partnership	Tasmanian Land Conservancy, Bush Heritage Australia	Minimum 5 years, with 10-year option and renewal clauses included in contract.	Threatened ecological communities and habitat for threatened species in the Midlands of Tasmania.	Standardised KPIs & indicators across properties. KPIs include records of observations and actions, submitted annually, declining High Threat Weeds (HTWs) and no new infestations. Indicators include native plant species richness, species recruitment, faunal population & habitat provision.	Agreements are renewable by written agreement of both parties with clauses to establish this condition in initial contract. Most participants renew on an ongoing basis. Fund is established to ensure program can run in perpetuity.
Western Australia					
Agreement to Reserve	Commissioner of Soil and Land Conservation	Negotiable, revocable while in force.	Agreement-specific, protection and management of natural values on private land	Not publicly specified, assumed to be agreement-specific within an M&E framework	Unspecified – note advice from DBCA suggests agreement to reserve have not been used to date.

Program name	Program administrator of contractual agreements	Duration of contracts (<i>Principles 3, 12</i>)	Values targeted (<i>Principles 3, 4, 6, 8</i>)	Monitoring & Evaluation (<i>Principles 3, 6, 11</i>)	Renewal arrangements (<i>Principles 3, 7, 12</i>)
Conservation Covenant	Commissioner of Soil and Land Conservation	Negotiable, irrevocable while in force	Agreement-specific, protection and management of natural values on private land	Not publicly specified, assumed to be agreement-specific within an M&E framework	Unspecified – note advice received from DBCA suggests these covenants are in perpetuity and would be considered protected areas
South Australia					
BushBids*	SA Murray-Darling Basin Mgmt Board, O'Connor NRM	5 years	Assessed natural values and management actions on private land	Values and management options scored against Biodiversity Benefits Index and various management options. M&E presumably packaged into this process.	Unspecified
Queensland					
Cassowary Credits	Terrain NRM	25 years	Conservation and restoration of remnant rainforest	Credits are accumulated and paid for a rate of improvement in rainforest condition from a measured baseline. Regular monitoring is assumed and measured according to the Accounting for Nature process.	Unspecified

3.11 Alignment against OECM Principles and Minimum Requirements

We analysed the 19 contractual programs against the OECM principles and minimum requirements (Figure 3). The overall alignment and count of programs assessed for each principle are in Figure 3 with further detail for each principle at program level in Table 2. Principle 1 and 2 address consent of participants. Due to lack of publicly available information at a program level regarding informed consent practices, we only cursorily examine alignment with these principles within this review. Our analysis focuses on the alignment of PLCPs with the remaining principles (3-12) and minimum standards at the program level, based on the detail of program characteristics as described in such documentation.

Principle 1:

Active and informed consent of governance authorities—including free, prior, and informed consent of First Nations people, as set out in Principles 1 and 2 of the Framework—are important characteristics of OECMs. These characteristics can only be empirically validated at the site and participant level; however, we assume that Principle 1 is met within private land conservation programs given these are voluntary in nature and thus participating landholders must individually opt into a program thus exhibiting behaviour consistent with consent (Principle 1). We note that this assumption only holds for the original property holder participating in a voluntary program. If the voluntary program is contractual in nature, it cannot transfer to any subsequent property holders (thus suggesting that Principle 1 consent may not be achieved in practice when contractual terms extend to a new property holder). If the voluntary program is noted on the certificate of title, it runs with the land and can bind subsequent property holders. In such instances, those property holders have notice of the arrangement and will be presumed to have consented to it by agreeing to purchase an interest in the property. Future research is necessary to explore under what conditions consent under Principle 1 remains consistent with Principle 12.

Principle 2:

Similarly, Principle 2 (Free Prior and Informed Consent - FPIC) for conserved areas governed by First Nations peoples is assumed to be consistent with existing programs at first point of engagement and recognition. FPIC requires demonstratable engagement and process, and in relation to the OECM Framework, it is required for First Nations governance authorities, and is best practice (but optional) for other First Nation groups. How FPIC is achieved across generations over the duration of a 99+ years is an important question in practice. Future research is necessary to assess consistency in 2 and 12.

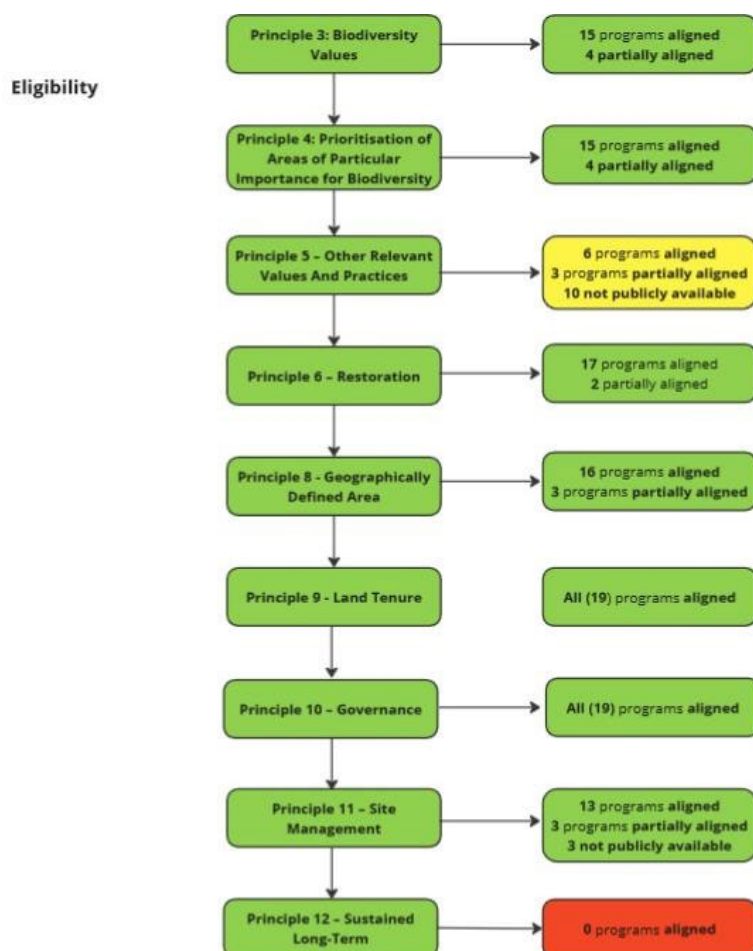
Alignment across Principles 3-12:

Contractual programs that potentially support OECMs differ greatly in their program design (Table 1) but were largely aligned with the principles and minimum requirements (Table 2, Figure 3).

We find that of the 19 programs analysed, none meet all principles; Principle 12 rules all programs analysed here as ineligible. The maximum contractual period identified was 25 years and means

(legal or otherwise) of demonstrating a long-term commitment post contract were not readily demonstrated within these programs (Figure 3).

Figure 3 Analysing eligibility of Australian PLCPs against principles and minimum standards



Method and results of analysing eligibility of Australian PLCPs against principles and minimum standards as defined in the Framework.

Programs were well aligned with other OECM principles. Areas of alignment include:

- All programs feature an emphasis on maintaining or restoring biodiversity values for sites with existing biodiversity values, with mechanisms to assess habitat condition and ecological function for degraded sites (*Principle 3 – Biodiversity Values* and *Principle 6 – Restoration Sites*); and operate in geographically defined areas (*Principle 8 – Geographically Defined Area*).
- Programs focused on restoration of natural areas typically feature clear guidelines around degradation of natural values and measurable thresholds for registration or progress through the program (*Principle 6 – Restoration Sites*), requiring assessment and monitoring by qualified program staff.

- Most programs aim to prioritise sites or areas with high biodiversity value (*Principle 4 – Prioritisation of Areas of Particular Importance for Biodiversity*), though this is highly context-dependent. Some only operate in areas of high priority for biodiversity (e.g. NSW BCT Conservation Tenders), or have been developed by the needs of specific ecosystems or bioregions (e.g. Midlands Conservation Partnership).
- The majority of programs reviewed incentivise or encourage PA designation via perpetual covenant upon property registration, contract review or cessation (*Principle 7 – Protected Area Consideration* and *Principle 12 – Sustained Long-Term*).
- PLCPs by definition are governed by the program organizer with clear program requirements (*Principle 10 – Governance*) and deliver management plans to participants as a common core program service (*Principle 11 – Site Management*). Whilst all programs aim for and encourage long-term participation and commitment to managing for biodiversity, conservation or restoration of natural values (*Principle 12 – Sustained Long-Term*), the sophistication and strength of mechanisms to secure this varies. None of the reviewed programs meet the requirement for a 99+ year demonstrated commitment to management for biodiversity values, aside from the pathway to covenant. We discuss contract duration and management plan aspects in detail below.

Table 2 Alignment of Australian contractual PLCPs against OECM Framework principles and minimum requirements.⁴

Coverage	Program	OECM Framework Principle											
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Tasmania	Midlands Conservation Partnership												
	BCT Conservation Tenders												
	Enviro Resto & Rehab grants												
	Protecting Our Places grants												
Victoria	TFN Biodiversity Offsets Program												
	BushTender												
	EcoTender												
Queensland	Cassowary Credits												
Northern Territory	Territory Conservation Agreements												
	Bush Heritage Partnerships												
Western Australia	Agreement to Reserve												
	Conservation Covenant												
South Australia	BushBids												
Commonwealth	Enhancing Remnant Vegetation Pilot												
	EPBC Conservation Agreements												
	Environmental Stewardship Program												
	Regional Land Partnerships												
	Environmental Small Grants												
	Indigenous Land Use Agreements												

Strongly aligns/all activities align	Partially aligns/some activities align	Does not align	n/a - not publicly available	Program not currently active
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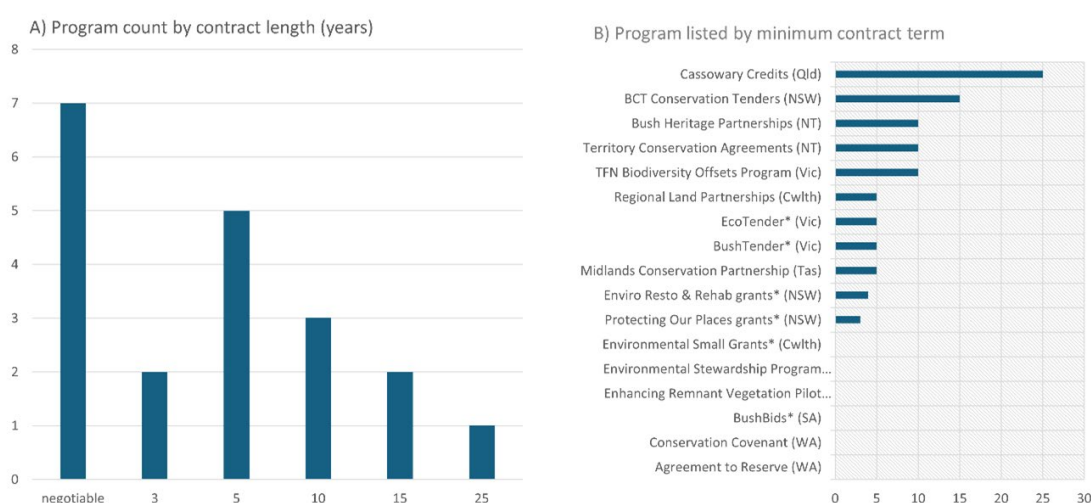
⁴ Principle 1 – Consent; Principle 2 – Free, Prior And Informed Consent; Principle 3 - Biodiversity Values; Principle 4 – Prioritisation Of Areas Of Particular Importance For Biodiversity; Principle 5 – Other Relevant Values And Practices; Principle 6 – Restoration Sites; Principle 7 – Protected Area Consideration; Principle 8 - Geographically Defined Area; Principle 9 - Land Tenure; Principle 10 – Governance; Principle 11 – Site Management; Principle 12 – Sustained Long-Term. We note that in this review, principle 1 and 2 are not explicitly assessed but are assumed as implied in properties voluntarily joining programs. However, these principles would need to be further interpreted and assessed at a property level with property owners to determine full alignment with FPIC and interactions of contract durations across generations.

3.12 Key contractual program attributes in relation to alignment with Framework Principles

When considering alignment with the OECM principles, there were principles which programs were misaligned: primarily Program duration, and Monitoring and Evaluation to demonstrate management outcomes (e.g. against Principle 11 and 12) (Table 2).

Program duration and renewal options – these criteria were critical to assess the extent to which Australian PLCPs could demonstrate capacity to contribute to *Principle 12 – Sustained Long-Term* conservation outcomes. The majority of programs had negotiable terms or terms of three to five years. Queensland’s Cassowary Credits (currently in pilot) features a minimum contract duration of 25 years as a core criterion, and NSW’s Conservation Tenders offer 15-year contracts as minimum term. Minimum ten-year contract terms were a feature of three programs (Territory Conservation Agreements, Bush Heritage Partnerships, TfN Biodiversity Offsets), with a five-year minimum for Victoria’s BushTender program, Landcare Regional Land Partnerships and the Midlands Conservation Partnership (Figure 4).

Figure 4 Summary of contractual program durations



Summary of contractual program durations. A) Program duration frequency. B) Candidate contractual PLCPs by minimum contract duration. Those with no minimum contract duration are negotiable.

A common theme across programs with negotiable contract terms was a pathway to permanent protection (*Principle 7 – Protected Area Consideration*), by facilitating an in-perpetuity contract term by default (e.g. NSW Fixed Price Offers), or at the end of the contract term (e.g. Victoria’s BushTender, the Commonwealth’s Environmental Stewardship program). Given covenanting has been used for in perpetuity terms, these on title arrangements have resulted in protected areas, rather than conserved areas. However, as a legal instrument where term limited, a covenant (or other on title instrument such as agreement to reserve) presents an opportunity for creating a pathway to created conserved areas.

Given our results recommendations for future research include further research focused on term limited covenants, and investigating renewal options and approaches to incentivising ongoing participation. Beyond contract duration and renewal mechanisms, other measures of program sustainability and resilience in their capacity to deliver long-term conservation outcomes should also be considered, such as the robustness of financing mechanisms and exposure to institutional or political risks inherent in programs that are entirely government-funded and managed. For example, the seven inactive programs we have included in our review are all government-led programs, and the potential for permanence of state schemes with longer contract terms (e.g. BCT Conservation Tenders) must be considered against programs with secure funding models and lesser exposure to political risk and institutional turnover.

Criteria for Inclusion & Values Targeted – In recording these two characteristics, we aimed to capture the specific purpose, key incentive mechanisms and eligibility criteria of each program. These criteria map to Principles: 3 – *Biodiversity Values*, 4 – *Prioritisation of Areas of Particular Importance for Biodiversity*, 5 – *Other Relevant Values and Practices*, 6 – *Restoration Sites* and 8 – *Geographically Defined Area*. All programs reviewed required biodiversity values to be present. The majority of programs applied some form of prioritisation methodology in assessment of values, whether against tightly specified priority bioregions or ecosystems at program level as an eligibility criterion (e.g. NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust’s Conservation Tenders and Fixed Price Offers); integral in the program’s spatial range (e.g. Tasmania’s Midlands Conservation Partnership); in evaluation of applications or expressions of interest against state- or Commonwealth-listed values (e.g. Victoria’s Trust for Nature Biodiversity Offsets), or at minimum at site scale when values were assessed in determining agreed management prescriptions, required by every program under review. These details also captured the programs’ core purpose whether conservation, restoration or a permissible combination of both objectives.

Performance measures – This criterion aimed to capture the mechanisms by and extent to which programs measure a participant’s performance towards conservation goals or agreed KPIs and the mechanisms by which this is monitored or structurally reinforced, e.g. by incentive scheme, and how lack of compliance or poor performance is treated. The details of monitoring and evaluation regimes vary significantly across programs. Stewardship payment models, particularly reverse auction schemes, tend to feature more rigorous monitoring of compliance and progress towards agreed management outcomes as integral to the valuation model. Programs administered or managed by conservation not-for-profits tend to feature more thorough assessment, monitoring and compliance processes (e.g. Trust for Nature-facilitated stewardship, Midlands Conservation Partnership, Territory NRM Conservation Agreements). This is a critical point for determining OECMs as the emphasis is on demonstrated outcomes for biodiversity.

This further relates to Principles 6 – *Restoration Sites*, 11 – *Site Management* and 8 – *Geographically Defined Area*. The majority of programs reviewed contained a requirement for biodiversity values to be assessed and management arrangements agreed as a component of the evaluation and registration process. Arrangements for ongoing monitoring varied significantly in the extent to which they were defined in available program documents. Contractual programs built around credit-based incentive mechanisms (e.g. Queensland’s Cassowary Credits, Victoria’s former BushTender and

EcoTender, the national Enhancing Remnant Vegetation Pilot) typically have clearer documentation of assessment methodology against targets to ensure that KPIs were being met and payments for management are appropriate. Reviewed programs varied greatly in the amount of detail monitoring arrangements available in public-facing information. Documented monitoring and reporting regimes ranged from participant self-reporting combined with CSIRO-led environmental and socio-ecological monitoring (National Environmental Stewardship Program (DCCEE 2022)), triennial site visits (TfN Biodiversity Offsets Program) to annual site visits or meetings (Midlands Conservation Partnership).

3.13 Further review of highly aligned programs

Based on the duration of contract, no reviewed programs meet the current principles; however, based on program terms which negotiate longer contracts or embed renewal periods in contracts we considered these as most aligned:

- ❖ Trust for Nature Victoria's 'Biodiversity Offsets'
- ❖ Queensland's 'Cassowary Credits' (in pilot)
- ❖ Tasmania's 'Midlands Conservation Partnership'
- ❖ NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust's 'Conservation Tenders'

For two of these programs (MCP and Conservation Tenders) we also compiled a complete set of details using the Conserved Areas Site Assessment Tool (Appendix).

3.14 Summary of managed lands (non-contractual programs)

Our review identified 10 non-contractual programs, all of which are LfW programs. We identify that these programs do not meet minimum standards or principles for OECMs and therefore are best categorised as managed lands which play a critical supporting role for protected and conserved lands and in particular, connectivity of these.

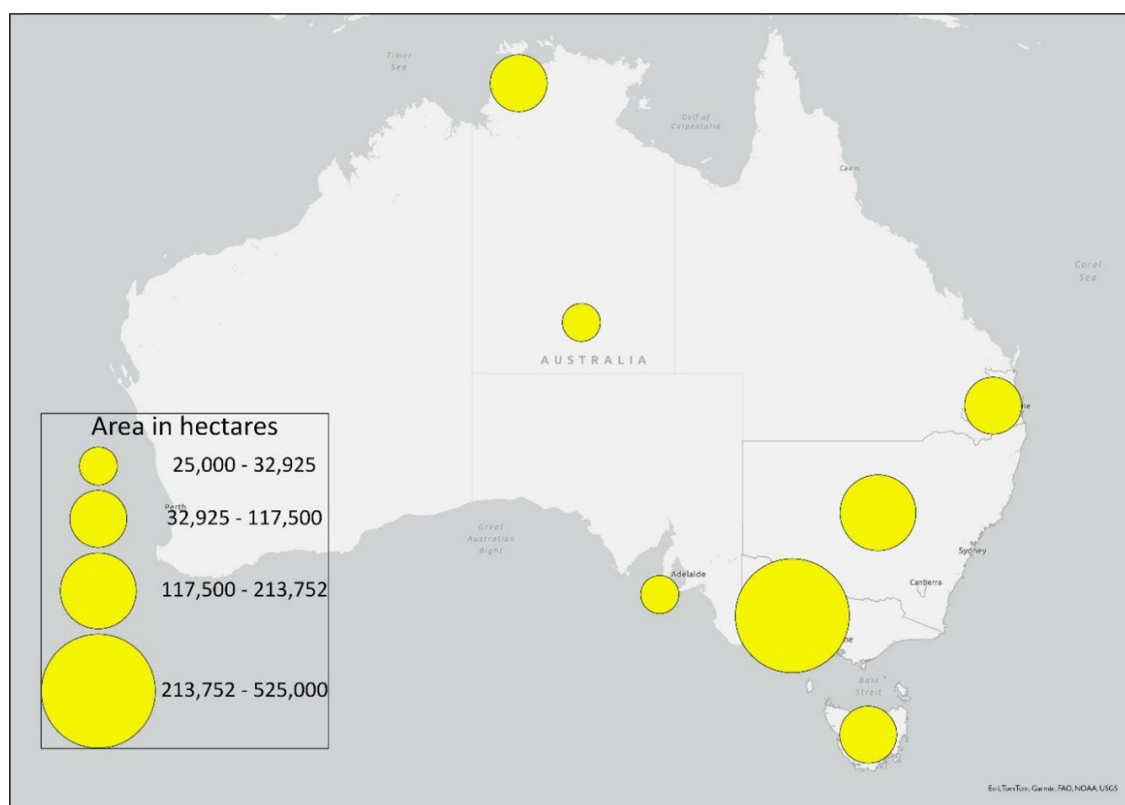
LfW has programs operating in all states and territories, though the number of programs and coverage of each jurisdiction varies considerably. National coordination was briefly managed centrally under the 'Bush for Wildlife' project during the early 2000s but is now coordinated informally at national level. Governance arrangements vary across jurisdictions and reflect the blend of not-for-profit, private, state and local government bodies administering the schemes (Prado et al. 2018) (Table 3).

Table 3 Non-contractual programs (sorted by state/territory)

Program	Program administrator of voluntary agreements	Values conserved in program	Monitoring & Evaluation
Land for Wildlife Tasmania	Tasmanian Land Conservancy	Noted protection for threatened plants which are range restricted and, in some cases, only found on LfW properties. Programs within LfW also designed to manage for threatened species, such as the Forty-spotted pardalote (<i>Pardalotus quadragintus</i>)	As agreed
Land for Wildlife New South Wales	Community Environment Network	Regionally specific conservation and restoration of natural values on private land	As agreed
Land for Wildlife Victoria	Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action	Management programs designed to support conservation of amphibians and other conservation values sometimes neglected by conservation programs.	As agreed
Land for Wildlife Western Australia	Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions	Regionally specific conservation and restoration of natural values on private land	As agreed
Land for Wildlife South Australia	Landcare Association of South Australia	Conservation and restoration of natural values on private land. Kangaroo island LfW has a particular emphasis on threat management of feral cats through monitoring and management to protect small bodied native mammals in areas recovering from fire.	As agreed
Land for Wildlife South East Queensland	Local Councils	Many varied programs (both council specific and multi-council) focused in particular on land management and threatened species detection and management.	As agreed
Land for Wildlife ACT	Kosciuszko to Coast	Regionally specific conservation and restoration of natural values on private land	As agreed
Land for Wildlife Top End	Low Ecological Services P/L	Regionally specific conservation and restoration of natural values on private land – particular emphasis on threat management and protecting freshwater values	As agreed
Land for Wildlife Alice Springs	Territory NRM	Regionally specific conservation and restoration of natural values on private land	

Significant numbers of privately owned properties participate in the non-contractual program, including more than 5,000 members managing just under 80,000 hectares of retained habitat in South-East Queensland (SEQ), Victoria hosting over 5,000 members in stewardship of ~525,000 hectares, and greater than 850 members covering ~34,000 hectares of wildlife habitat in Tasmania (Figure 5, Table 4). Because LfW is entirely voluntary it does not explicitly target values for participant entry, nor does it have formal management monitoring at program level.

Figure 5 Land for Wildlife programs by area



Details of programs are in Table 4.

Table 4 Land for Wildlife programs by state and property and area details.

State	Program name	Area under management (ha)	# of properties registered
Vic	Land for Wildlife Victoria	525,000	4,800
NSW	Land for Wildlife NSW	213,752	2,940
NT	Land for Wildlife Top End	117,500	241
Qld	Land for Wildlife SEQ	79,475	4,450
Tas	Land for Wildlife Tasmania	34,208	859
NT	Land for Wildlife Central	32,925	105
SA	Land for Wildlife Kangaroo Island	25,000	84

Note: Administrators of LfW WA, LfW Mackay and LfW ACT did not provide program data so are omitted from this table.

In considering values and active management, previous work has identified that LfW properties typically have mapped biodiversity values and landholder intentions for wildlife persistence that result in properties that have been registered and active for several decades. For example, in Southeast Queensland, the listed species known to occur on LfW properties and being managed for by property holders were Koalas (*Phascolarctos cinereus*) and Glossy Black Cockatoos (*Calyptorhynchus lathami*).

Similarly, in Tasmania, LfW properties have important mapped threatened species and ecological communities including Tasmanian blue gum (*Eucalyptus globulus*), habitat for Swift Parrots and nesting sites for endangered Tasmanian Wedge-tailed Eagles (*Aquila audax fleayi*). Participating landholders in such areas have stated management actions and intentions to protect these species (see Box 1). Surveys of LfW landholders (across Victoria, Tasmania, and Queensland 2016-2023) stated that, while they were aware of threats to biodiversity on their property such as weeds and feral animals, they were not always actively managing for these. Reasons for inaction include lack of knowledge, skills or confidence regarding the potential impacts of threats or appropriate management techniques, lack of time and resources, and a lack of perceived individual control over management. These barriers can potentially be addressed through well-designed interventions (choice architecture that allows landholders to easily make independent choices that deliver desired program outcomes). Such interventions might include targeted information, events, training or improved ease of access to resources within LfW to specifically improve knowledge, skills and confidence of management options, raise awareness of biodiversity values on properties, and enhance landholders' abilities to implement interventions that improve biodiversity values on their properties (see Box 2 for examples from Kangaroo Island).

Box 1 Land for Wildlife in Tasmania

Land for Wildlife (LfW) in Tasmania is run by the Tasmanian Land Conservancy (TLC). It is acknowledged within their strategic plan as a key program for managing land for biodiversity. LfW Tasmania has ~900 members covering ~34,000 hectares of wildlife habitat in Tasmania. In Tasmania, LfW properties have important mapped threatened species and ecological communities including *Eucalyptus globulus* trees – habitat for swift parrots – and nesting sites for wedge-tailed eagles. Landholders have stated management actions and intentions to protect these species.

Previous research on the alignment of LfW Tasmania with IUCN OECM criteria found strong alignment of the program with global criteria (Otzen, 2019 Pers Comms). This study used GIS analysis to assess the distribution of LfW properties in Tasmania across the Interim Biogeographic Regionalisation for Australia (IBRA) regions and other spatial characteristics of the properties including size and presence of significant ecological communities. Furthermore, a landholder survey was conducted to consider aspects of persistence, in particular landholder intentions to manage their properties for biodiversity into the future and to remain within the LfW program, as well as on ground management and ability to monitor for outcomes. The survey revealed high levels of intention to persist and stated management activities within LfW properties. However, there were barriers to management such as knowledge of specific management actions for wildlife. Additionally, there was an absence of monitoring data to verify outcomes.

Thus, while the study found that the LfW program fulfils the characteristics of an OECM based on global criteria, that gaps remain specifically for monitoring and demonstrating biodiversity outcomes. Interventions targeted at monitoring and providing supportive management advice were identified. For example, within Tasmania the re-launch of the citizen-science and conservation-management program WildTracker provides the opportunity to embed camera trapping citizen science in LfW to support monitoring and providing landholders tailored advice. WildTracker is a program where private landholders in Tasmania upload, tag and share images of wildlife collected by camera traps on their properties. Through participation in the program, they can become more aware of what wildlife uses their properties for habitat and they receive property-management tips that highlight specific actions they can take to improve habitat for these species.

Box 2 Land for Wildlife Kangaroo Island

Land for Wildlife (LfW) Kangaroo Island is managed by Heidi Groffen, a former manager of Land for Wildlife Central in Alice Springs, NT. The program now has around 84 properties registered covering a footprint of over 25,000 hectares, mainly on the western on the island, an area most in need of recovery from the 2019-20 Black Summer bushfires. Participating properties have a minimum size of five hectares, but most are over 50 ha of heritage-listed remnant vegetation.

Having observed variation in implementation of other regional LfW programs, operational parameters were developed with a priority on a) capturing and maintaining landholder engagement, and b) establishing baseline data and an effective monitoring regime. The tight spatial focus means that LfW staff have a clear idea of values and threats likely to be present, facilitating ready identification of candidate properties most in need of protection and restoration.

Needs of critical weight range mammals, the threat of feral cat predation and *Phytophthora cinnamomi* transmission are key values and threatening processes for the program, so potential participants are visited for a site survey upon initial enquiry. Once registered, drift line camera traps to monitor for threatened fauna and predators are established on the property, with owners being provided clear directions on management actions in relation to values and threats. LfW staff engage participants approximately every 2-3 months to check camera monitoring sites, site-specific species tables, listed status of recorded fauna and monitor threat management. These visits and data are used to guide landholders in conservation actions on the ground.

4 Conclusions

Our review identified 29 PLPCs for analysis (19 contractual and 10 non-contractual). These operate across all states and territories and engage a large number of landholders. The majority of reviewed programs provide a pathway to perpetual covenants and frequently offered this option upon registration, making participating properties a PA if taken – disqualifying such sites as being recognized as conserved areas but making significant contributions to the ‘in situ conservation of biodiversity over the long term’ (IUCN 2019) via permanent protection of the site.

We found national scale, broad scope grant programs with a track record and potential to fund projects meeting OECM principles, to highly targeted programs with tightly managed criteria, for which all associated activities may qualify⁵ (e.g. TfN Vic’s Biodiversity Offsets scheme, Cassowary Credits, Midlands Conservation Partnership, NSW BCT’s Conservation Tenders).

Of the 19 contractual programs in our review, 15 were strongly aligned with at least eight of the Framework’s principles, with most showing partial alignment across remainder criteria, either partially meeting it at program level, or supporting arrangements that met the criteria among others (Table 2). However, of the 19 contractual programs identified, none met Principle 12 (sustained long-term). A defining characteristic of many PLCPs is the need to provide a clear alternative to permanent covenanting, appealing to landholders that may require a level of flexibility in managing properties or that have intergenerational concerns around ‘locking up’ areas permanently (Adams et al. 2014; Moon and Cocklin 2011; Moon et al. 2012). In response, many Australian PLCPs have been developed or adapted to accommodate this need, aiming to provide flexible parameters to meet participant needs (Adams et al. 2014; Greiner 2015). Such programs typically feature focused engagement and relationship development strategies to support landholders and see significant retention of participants in contract renewals or conversion to in-perpetuity conservation covenants (e.g. Midlands Conservation Partnership; see Appendix for further details).

From our review, the four programs that demonstrated the best fit with the principles currently defined in the Framework are:

- ❖ Trust for Nature Victoria’s ‘Biodiversity Offsets’
- ❖ Queensland’s ‘Cassowary Credits’ (in pilot)
- ❖ Tasmania’s ‘Midlands Conservation Partnership’
- ❖ NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust’s ‘Conservation Tenders’

When reviewing the programs, important patterns emerge:

- ❖ Private land conservation programs were primarily contractual in nature, and with a strong preference for perpetual or termed conservation covenants as requisite for participation, eligibility for financial and in-kind support, or as the means for securing long-term conservation outcomes. Thus, most programs were considered to incentivise the declaration of private PAs through their structural pathways to perpetual covenants and long-term management for

⁵ With the exception of the 99-year duration requirement for *Principle 12 – Sustained Long-Term*.

biodiversity values (e.g. Queensland's NatureAssist grants, NSW's Conservation Tenders, and the National Environmental Stewardship program).

- ❖ Of the programs reviewed, duration of contract was the limiting factor in meeting the principles with the longest duration contracts being 25 years.
- ❖ In certain circumstances, covenants which are revocable, or term limited, could potentially fulfill the OECM criteria by providing a pathway to conservation and management. In limited cases we identified these within existing programs or legal instruments, such as Western Australia's Agreement to Reserve and Tasmania Part 5 agreements. A further review of such mechanisms is required to identify if these would meet Principle 12.
- ❖ Many of the included programs fulfil OECM principles in only a specific combination of circumstances that are not formally aligned within program guidelines. For example, Bush Heritage Agreement partnerships with First Nations groups only when managing a specific area that is not an established PA while also having an established management plan (Healthy Country Plan), or National Landcare grants given to community organisations or municipalities for conservation or environmental management projects whose detail meets OECM principles, though grant eligibility is much broader.

When considering program structures:

- ❖ Reverse auction programs, such as Victoria's BushTender and EcoTender, South Australia's BushBids and New South Wales' Conservation Tenders, were piloted in most states in past decades but are no longer active. Reverse auction bidding systems that rank and price ecosystem service as a means for incentivising management for conservation have been generally well received, successful and long-running programs that qualify as model candidate conserved areas. These are well aligned with OECM principles and would allow targeting of contracts that meet the required terms. Most such programs are no longer managed or currently active.
- ❖ Pilot schemes at state and national level, such as Cassowary Credits and the Enhancing Remnant Vegetation Pilot, hold promise for alignment with OECM principles and expansion beyond participation of individual landholders, such as regional NRMs or councils could be considered.
- ❖ Indigenous Land Use Agreements represent areas of potential in developing program alignment and pathways to formal recognition, i.e. informing redevelopment of joint management frameworks and pathways to Native Title recognition.

Non-contractual programs identified do not meet OECM principles of duration and permanence but present major opportunities for nationally coordinated effective management:

- ❖ Nationally, the major non-contractual program identified was Land for Wildlife (LfW). LfW is administered and managed at different scales across the states and territories: centrally by a state agency, locally by municipal councils or community NRM and conservation organisations or a combination. The general framework, parameters and terms are consistent and national Landcare funding supports all LfW programs.

- ❖ Beyond LfW program participation, potential for OECM alignment with local council land management and restoration activities is largely unexplored here as programs are not well described in publicly available materials.

5 Appendix: Contractual program profiles

5.1 Midlands Conservation Partnership: Tasmanian Land Conservancy and Bush Heritage Australia

The Tasmanian Midlands are home to some of the most threatened ecosystems in the world – temperate grasslands and grassy woodlands. A working landscape, the Tasmanian Midlands have, since colonial settlement, been largely turned over to sheep farming and – increasingly – cropping, poppies, orchards and vegetables. At the same time, it is an ecologically unique landscape. Surrounded by mountains, the Midlands have lower rainfall than the state’s west, south and east. The Midlands are one of only two terrestrial priority places in Tasmania under the Federal Government’s [2022-32 Threatened Species Action Plan](#). The ecosystems that once flourished here are not well-protected in national parks and other PAs elsewhere in Tasmania.

The Midlands Conservation Partnership (MCP) was established in 2011 as a joint initiative of nature conservation organisations, Bush Heritage Australia and the Tasmanian Land Conservancy. The model is funded through an endowment fund, the Midlands Conservation Fund, jointly owned by both organisations. The fund was established in 2011 as a company limited by guarantee. It is registered as a charity and on the register of environmental organisations. Its purpose is to provide secure and predictable funds to resource ongoing conservation management on properties secured through stewardship agreements in the Tasmanian Midlands. It is governed by a Board of Directors appointed by both organisations. The fund grows thanks to donations from philanthropists and members of the public. This structure ensures that the program can support conservation in perpetuity. This is a unique feature of the program and while contracts are typically of five- or ten-year durations, they include a renewal clause, and the fund structures ensures renewal will continue to occur into the future so long as both parties consent.

Since the partnership was established, it has secured the long-term protection and management of over 7,360 ha of high priority grasslands, wetlands, grassy woodlands, and forests across 14 properties. The MCP has secured 1,624 ha (11.6%) of its original goal of securing 8,000 ha (75%) of threatened native grasslands (Lowland Native Grasslands of Tasmania). On-going ecological monitoring and reporting informs appropriate management to ensure the condition of these ecosystems is maintained or improves through time. The program’s longevity also created a trusting relationship with farmers who turn to its staff for ecological advice.

Program Information	
Program Name	Midlands Conservation Partnership
Address	N/A
Lot on Plan	N/A
Size <i>No minimum or maximum site size required, but site must be a sufficient size to achieve positive, long-term outcomes for the biodiversity values present.</i>	N/A
Land tenure <i>Conserved Areas can be recognised on all forms of land tenure in Australia (Principle 9). The land tenure categories are based on ABS land account definitions.</i>	Predominantly freehold.
Lease duration and governing legislation <i>(if relevant)</i>	N/A

<i>Leased land is only eligible if conservation is compatible with lease conditions / governing legislation, and the lease is of a long-term nature (if not in-perpetuity for a minimum of 25 years).</i>	
Existing conservation measures <i>Information on existing conservation measures and term e.g. termed covenants (i.e. not in-perpetuity).</i>	Participating properties may frequently participate in multiple programs including covenants; however areas enrolled in the MCP are only under contractual arrangements within that program (with no spatially overlapping area based protection measures).
Is biodiversity conservation a primary or secondary management objective or an ancillary result of another management activity? <i>Ancillary Conserved Areas are those that deliver conservation as a by-product of management activities, even though biodiversity conservation is not a management objective.</i>	Conservation of critically endangered ecosystems in the Tasmanian Midlands is the primary management objective of the MCP. The program's vision statement is 'To promote and facilitate long-term community-based protection and management of threatened native grasslands and associated wetlands and woodlands in the Tasmanian Midlands.' (TLC, 2023). The program's secondary management objective is grazing and wool production.

Governance and Management Arrangements	
Governance type <i>(Principle 10)</i>	The MCP is a joint endeavour between Bush Heritage Australia and the Tasmanian Land Conservancy, established as a company limited by guarantee in 2011 (TLC, 2023). The company is governed by a Board of Directors appointed by BHA and TLC and the management of the company is ensured by a coordinator with support from an operations team. The MCP governs contractual agreements with landholders to manage for conservation of threatened values on their land.
Governance authority/ies name <i>Governance authority is the person or entity (or an agreed upon combination of entities) acknowledged as having authority and responsibility for decision-making. This is often the landholder / land-manager but not always.</i>	Midlands Conservation Partnership ABN: 83150425648 Address: 183 Macquarie Street Hobart TAS, 7000, Australia
Governance authority/ies description	Landholders enter a contractual agreement with the MCP which contains a payment schedule for managing the agreed MCP area in accordance with the terms of the agreement. Landholders are required to record management activities and observations and report on them annually. The MCP meets with landholders annually to review and discuss those reports with landholders. Progress against KPIs and management effectiveness is monitored and assessed every three years through ecological surveys at designated monitoring sites on the properties. The Key Performance Indicators (KPI) are: ○ KPI 1 - Natural Values are maintained in good condition. Indicators used are:

	○ Diversity and cover of native spp. is stable or increase. ○ Cover of introduced spp. is stable or decreasing. ○ Inter-tussock spaces are maintained. ○ Ground cover is stable. ○ KPI 2 - Records Of management activities and observations are maintained ○ and submitted to TLC annually in the form of Attachment A — (The Annual Management Report) along with annual fixed-point photographs; ○ KPI 3 - The extent Of High Threat Weeds on the Land is declining where present; ○ KPI 4 - No new infestations of High Threat Weeds have become permanently established in locations where infestations have not previously been recorded.
Management authority/ies (i.e. land manager/s) (if different from governance authority) <i>Management authority is the person or entity (or an agreed upon combination of entities) responsible for the ongoing management of the site.</i>	The Management authority lies with the landholders, who are responsible managing the land in such a way to ensure the conservation values are maintained in good condition (see indicators above). MCP's role is to ensure these conservation values are maintained through monitoring, and to provide advice to those landholders for the appropriate management of the sites.
Primary site management objective <i>Based on the primary management objective(s) of at least 75% of the area proposed to be recognised as a Conserved Area.</i>	Conservation is the primary objective of areas managed under the MCP, which contain threatened values. The boundaries and management prescriptions for these areas are enclosed in the management plan and contractual agreement between the MCP and landholder.
Name and contact details of any other rights-holders or stakeholders who are involved in completing the site assessment.	<i>e.g. First Nations groups, government agencies, private sector, eNGOs etc.</i> N/A

Detailed Site Assessment

Where appropriate, responses to these questions requires evidence to be provided.

QUESTIONS	RESPONSE	SUPPORTING INFORMATION / EVIDENCE
Does the site support <u>at least one</u> of the following: (<i>Principle 3</i>) • biodiversity values recognised through designation as a Ramsar site, World Heritage property, National Heritage or Commonwealth Heritage place, Key Biodiversity Area, etc.	Yes	The Tasmanian Midlands is recognised by the Commonwealth as a Biodiversity Hotspot and a Priority Place for conservation under the 2022-2032 Threatened Species Action Plan. The area contains endemic, threatened ecological communities; flora and fauna species recognised under the <i>EPBC Act 1999</i> and

• threatened species and ecological communities (see EPBC Act Protected Matters Search Tool, Species Profiles (SPRAT), EPBC Act List of Threatened Ecological Communities, as well as relevant state/territory lists e.g. Victoria's Naturekit, NSW's Threatened biodiversity profiles, WA's Threatened flora and fauna lists, Queensland's Matters of state environmental significance, ACT's Threatened Species, SA's Threatened species, NT's Threatened Animal List, Tasmania's list of threatened species). • natural ecosystems in bioregions that are under-represented in Australia's Protected Area network (see Australia's underrepresented Bioregions for information). • a high level of ecological integrity or intactness. • range restricted species or ecosystems. • important species aggregations, such as spawning, breeding or feeding areas. • ecological connectivity, as part of a network of sites in a landscape or seascape.		Tasmania's <i>TSPA 1995</i>. The Tasmanian Northern Midlands are an Underrepresented Bioregion in the Australian Protected Area network.
Is the site within an area important for biodiversity? Target 3 requires areas important for biodiversity to be prioritised for conservation. Examples of such areas are those high in species richness or threatened species, threatened biomes and habitats, areas with particularly important habitats and areas that are important for the continued provision of ecosystem functions and services. The site may have biodiversity values that are important at a national, state or regional / local scale.	Yes	The Northern Midlands Bioregion is the only Tasmanian Bioregion to be nationally recognised as a biodiversity hotspot, containing 180 species recognised as threatened at state level and 32 nationally. It is identified as a priority place under the Threatened Species Action Plan 2022-2032 (DCCEEW, 2022). The MCP specifically targets properties containing critically endangered lowland <i>Poa labillardierei</i> and <i>Themeda triandra</i> native grasslands. It protects 1,632ha of those native grasslands. 62 threatened species have been recorded on MCP areas, including 16 that are nationally listed. These communities host the four of largest remaining populations of EPBC-listed orchids on

		MCP-protected properties (BHA, 2023): • Golfers Leek Orchid (<i>Paraprasophyllum incorrectum</i>) • Tunbridge Leek Orchid (<i>Paraprasophyllum tunbridgense</i>) • Midlands Greenhood (<i>Pterostylis commutate</i>) and • the Fleshy Greenhood (<i>Pterostylis wapstrarum</i>) Three species listed under the Threatened Species Action Plan (DCCEEW, 2022) as priority fauna species are found in the Midlands: • the Australasian bittern, • the Eastern Quoll and • the Growling Grass Frog
Does the site support ecosystem services? <i>Ecosystem services are the benefits that nature provides to people (Neugarten et al. 2018).</i>	Varies per property	Most areas under conservation agreements are used by landholders for light grazing of sheep. As such those areas support the production of wool, and deliver food, shelter, erosion control, pollination and other ecosystem services to the commercial farms on which they are found.
Does the site improve connectivity between Protected Area and / or Conserved Area sites?	Yes	Connectivity is considered in participant/site selection and prioritised in management and restoration actions once contracted.
Does the site support heritage, cultural, spiritual and socio-economic values? (Principle 5) <i>Heritage, cultural, spiritual, socio-economic and other locally relevant values and practices can achieve positive biodiversity outcomes. Information on these values will add to the overall understanding of a site's values. These values should complement, and not negatively impact, biodiversity values for which the site is to be recognised.</i>	Yes	Site-specific values.
Does the site have a clearly agreed boundary that can be accurately identified on maps and on the ground? (Principle 8) <i>Where a proposed Conserved Area is part of a larger property, the footprint of the Conserved Area must be clearly described, and able to be identified on maps and on the ground, to differentiate it from other parts of the property. In instances where boundaries are in dispute, for example, where there is an unresolved Native Title claim, Conserved Area recognition would not be appropriate until the claim is</i>	Yes	Maps are included in the management plan that is an integral part of the contract between the MCP and landholders.

settled, or where there is a clear, established process in place in the Australian, state or territory government.		
Are threats to biodiversity values for which the site is important, prevented or mitigated? (Principle 11) <i>Threats include those that are within and external to the site boundaries. Pressures that are entirely beyond the control of the governing and managing authority (such as impacts from a changing climate) do not exclude a site from being identified as a Conserved Area.</i>	Yes	Remnant native vegetation in the Northern Midlands is enmeshed in a matrix of intensive human land uses that combine to create multiple threat vectors. Participating MCP properties typically have a productive economic use as their primary objective, but biodiversity conservation as the primary objective for the allocated MCP management zone(s). Ecosystems under MCP agreements have seen widescale clearing in the Midlands, where only 30% of the original native vegetation covers remain. In terms of critically endangered lowland native grasslands, 95% of their original extent has been cleared. As such, MCP agreements prevent the further clearing of those remnants.
Does the site have documented site management arrangements (i.e. Plan of Management or other planning document) in place to support the long-term maintenance of biodiversity values? Does it meet minimum requirements? (Principle 11) <i>The site management arrangements can be a short stand-alone Plan of Management document or a chapter / section on biodiversity conservation in a broader site planning document. The level of detail on management arrangements will be driven by site-specific circumstances.</i>	Yes	Management prescriptions and plans have been developed by ecologists and MCP program staff in collaboration with the landholder and preclude intensive agricultural use of those areas, such as cropping or pasture improvement practices that may threaten values or impede management objectives. Low-intensity activities consistent with the needs of values present site, e.g. periodic low-intensity grazing of native grasslands that benefit from such a disturbance regime, may be permitted or prescribed under expert advice. The management plans are outcome-driven and not overly prescriptive in nature. They list a range of prohibited activities and outline the desired state of the ecosystems (ecological indicators and KPIs) but leaves room for the landholders to choose the appropriate management method to achieve this desired state.
Is the site under restoration? If so, do the site management arrangements include a habitat restoration section? (Principle 6)	Yes	Management prescriptions are typically focused on restoration actions for remnant fragments of critically endangered vegetation communities, management of threatening processes and restoration of functional connectivity.
Has First Nations Peoples' knowledge in caring for Country been considered in management arrangements? (Principle 11)	Varies per property	First Nations groups are carrying out Cultural burning practices on some MCP properties.
Is there a clear long-term commitment for the continuation of management	No	The conservation agreements are entered for a period of 5 to 10 years at a time (pending

arrangements (or management activities in the case of ancillary sites) that deliver in-situ biodiversity conservation outcomes, that can be secured by legal or other effective means? (Principle 12)		outcome of negotiations with landowners). However, the intention is to maintain these agreements into the long-term (beyond 25 years). The governance arrangements have certainly been set up to provide that long-term certainty and resourcing for the program. The agreements are renewable simply by written agreement of both parties, and to date, all landholders except for one have agreed to renew their agreements. Moreover, through the program's endowment fund, income is available for annual stewardship payments in perpetuity. This means that, should a landholder decide to not renew their agreement, or should we decide that our conservation priorities can be better protected over a different area in the future, we can redeploy those payments to enter a new conservation agreement elsewhere.
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5.2 Conservation Tenders: NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust

The NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust periodically invites landholders in high priority areas to express their interest in a site assessment. NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust staff members assist landholders with eligible sites to identify an area (or areas) on their land that could be managed for biodiversity conservation and develop a conservation management plan. Landholders are then invited to submit a tender or 'bid' which sets the annual payments they wish to receive to implement the conservation management plan. As part of their bid, landholders can choose the term of the conservation agreement, which will be either in-perpetuity or for a fixed term (a minimum of 15 years). Tenders often attract mainly covenant bids, but they do hold a number of contracts of 15- and 20-year durations.

Conservation agreements will be offered to sites that provide good value for money until the available funds for each conservation tender are exhausted. Landholders with successful bids will be offered to sign a funded conservation agreement with the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust. Landholders will receive annual conservation management payments, as set out in their bid, for the term of the agreement.

All agreements will include a provision for the conservation management plan and associated payments to be reviewed and in limited circumstances renegotiated every five years. Landholders that have signed term agreements will be able to upgrade to in-perpetuity agreements at any time. In either of these scenarios, if the BCT has available funds at that time, the amount set aside by the BCT will be increased commensurately. Information based on the program was largely compiled from the program information pages and with consultation to the program administrator to ensure correct interpretation (<https://www.bct.nsw.gov.au/conservation-management-program>).

<u>Program Information</u>	
Program Name	Conservation Tenders
Address	N/A
Lot on Plan	N/A
Size <i>No minimum or maximum site size required, but site must be a sufficient size to achieve positive, long-term outcomes for the biodiversity values present.</i>	No minimum size is recorded in publicly available program information. Conservation tenders are designed fit-for-purpose, depending on the target biodiversity asset and/or region. Tenders targeting coastal areas with smaller lot sizes and/or more patchily distributed assets (e.g. koala habitat) will likely have a much smaller minimum site area to be eligible (e.g. 10ha), while tenders targeting western NSW regions and/or more broadly distributed assets (e.g. woodland ecological communities), might have a larger minimum area - e.g. 100ha.
Land tenure <i>Conserved Areas can be recognised on all forms of land tenure in Australia (Principle 9). The land tenure categories are based on ABS land account definitions.</i>	Typically freehold.
Lease duration and governing legislation <i>(if relevant) Leased land is only eligible if conservation is compatible with lease conditions / governing legislation, and the lease is of a long-term nature (if not</i>	N/A

<i>in-perpetuity for a minimum of 25 years).</i>	
Existing conservation measures <i>Information on existing conservation measures and term e.g. termed covenants (i.e. not in-perpetuity).</i>	Participating properties may often participate in multiple programs including covenants thus the potential spatial overlap of any area-based measures would need to be assessed.
Is biodiversity conservation a primary or secondary management objective or an ancillary result of another management activity? <i>Ancillary Conserved Areas are those that deliver conservation as a by-product of management activities, even though biodiversity conservation is not a management objective.</i>	Biodiversity conservation is the primary management objective of the program, the management commitments contained in agreements between the BCT and landholders, and for the areas and management prescriptions covered in each agreement.

Governance and Management Arrangements

Governance type <i>(Principle 10)</i>	The NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust was established under Part 10 of the NSW <i>Biodiversity Conservation Act</i> 2016. The Trust is led by a Chief Executive Officer and executive team and governed by a Board. The board is advised by an Audit and Risk Committee and Programs and Delivery Committee. A Public Fund Management Committee monitors compliance of the Trust's public fund under the BCA 2016 (BCT, 2024).
Governance authority/ies name <i>Governance authority is the person or entity (or an agreed upon combination of entities) acknowledged as having authority and responsibility for decision-making. This is often the landholder / land-manager but not always.</i>	NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust Four Parramatta Square (4PSQ), Level 14, 12 Darcy Street, Parramatta NSW 2150 Locked Bag 5022, Parramatta NSW 2124 NSW BCT has regional offices across the Central West and Western, Northern Inland, North West, Sydney Hunter, South East and Murray Riverina regions.
Governance authority/ies description	Landholders in areas of high conservation priority are invited to submit expressions of interest for site assessments to identify potential area(s) for biodiversity conservation management. BCT staff conduct assessments and develop management plans, for which a biodiversity value score (BVS) is calculated. Landholders submit tenders for a proposed annual payment for implementation of the plan, choosing a term for the conservation agreement with a minimum of 15 years. The BCT calculate a biodiversity value index (BVI) for each tender, which divides the BVS by tender price. Tenders are ranked according to conservation value for investment, offering conservation agreements to tenders with a high BVI. Conservation Agreements contain provision for review and limited scope for renegotiation every five years. The BCT sets aside funds required to complete the

	agreement upon signing, including those with a perpetual term. Landholders are required to report, and payments are made annually (BCT, 2024).
Management authority/ies (i.e. land manager/s) (if different from governance authority) <i>Management authority is the person or entity (or an agreed upon combination of entities) responsible for the ongoing management of the site.</i>	Landholders are responsible for implementing the Management Plan and Management Actions set out in their funded conservation agreement.
Primary site management objective <i>Based on the primary management objective(s) of at least 75% of the area proposed to be recognised as a Conserved Area.</i>	Tender agreements refer to a Conservation Area, for which the primary site management objective is biodiversity conservation. These may contain one or more Management Zones with agreed targeted Management Actions (e.g. separate actions for goals of maintenance, enhancement and restoration of values) specific to those zones (BCT, 2024).
Name and contact details of any other rights-holders or stakeholders who are involved in completing the site assessment.	N/A

Detailed Site Assessment

Where appropriate, responses to these questions requires evidence to be provided.

QUESTIONS	RESPONSE	SUPPORTING INFORMATION / EVIDENCE
Does the site support <u>at least one</u> of the following: (<i>Principle 3</i>) - biodiversity values recognised through designation as a Ramsar site, World Heritage property, National Heritage or Commonwealth Heritage place, Key Biodiversity Area, etc. - threatened species and ecological communities (see EPBC Act Protected Matters Search Tool, Species Profiles (SPRAT), EPBC Act List of Threatened Ecological Communities, as well as relevant state/territory lists e.g. Victoria's Naturekit, NSW's Threatened biodiversity profiles, WA's Threatened flora and fauna lists, Queensland's Matters of state environmental significance, ACT's Threatened Species, SA's Threatened species, NT's Threatened Animal List, Tasmania's list of threatened species). - natural ecosystems in bioregions that are under-represented in Australia's Protected Area network (see	Yes	Expressions of Interest are only invited in pre-identified areas of high priority for biodiversity by the BCT, according to targets and principles identified in the <i>Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2018</i> (BCT, 2024). This may be basis of high environmental value, such as the presence of threatened species or ecosystems or RAMSAR-listed wetlands; with connectivity or landscape scale climate resilience as a goal, such as adjacency with tracts of the state reserve system (Criteria 2), contributing to CAR principles by targeting threatened values at bioregional scale (Criteria 3) and areas with environmental assets under greatest pressure from human uses (Criteria 4) (BCT, 2019).

Australia's underrepresented Bioregions for information). • a high level of ecological integrity or intactness. • range restricted species or ecosystems. • important species aggregations, such as spawning, breeding or feeding areas. • ecological connectivity, as part of a network of sites in a landscape or seascape.		
Is the site within an area important for biodiversity? Target 3 requires areas important for biodiversity to be prioritised for conservation. Examples of such areas are those high in species richness or threatened species, threatened biomes and habitats, areas with particularly important habitats and areas that are important for the continued provision of ecosystem functions and services. The site may have biodiversity values that are important at a national, state or regional / local scale.	Yes	The NSW Biodiversity Conservation Trust exclusively opens tender rounds in priority landscapes across NSW, targeting key assets defined in the <i>Biodiversity Conservation Investment Strategy 2018</i> (NSW OEH 2018). These typically include landscapes and ecosystems underrepresented or under-reserved in the protected area system. They may also target specific conservation assets such as important koala habitat (BCT, 2024).
Does the site support ecosystem services? <i>Ecosystem services are the benefits that nature provides to people (Neugarten et al. 2018).</i>	Varies per property	Some participating properties may support economic activities relying on ecosystem services such as ecotourism.
Does the site improve connectivity between Protected Area and / or Conserved Area sites?	Yes	Landscape scale connectivity is considered in selection of high priority areas for tender eligibility, appropriate to the values of interest. Connectivity with reserves and relevant conservation and heritage values are considered in the site assessment metric.
Does the site support heritage, cultural, spiritual and socio-economic values? (Principle 5) <i>Heritage, cultural, spiritual, socio-economic and other locally relevant values and practices can achieve positive biodiversity outcomes. Information on these values will add to the overall understanding of a site's values. These values should complement, and not negatively impact, biodiversity values for which the site is to be recognised.</i>	Yes	Site-specific values.
Does the site have a clearly agreed boundary that can be accurately identified on maps and on the ground? (Principle 8) <i>Where a proposed Conserved Area is part of a larger property, the footprint of the Conserved Area must be clearly described, and able to be identified on maps and on the ground, to differentiate it from other parts of the property. In instances where</i>	Yes	Areas eligible for tendering are advertised on the BCT's website along with maps showing the boundaries of areas open for tender and areas of closed rounds. Maps illustrating the Conservation Areas and associated Management Zones are enclosed in enforceable Conservation Agreements.

<i>boundaries are in dispute, for example, where there is an unresolved Native Title claim, Conserved Area recognition would not be appropriate until the claim is settled, or where there is a clear, established process in place in the Australian, state or territory government.</i>		
Are threats to biodiversity values for which the site is important, prevented or mitigated? (Principle 11) <i>Threats include those that are within and external to the site boundaries. Pressures that are entirely beyond the control of the governing and managing authority (such as impacts from a changing climate) do not exclude a site from being identified as a Conserved Area.</i>	Yes	Threats are considered at landscape scale and program level in eligibility consideration (Criteria 4). Threats at property/patch scale are considered in the assessment process, management plan, management action and documented in the Conservation Agreement.
Does the site have documented site management arrangements (i.e. Plan of Management or other planning document) in place to support the long-term maintenance of biodiversity values? Does it meet minimum requirements? (Principle 11) <i>The site management arrangements can be a short stand-alone Plan of Management document or a chapter / section on biodiversity conservation in a broader site planning document. The level of detail on management arrangements will be driven by site-specific circumstances.</i>	Yes	<i>Provide a copy of the site management arrangements and any other relevant conservation planning documents.</i> <i>For site management arrangement requirements (see Appendix 3).</i>
Is the site under restoration? If so, do the site management arrangements include a habitat restoration section? (Principle 6)	Site specific	Where applicable, these goals, actions and M&E indicators are considered and documented in the management plan, zones, actions and enclosed in the Conservation Agreement.
Has First Nations Peoples' knowledge in caring for Country been considered in management arrangements? (Principle 11)	Site specific	Guiding frameworks (BCS 2018) and mechanisms Conservation Agreements contain provisions to be structurally consistent with such arrangements, though they are not specifically targeted.
Is there a clear long-term commitment for the continuation of management arrangements (or management activities in the case of ancillary sites) that deliver in-situ biodiversity conservation outcomes, that can be secured by legal or other effective means? (Principle 12)	No	Conservation tenders are in perpetuity by default but provide for negotiable contract terms from a minimum of 15 years. Long term management is incentivised <i>de facto</i> by the terms of the agreement, as the Trust commits to setting aside agreed funding for the duration of the agreement upfront, even if in perpetuity. Clauses exist to specify re-assessment of agreed rates every five years (BCT, 2024).

Glossary

Term	Definition
Protected area	A protected area is a clearly defined geographical space, recognised, dedicated and managed through legal or other effective means to <i>achieve the long-term conservation of nature with associated ecosystem services and cultural values</i> .
OECM	Other Effective Area-Based Conservation Measure (OECM). Define as 'A geographically defined area other than a Protected Area, which is governed and managed in ways that achieve positive and sustained long-term outcomes for the <i>in-situ</i> conservation of biodiversity with associated ecosystem functions and services and where applicable, cultural, spiritual, socio-economic, and other locally relevant values'
Conserved area	A common synonym used for OECMs
Managed area	Areas managed for conservation and biodiversity outcomes but neither protected nor conserved. Managed areas are recognised as critical for providing landscape scale connectivity of protected and conserved areas.
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity

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