

Environmental Levy Policy

1 Purpose

To provide the framework for the allocation of Environmental Levy funds to support major Council environmental initiatives and a community based Environmental Levy Grants Program.

2 Policy

This policy provides a framework for the allocation of Environmental Levy funds to support the achievement of the MyCoffs Community Strategic Plan objective – “A natural environment sustained for the future”. The framework includes the:

- Definition of eligibility criteria to be met for projects to be funded
- Allocation of funds to major strategic programs and projects initiated and supported by Council through its four year Delivery Program;
- Allocation of funds for a community based Environmental Levy Grants Program (ELGP);
- Assessment methods; and
- Monitoring and reporting requirements.

2.1 Eligibility Criteria

For applications to be considered for assessment they must first meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Address one or more of the key strategies identified in the MyCoffs Community Strategic Plan objective - “A natural environment sustained for the future”; and
- Works on private land must have a greater “public benefit” than the benefit to an individual or individual group. This means that the benefit must be to others in the community; either the general community as a whole or a significant section of the community.

2.2 Fund Allocation

Environmental Levy funds are raised annually through a special rate from all property owners in the Coffs Harbour City Local Government Area.

Through the Integrated Planning and Reporting Framework Council engages with the community to develop a Community Strategic Plan. Council’s role in the delivery of the plan is articulated through the four year Delivery Program with resourcing provided through the annual Operational Plan.

To maximise the benefit achieved from Environmental Levy funds, the funding is split into two pools:

1. Funds for major strategic programs and projects initiated and supported by Council through its four year Delivery Program; and
2. Allocation of funds for a community based ELGP.

To maintain the relativity of funding for the two funding pools 75% of funds levied are available for major strategic projects and 25% of funds levied are available for the ELGP. If the ELGP funding pool is not fully allocated or spent in a particular year the balance will be rolled forward into the next year.

2.3 Assessment Methods

An assessment method is used for each of the two Environmental Levy funding pools as follows:

1. Major Strategic Programs and Projects

These programs and projects are identified through Council’s planning processes and are included in the four year Delivery Program adopted by Council, with the level of resourcing of each project determined through the adoption by Council of the annual Operational Plan.

These programs and projects will be long-term and/or strategically important in nature and will therefore be underpinned by strategies and resourcing plans.

Program and project areas for consideration include:

- Environmental Levy and ELGP Coordination
Administration and accounting for Environmental Levy funds and ELGP coordination, including the application process, support for the ELGP Panel, reporting and acquittal of grants.
- Bush Regeneration
Programs and projects for natural area restoration of remnant vegetation, while minimising negative disturbances such as exotic weeds and erosion, and the protection and enhancement of natural areas.
- Environmental Weed Management
Programs and projects to remove or control weeds through physical, chemical and/or biological control measures to assist in the restoration of biodiversity.
- Biodiversity Strategies
The preparation and implementation of strategies which advance the protection and management of biodiversity beyond Council's established service levels.
- Waterway Health Initiatives
Programs and projects to monitor and improve water quality, including management of riparian areas, sampling programs, prevention and control of run-off and erosion prevention works.
- Coastal Initiatives
Programs and projects to understand and /or manage environmental impacts on coastal zones to control or prevent erosion from causes such as storms or climate change, and other issues relevant to the coastal zone.
- Environmental Education
The development and provision of education programs, resources and infrastructure to increase community and visitor understanding of the natural environment, provide interpretation and facilitate environmental learning.

Programs and projects may be delivered by Council or in partnership with or through community organisations, research institutions and/or other government bodies.

2. ELGP

The community grants program is operated, and applications assessed, in accordance with the ELGP Guidelines. Applications will be called for up to twice yearly and will be assessed by the ELGP Panel using the assessment criteria specified in the guidelines.

2.4 **ELGP Panel**

The ELGP Panel will consist of one Councillor, as the Chair, two credentialed community members, one interagency advisor, and one credentialed Council staff member. The Council staff member is a non-voting member of the panel. The panel members will be appointed for a period of four years.

The community and interagency advisor positions are to be declared vacant at 30 June every four years and nominations be invited for new membership. Existing members may re-nominate. Council will consider reappointment of the panel within 12 months of the holding of a general election.

2.5 **Monitoring and Reporting**

The programs and projects included in Council's Delivery Program will be reported on through Council's Delivery Program progress reports with further detail on outcomes and expenditure included in Council's Annual Report.

ELGP funded projects will be reported on through the acquittal process outlined in the ELGP Guidelines.

All programs and projects are subject to on-ground monitoring by the assigned program/project manager or when required, by Council's Grants Administration Officer.

3 Definitions

Credentialed: A person with an adequate combination of environmental qualifications, skills and/or experience.

Long Term: No shorter than the Delivery Plan period of four years.

4 Key Responsibilities

Position	Directorate	Responsibility
Mayor	Council	To lead councillors in their understanding of, and compliance with this policy and guidelines.
General Manager	Executive	To lead staff (either directly or through delegated authority) in their understanding of, and compliance with, this policy and guidelines.
Directors	All Directorates	To communicate, implement and comply with this policy.
Council Leaders	All Directorates	To implement and comply with this policy and related guidelines.
All Council Staff	Council	To comply with and follow the requirements of this policy and related guidelines.

5 References

- MyCoffs Community Strategic Plan
- Coffs Harbour Biodiversity Action Strategy 2012 – 2030
- Council's Coastal Zone Management Plans/Programs
- Regional State of the Environment Report 2016
- Environmental Levy Grants Program Guidelines

6 Details of Approval and revision

- **Approval date:** 10/05/2018
- **Responsible Section:** Financial Planning
- **Superseded policies/procedures:**
- **Next review date:** 1/07/2019

Table of amendments

Amendment	Authoriser	Approval ref	Date