

77. RATES INCENTIVE FOR CONSERVATION POLICY

Intent

The purpose of this Policy is to establish the process for affording rates incentives to landholders that enter into a Conservation Agreement for a Nature Refuge under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* or a Voluntary Declaration (VDec) under the *Vegetation Management Act 1999*.

Scope

This policy applies to all land within the Douglas Shire Council boundaries.

Definitions

TERM	DEFINITION
Critical Habitat	as per the meaning under the <i>Nature Conservation Act 1992</i>
High nature conservation values	as per meaning under the <i>Vegetation Management Act 1999</i>

Provisions

Under the provision of the *Local Government Regulation 2012*, Council may resolve to grant a ratepayer a concession for rates and charges provided the specified criteria is met by the ratepayer. To be eligible for financial assistance, the following conditions must be met:

- i. The owner enters into an agreement preserving/conserving flora and fauna on a rateable property within the boundaries of the Council. This agreement must be bound to the property title, in perpetuity, by a Conservation Agreement for a Nature Refuge under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* or a Voluntary Declaration under the *Vegetation Management Act 1999*.
- ii. The rates incentive is proportionately attributed to that area of land included in an agreement.
- iii. The rates incentive will be credited to the recipient’s rates notice prior to being issued.

Council will provide the following financial assistance:

- Properties where more than 50% of the total area of the property is covered by a Nature Refuge Agreement under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* or the Voluntary Declarations under the *Vegetation Management Act 1999* are entitled to 50% of the general rate.
- Properties where less than 50% of the total area of the property is covered by a Nature Refuge Agreement under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* or the Voluntary Declarations under the *Vegetation Management Act 1999* are entitled to 35% of the general rate.

Any benefit provided to a landholder through the Rates Incentive for Conservation Program must be repaid to Council from the date of revocation or cancellation of the agreement, if the declaration of the Nature Refuge to which it relates is revoked in accordance with Section 50 of the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* or if the Voluntary Declaration has ended under section 19 of the *Vegetation Management Act 1999*.

Related Legislation and Guidelines

Nature Conservation Act 1992

Vegetation Management Act 1999

Local Government Act 2009

Local Government Regulation 2012

Douglas Shire Council Revenue General Policy

Douglas Shire Council Revenue Statement

Douglas Shire Council Utility Charges and Associated Rating matters

Policy Review

This policy is to be reviewed every four years/whenever legislation changes, or at the direction of the Chief Executive Officer.

Policy Details

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Revoked/Superseded	

This policy is to remain in force until otherwise determined by Council.