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# Biodiversity on Rural Land Grant

Program Guidelines 2025 - 2026



## Contents

Introduction .....	2
Program Objectives .....	2
Grant Funding.....	2
What will be funded: .....	2
Funding Rounds.....	2
Eligibility Criteria.....	3
Ineligibility.....	3
Additional Information .....	4
Projects .....	4
Acquittal.....	5
Assessment Process.....	5
Submitting your application.....	5
Supporting Documents .....	5
Further information and assistance .....	6
Helpful Resources.....	6

## Introduction

Latrobe City Council supports practical community efforts to undertake conservation projects on private land. This program will support a wide range of initiatives that help to protect, improve, and expand habitats for our native plants and animals.

## Program Objectives

Funds will be directed towards initiatives that:

- Achieve a direct and long-term environmental benefit.
- Improve biodiversity through increasing the extent and quality of native vegetation<sup>1</sup>.
- Create or extend wildlife corridors.
- Contribute to improved understanding of the need for biodiversity on non-government land.
- Build community capacity and foster greater understanding of environmental issues.

<sup>1</sup> Native vegetation is vegetation comprised of locally native species indigenous to the area and subject to the application and project/initiative

## Grant Funding

Funding is available up to \$1,500 (ex G.S.T) per property, per funding round.

Applicants are eligible to receive one grant from the Biodiversity on Rural Land grants program, per property, per funding round.

Applicants are encouraged to provide financial or in-kind assistance to the project.

## What will be funded:

This grant is designed for projects<sup>2</sup> on private rural land that aim to improve biodiversity outcomes. The following list provides examples of the types of projects that will be considered for funding:

- Planting tube stock or direct seeding of locally native vegetation.
- Fencing to exclude stock from areas of native vegetation.
- Increasing the extent, quality and connectivity of native vegetation.
- Creating or extending wildlife corridors.
- Providing nest boxes or artificial hollows.
- Weed or pest control within and adjacent to native vegetation.
- Development of Property Management Plans with a focus on conservation and biodiversity outcomes.
- Wetland creation or maintenance.

<sup>2</sup> 'Project' refers to the project, activity, proposal, or initiative that will be delivered if your application is successful.

## Funding Rounds

The Biodiversity on Rural Land Grant program accepts applications annually.

The grant program consists of **two stages**:

### 1. Expression of Interest (EOI)

This stage is open for three (3) weeks. You *must* submit an EOI by the due date indicated below or you will not be eligible to apply for the grant.

*The purpose of the EOI stage is to ensure applicants meet the eligibility criteria for the grant. The EOI also provides an opportunity to seek advice and guidance from the Latrobe City Environment Team, if required.*

## 2. Applications

This stage is open for two (2) weeks following the EOI stage. Only applicants who have submitted an approved EOI will be invited to apply. Applications must be submitted by the due date indicated below.

*It is expected that applications will incorporate any advice received from the Environment Team into their application, where applicable. This will assist in ensuring applications are eligible for assessment.*

Expression of Interest (EOI) Open: Monday 2 June 2025 9:00am

Expression of Interest (EOI) Close: Monday 23 June 2025 4:00pm

Applications Open: Monday 7 July 2025 9:00am

Applications Close: Monday 21 July 2025 4:00pm

Successful projects are to commence after the date of outcome notification, this is usually by September of each funding round.

## Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for the Biodiversity Grant program applicants must:

- Be a private landowner delivering a project on rural land with a property size greater than 0.4 Hectares (Ha)
- Be free of debt to Latrobe City Council
- Own property within Latrobe City.

## Ineligibility

Meeting any of the following ineligibility criteria will render an applicant and their application ineligible, meaning that it will not progress to assessment.

### Ineligible Applicants

- State and Federal Government departments, agencies and authorities
- Applicants who have an open acquittal form from previous Community Grant streams provided by Latrobe City Council
- Schools and educational institutions
- Any organisation or individual who has an existing, active Biodiversity Grant Program funding agreement in place
- Applicants who have been funded for projects on the same property or parcel of land for the previous two consecutive grant funding rounds
- Applicants who have not submitted and Expression of Interest (EOI) for the grant.

### Ineligible Expenditure

- Funding cannot be used for projects on public land, Crown land, Latrobe City Council owned land or in urban areas (townships)
- A project that does not demonstrate an environmental benefit and/or that may have a detrimental environmental impact
- Revegetation projects that do not use locally native species that are representative of the Ecological Vegetation Class (EVCs) of the area<sup>3</sup>
- Revegetation that is required as a condition of a planning permit or compliance action

- Planting of shelterbelts less than 10m wide and using less than five (5) locally native species inclusive of both trees and shrubs
- Retrospective costs. This includes reimbursement of expenses already incurred for projects which commenced prior to the application being approved by Latrobe City Council
- Payment of debts or loans
- Projects that provide direct financial benefit to a commercial business or individual
- General operational expenses such as insurance, electricity, lease or rent payments, telephone, wages, salaries, and project management costs
- The purchase of land
- Repair of facilities damaged by vandalism, fire, or other natural disasters where the incident should reasonably be expected to be covered by insurance
- Applications for projects that engage in activities which promote discrimination, violence, or antisocial behaviour
- Projects linked in any way to a political party, political organisation, or political agenda
- Any activity involving the use of firearms, tranquilisers, traps, or explosives
- Any illegal activity
- Development of recreational facilities, general landscaping or beautification projects
- Purchase of tools, equipment and infrastructure (e.g. Spray equipment, machinery, rainwater tanks, hand tools etc)
- Development of infrastructure or engineering works
- Projects that contravene defendable space requirements or any other aspect under the Latrobe Planning Scheme.

<sup>3</sup> Please see 'Helpful Resources' at the end of these Guidelines for information on Ecological Vegetation Classes and other information that may assist with your application.

### **Ineligible Applications:**

- Multiple applications for the same project
- Incomplete applications
- Applications submitted by Councillors or Council Officers. Councillors and Council Officers may assist applicants in the application process.

## **Additional Information**

Funding is not on-going. Future applications will be assessed on their merits and there is no guarantee that subsequent applications will be approved.

Funding is limited and applicants may be offered partial funding depending on the number and quality of applications received.

## **Projects**

Applicants are encouraged to work with neighbours on their projects, particularly for projects protecting, enhancing and connecting areas of native vegetation across the landscape. Neighbouring landowners may apply for the grant separately and are encouraged to demonstrate how their joint project will achieve an agreed environmental outcome. Applications that demonstrate working with neighbours on a project will be assessed favourably.

Any permit and/or approvals are the responsibility of the applicant. Funding may be conditional upon obtaining these (e.g. Works on Waterways permit).

## Acquittal

The Acquittal form will be a reconciled statement of income and expenditure associated with the grant. Applicants are required to provide details on the outcomes of the project that were achieved as a result of the funding. The following will be required as part of the acquittal:

1. Proof of purchase invoice and/or receipts for all items purchased using funding from Latrobe City Council
2. Photo evidence of the completed project and any community participation
3. Information to support any conditions of the funding agreement
4. Funds must be expended and acquitted within 12 months of signing a Funding Agreement unless written approval has been given for an extension. Applicants who have an open Acquittal form for the Biodiversity on Rural Land Grant will not be able to apply for further funding. Applications for project extensions may be applied for in writing to Latrobe City Council prior to 30 April each funding term. Applications for project extensions up to a maximum of six (6) months will be considered at the discretion of Council officers. There is no guarantee your project will be approved for an extension.

## Assessment Criteria

All applications will be assessed in accordance with the program objectives and scored out of 100 by the assessment panel. The Biodiversity on Rural Land grant stream involves a competitive process with applications for this program assessed against the following criteria:

1. Ability to achieve direct and long-term environmental benefits (40)
2. The applicant's capacity to deliver the project and sustain it beyond the funded term – this includes any quotes, budget information and plans in support of the application (30)
3. Level of community support, broader public benefit, relevance to regional plans/strategies, and/or the ability to build community capacity foster greater understanding of environmental issues (30)

Assessors will score each application in accordance with the criteria outlined above. All funding decisions will be final.

## Submitting your application

All applications must be submitted online. When you complete an application form you will be asked to sign up for a Latrobe City Council Smarty Grants account. This account will be used to send you reminders and allow you to complete your application, funding agreement and acquittal form.

Please contact Council if you require assistance with your application.

## Supporting Documents

The following documents must be provided with your application:

- Quotes or evidence of item costs that funding will be used
- A legible map showing the location of the project within the property boundaries and containing a north arrow. Hand drawn maps are acceptable as long as they are legible.

## Payment of Funds

Successful applicants will receive an Outcome Notification with instructions to sign the Funding Agreement and complete the Acquittal form via Smarty Grants.

To receive payment, you must submit the completed Funding Agreement and attach one of the following:



- A signed tax invoice if you are GST (Goods & Services Tax) registered; or
- A completed [Statement by Supplier Form](#).

Once these documents are submitted, all payments are made electronically, direct to the applicant's bank account in line with Council's Procurement Policy."

## Further information and assistance

For all grant enquiries on using the SmartyGrants system, please contact our Grants team:

grants@latrobe.vic.gov.au

Phone: 1300 367 700

For all other enquiries on the grant, including for eligibility and assistance developing your project, please contact the Sustainability and Environment Team:

SE@latrobe.vic.gov.au

Phone: 1300 367 700

## Helpful Resources

### Ecological Vegetation Classes

An Ecological Vegetation Class (EVC) is a grouping of vegetation communities based on their floristic, structural, and ecological features. For example, there may be one type of EVC running along a waterway and another located on the adjacent hillside due to the different soil types, drainage, slope, aspect and various other characteristics of these areas. These different characteristics in combination result in a unique community of plants that have historically adapted to the environment they live in. Some species of native plants exist across different EVCs while others are unique to their specific EVC. There may be more than one type of EVC on your property.

For more information and to identify which EVCs are located on your property and other information about biodiversity in the region please click on the following links or otherwise contact Council's Environment staff for further information:

- **[Nature Kit](#)**  
A comprehensive online resource to identify EVCs and other information on biodiversity for your local area.
- **[DEECA – Bioregions and EVC Benchmarks](#)**  
The Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action (DEECA) website containing detailed information on EVCs based on their bioregion. Note that Latrobe contains three bioregions – Highlands Southern Fall, Gippsland Plain and Strzelecki Ranges and your property will be located within one of these.
- **[Ecological Vegetation Class Mapping in Gippsland](#) (Davies, Oates and Trumbull-Ward 2002)**  
Comprehensive resource on EVC types specific to Gippsland.