



# NATURAL OPEN SPACE RESERVES



## **NATURAL OPEN SPACE RESERVES**

### COMMUNITY GROWTH - CULTURE

#### **BACKGROUND**

Council manages several hundred land parcels classified as 'Community' under section 26 of the Local Government Act 1993 as Natural Open Space Reserves. Some land parcels that are part of Natural Open Space Reserves are also classified as 'Operational' under section 26 of the Local Government Act 1993. In addition Crown owned parcels with supporting native vegetation are managed by Council as Natural Open Space.

For the purposes of section 36 of the Local Government Act 1993 relating to the preparation of draft plans of management for community land, these land parcels are managed under the generic Bushlands Plan of Management. Some reserves also have specific plans of management including Kincumba Mountain Regional Reserve.

Particular natural area reserves are identified as being part of the Coastal Open Space System (COSS), as identified in the Coastal Open Space System Strategy 2010.

Land identified as being part of the COSS is managed for values relating to nature conservation, heritage protection, environment education and research, nature based recreation and landscape character.

#### **POLICY OBJECTIVES**

- 1 Provide for Council owned and Council Controlled Crown land parcels that support native ecological communities to be designated and managed as natural open space reserves, including the Coastal Open Space System (COSS).
- 2 Define the objectives and direction for the management of Council's natural open space reserves in both generic and specific plans of management.
- 3 To provide appropriate opportunities for members of the community to become involved in the management of natural area reserves through programs including Bushcare.

#### **POLICY STATEMENT**

- 1 This policy applies to all land designated natural open space reserves managed by Gosford City Council.
2. State Planning Policy No. 19 - Bushland in Urban Areas applies to the Gosford Local Government Area.
- 3 Council will prepare plans of management for the natural open space reserves, including those identified as COSS reserves, to articulate management objectives and to guide management activities.

- 4 Council will provide opportunities for registered volunteers and community groups to undertake bush regeneration and related environment management works in Gosford's Natural Open Space Reserves in accordance with an adopted plan of management or site plan through programs including Bushcare.
- 5 In addition to providing for self guided discovery of the natural open space reserves, Council facilitate opportunities for formal environmental education and scientific research activities to be undertaken by organisations and individuals with appropriate permits, approvals, and insurances.
- 6 Bush fire management within natural area bushland reserves will be conducted in accordance with the Gosford City Bushfire Fire Management Committee's Bush Fire Risk Management Plan and annual Fuel Management Program.
- 7 Fire breaks will be established as appropriate (for example, where development approval was granted prior to August 2002) where existing development adjoins natural open space reserves, subject to the recommendation of site assessment and the availability of funding
- 8 Where new development or subdivision adjoins a natural area bushland reserve the required bushfire protection measures (such as asset protection zones and fire trails, are to be incorporated within the boundaries of the private property (as per Planning for Bushfire Protection 2006). The bushfire protection measures are not to encroach on the natural open space reserve.
- 9 In the case of existing development, maintenance of fire breaks by adjoining property owners on reserves will be considered and if approved the property owner will be written permission by Council. The dimensions and description of the approved fire break will be provided with Council's written approval. Residents must comply with Council's Tree Preservation Order when maintaining a fire break. Existing development refers to houses or structures approved prior to August 2002.
- 10 Unauthorised clearing or mowing of native vegetation in a natural open space reserve is not permitted. In accordance with Section 629 of the Local Government Act 1993 a person who, without lawful excuse, wilfully or negligently injures or unnecessarily disturbs any plant or animal in a public place is guilty of an offence with a maximum penalty of five penalty points.
- 11 Unauthorised planting of species non-native species in a natural open space reserve is not permitted. After notification of the potential owner Council will remove unauthorised non-native species and encroachments such as garden beds, sheds, and play equipment as appropriate. Particular attention will be placed on species likely to invade natural open space.
- 12 a Where subdivision proposals include the dedication of land to Council as natural open space reserve, the dedication will only be accepted if the natural open space reserve will be of sufficient size and character to be a manageable natural open space reserve. Bushfire protection measures (including firebreaks and fire trails) to support new development should not be incorporated into these reserve areas as part of the dedication process. Smaller sections requiring more intensive management may be accepted if they support significant ecological values, recreational values or landscape features.

- b Dedicated land must provide for ease of access from formed roads / fire trails to allow for pedestrian access and for maintenance management and fire vehicle access. If additional fire trail access is to be obtained through private land, including via a Right of Way, fire trails are to be maintained at a minimum 4WD dry-weather standard in accordance with the Bush Fire Coordinating Committee Policy: 2/2007 Fire Trails (or its legislative equivalent).
  - c If the proposed reserve is invaded by weed species, Council will require the applicant to carry out a bush regeneration program prior to the release of the linen plan. A bushland management plan prepared by a suitably qualified person will be required. On-ground works are to be conducted by qualified bush regenerators. Land identified for addition to the Coastal Open Space System lands may be exempt from this requirement at the discretion of Council.
- 13 Council will promote recreational activities in natural open space reserves which are compatible with the principles of bushland conservation and discourage those activities not compatible with natural open space reserve management objectives. Licensing of activities that are not prohibited in a plan of management for a natural area bushland reserves may be required.
- a Suitable recreational activities in natural open space reserves include:
    - walking and jogging on designated trails
    - picnicking
    - nature appreciation
    - barbecues where facilities are provided
    - cycling on designated trails
  - b Generally unsuitable recreational activities in natural open space reserves include:
    - motor bike riding
    - organised sporting activities
    - horseriding in prohibited areas
    - dog exercising in prohibited areas.
- 14 Council will conduct pest plant and animal control programs within natural open space reserves according to established priorities and funding availability.
- 15 Council will provide educational material to support this policy and promote environmental awareness of the natural open space reserves.
- 16 Proposed works or activities affecting a Natural Open Space Areas bushland Reserve whether undertaken by Council staff, contractors working for Council or external organisations require approval of the Manager Culture and the Coordinator Natural Open Space prior to commencement.
- 17 The acquisition of land for the Coastal Open Space System will be managed as a natural open space reserve under an appropriate plan of management.

## **PROCEDURE**

This procedure being an administrative process may be altered as necessary by the Chief Executive Officer.

Plans of management for Natural Open Space Reserves, including the Coastal Open Space System reserves, will be reviewed as resources and funding permit.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

This policy will be implemented by the Manager Culture in liaison with all affected Programs of Council.

(Min No 581/1996 - 23 July 1996 - Review of Policies)

(Min No 239/2000 - 24 October 2000 – Review of Policies – no changes)

(Min No 214/2005 - 8 March 2005 - Review of Policies)

(Min No 610/2009 - 1 September 2009 - Review of Policies)

(Min No 2013/388 - 16 July 2013 - Review of Policies)