



Case Study: Reintroducing Woody Debris to Woodlands




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Project Background

Racing to Save the Mount Panorama Woodlands

Mount Panorama. A name so iconic in the Australian vernacular that there is no need to include the words 'motor racing circuit' to elicit an image of V8 Supercars for most people. While the very name Mount Panorama is synonymous with motor racing, the Mount – as it is affectionately known – is increasingly becoming known to conservationists as host to a very important vegetation community.

Box-Gum Grassy Woodland is listed as a Critically Endangered Ecological Community under the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act) and listed as an Endangered Ecological Community (EEC) under the NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995. This vegetation community exists in fragments within the Mount Panorama precinct.

In 2013 Bathurst Regional Council was successful in receiving funding from the NSW Government through its Environmental Trust for a project titled "Racing to Save the Mount Panorama Woodlands".

The project was designed to improve the condition and connectivity of four remnant populations of Box-

Gum Grassy Woodland to create a landscape-scale project over 100ha in size, which is consistent with two of the priority projects as established by the Bathurst Vegetation Management Plan Reference Group.

Local Government & Landcare

This project is a partnership between Bathurst Regional Council and Boundary Road Reserve Landcare Group in order to improve the condition and linkages of more than 117ha of EEC woodland across four sites within the Mount Panorama precinct.

Improving the ecological condition of these woodlands is being achieved through a variety of on-ground and educational works across Council managed land as well as Boundary Road Reserve which is managed by a dedicated group of volunteers through the Boundary Road Reserve Landcare Group.

Key activities as part of the Racing to Save the Mount Panorama Woodlands project have included importing timber into the woodland reserves, and education to prevent timber from being illegally removed.



Why Conserve Woody Debris in Woodlands?

Ecological Value of Woody Debris

Fallen logs and branches are an important part of the structure of woodlands and provide valuable habitat for many species of native wildlife. This woody debris provides breeding and sheltering sites for many ground dwelling mammals, reptiles, insects and fungi. Threatened species such as the Brown Treecreeper forage on the ground amongst fallen logs for insects and other prey.

Woody debris is also an important part of the nutrient cycle as it gradually breaks down to add organic material back into the soil. The debris also acts as mulch helping to retain moisture and prevent soil and nutrients from being transported off site during rainfall events.

Activities such as collecting logs and branches for firewood or to “tidy up” parks and reserves for aesthetic reasons is threatening the biodiversity of these areas. This repeated loss of woody debris over time reduces or eliminates the availability of old and decaying wood as habitat in the long term.



Legal Requirements and Responsibilities

Importing timber into woodlands should only be done in accordance with best management practices and only carried out by the respective landholder or land manager. Dumping timber or any other materials onto public or private land without relevant permissions may be considered to be illegal dumping or littering and can be charged accordingly. This case study has been produced primarily to encourage Councils to consider the ecological and economic benefits of importing native hardwood timber into bushland reserves to benefit of native ecosystems.

Bringing Woody Debris Back into the Mount Panorama Woodlands

The woody debris within the reserves at Mount Panorama in Bathurst has been depleted over time primarily due to the collection of firewood. Bathurst Regional Council has been working to improve the quality and extent of Box Gum Grassy Woodland on the slopes and foothills of Mount Panorama through a project titled "Racing to Save the Mount Panorama Woodlands", funded by the NSW Environmental Trust.

As part of this project, Council has been importing woody debris into the parks and reserves to increase the habitat and the structural complexity of the woodlands. This woody debris consists of trees that have been removed from elsewhere in Bathurst due to infrastructure upgrades or tree maintenance.

To ensure that existing woody debris is retained within the reserves, Council has also banned the collection of firewood and have been notifying the public of the ban through signage, radio advertisements and within camping pass information for racing events at Mount Panorama. These management changes are helping to retain and slowly replace this lost habitat element from the reserves.



This project has been supported by the NSW Government through its Environmental Trust

The Cost Benefit to Council

Fees apply to Bathurst Regional Council staff to dispose of green waste at the Waste Management Centre.

These costs are therefore saved if clean woody debris is placed within the reserves rather than disposed of at the Waste Management Centre. Note that any woody debris that is placed within the reserves must be registered and approved by Council.

The Risks

Adding logs to a site has the potential to provide habitat for rabbits, and as such it is important to monitor rabbit populations and take appropriate control measures if required.

There is also the risk of creating a weed incursion where woody weeds are used. For this reason it is recommended that only native hardwood is selected.

Best Management Practice

Key Points for Importing Woody Debris

- Combine any woody debris importation program with a ban on the removal of woody debris (e.g. firewood collection, park maintenance practices) to ensure that existing woody debris is retained.
- Woody debris should be spread across the reserves, both under trees and in the open, to create a variety of habitats.
- Ensure that the placement of woody debris is not in areas where there may risks to the safety of the general public.
- Utilise only native hardwood timber where possible to prevent the importation of weeds and the potential of exotic fungi etc.
- Monitor woody debris for rabbit burrows or weed regeneration.
- Manage the woodlands to ensure that woody debris is naturally generated over time.
- Spread woody debris where opportunity and resources permit, in as natural a fashion as possible i.e. mimicking a fallen tree.



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