

Nature refuge

Blueprint for the Bush

Building a sustainable, liveable and prosperous rural Queensland

NatureAssist Information Sheet

NatureAssist is the incentive component of Queensland's Nature Refuge Program. It provides financial assistance for landholders who actively manage the natural and/or cultural assets of their property.



› **Above:** Fence construction.

Photo: Darren Larcome, Australian Bush Heritage Fund.

The NatureAssist scheme is designed to encourage and assist the conservation of private lands in Queensland.

NatureAssist recognises new and existing nature refuge landholders who make the commitment of protecting the conservation values on their land through a perpetual nature refuge agreement.

Financial assistance is offered via two avenues – an incentive tender and transfer duty and land tax refunds.

The NatureAssist Incentive Tender scheme is a competitive bidding process that gives landholders throughout Queensland the opportunity to access financial assistance to protect and manage their property's significant natural and/or cultural heritage values through the establishment of, or an existing nature refuge.

Through NatureAssist Transfer Duty and Land Tax refunds, landholders may be eligible for a refund of the transfer duty and/or land tax payable on the area of land covered by a nature refuge agreement.

This information should be read in conjunction with the Nature Refuge Information Sheet.



› **Above:** Watering point near Bedourie.
Photo: Craig McGregor, EPA.

› **Above header:** Cattle yards.
Photo: EPA.



Queensland Government
Environmental Protection Agency
Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service



Incentives Tender

Expression of Interest

The NatureAssist Incentives Tender is open to the majority of landholders in Queensland, initially through submission of a simple one page expression of interest. The NatureAssist Incentive Tender expressions of interest are assessed to determine whether the lands nominated in the application contain significant conservation values and whether they are eligible for NatureAssist funding.

Tender development

Where a property is assessed as being suitable as a nature refuge through the Expression of Interest stage, the landholder will be invited to tender.

Nature Refuge Officers located throughout Queensland play a significant role in assisting in the development process and commencing negotiation of a nature refuge agreement (or additional provisions for existing agreements). However, Nature Refuge Officers are not permitted to provide advice on the financial components of a bid. Tenderers may choose to seek independent financial advice.

Landholders may withdraw from the NatureAssist/ nature refuge process at any time prior to signing a nature refuge agreement.

However, once a nature refuge agreement has been signed, the landholder is bound to honour the agreement, as are all future landholders.

Management activities

While there is no set list of conservation management activities that will be considered for funding under the NatureAssist Incentive Tender, there are a number of activities the Environmental Protection Agency would like to see implemented because of their known positive environmental outcomes. These include:

- managing particular areas to allow for natural revegetation;
- fencing to protect environmentally sensitive areas;
- establishing watering points away from sensitive areas (such as mound springs);
- eradicating or controlling weeds and pest animals; and
- establishing a property management plan.

Tender assessment

Each tender submitted will be assessed against all other tenders on the basis of 'value for money', using the combination of an expert panel and what is known as an Ecosystem Benefits Index, which considers factors such as:

- the existing conservation value of the land;
- the precise dollar amount of each tender bid;
- the overall conservation outcome of the management services provided.

Successful bids will be those that provide the best conservation outcome for the least overall cost.

Each landholder who has submitted a tender will be notified of the decision by both mail and phone. Landholders who are not successful in obtaining funding are encouraged to resubmit their tender in a subsequent round.

Distributing funds

Funds are distributed to successful tenderers after the landholder and the Minister for the Environment have signed either a new nature refuge agreement, or an altered agreement containing funding provisions. Successful landholders should not make any financial purchases or commitments unless they are able to absorb the costs until payment occurs.



› **Above:** Wildlife survey at Mulligan River Nature Refuge.
Photo: Craig McGregor, EPA.



Transfer Duty and Land Tax refunds (Green Rewards)

Transfer Duty refund

If a landholder purchases land or a lease and enters into a perpetual nature refuge agreement, they may be eligible for a refund of the transfer duty paid on the purchase of the area. To be eligible:

- ✦ the area must have been purchased on or after 1 July 2003;
- ✦ the area must qualify for a nature refuge agreement. If necessary, a Nature Refuge Officer can provide advice on the suitability of the area prior to purchase; and
- ✦ the landholder must enter into negotiations with the EPA for a perpetual nature refuge agreement over part, or all, of the area within 12 months of the purchase.



✦ **Above:** Water drilling in Western Queensland.
Photo: Craig McGregor, EPA.



✦ **Above:** Early nature lesson.
Photo: Craig McGregor, EPA.

Note: For land or lease purchased using government grant monies (e.g. National Reserve System funding), the landholder is only eligible for a refund of the amount of transfer duty paid by them.

If eligible, the EPA will refund the transfer duty once the nature refuge agreement has been signed by the landholder and the Minister for the

Environment. Where the nature refuge agreement only covers part of the area, refunds will be paid on a *pro rata* basis. Transfer duty can generally be refunded immediately.

Land Tax refund

If a landholder is required to pay land tax on their land and enters into a perpetual nature refuge agreement, they are eligible for a refund of the land tax paid on the area covered by the nature refuge agreement. Land tax refunds also apply to subsequent owners of nature refuges.

From 1 July 2003, the EPA will refund land tax once both the landholder and the Minister for the Environment have signed a nature refuge agreement. Land tax is usually refunded after the end of the financial year or the refund amount may be deducted from the landholders Land Tax Assessment Notice before the Office of State Revenue issues it to the landholder. Where the nature refuge agreement only covers part of the land, refunds will be paid on a *pro rata* basis.



✦ **Above:** 'Sam'.
Photo: Craig McGregor, EPA.

✦ **Above left header:**
Wildlife survey.
Photo: Craig McGregor, EPA.

✦ **Above right header:**
Ecotourism on Mt Tully Cottage
Nature Refuge.
Photo: Darren Phillips, EPA.

✦ **Back page header:**
Stream bank rehabilitation.



For more information on NatureAssist contact:

EPA Brisbane

Phone: 1800 603 604

Email: natureassist@epa.qld.gov.au

Website: www.epa.qld.gov.au/naturerefuge

Nature Refuge Officers

Atherton	(07) 4091 8177
Emerald	(07) 4982 4555
Maryborough	(07) 4121 1817
Moggill Office	(07) 3202 0222
Rockhampton	(07) 4936 0511
Roma	(07) 4622 4266

Toowoomba	(07) 4699 4326
Townsville	(07) 4796 7789
Burleigh Heads	(07) 5520 9600
Mackay	(07) 4944 7834
Longreach	(07) 4652 7333

NatureAssist is a statewide program coordinated by the Environmental Protection Agency and brings together contributions from the following organisations:



Queensland Government
Environmental Protection Agency
Natural Resources and Water



Natural Heritage Trust

Helping Communities Helping Australia

An Australian Government Initiative



FNQ NRM LTD

You make a difference

