# Frequently Asked Questions

What is Biodiversity Response Planning (BRP)?

Biodiversity Response Planning is a new area-based planning approach to biodiversity conservation in Victoria; designed to strengthen alignment, collaboration and participation between government agencies, Traditional Owners, non-government agencies (NGOs) and the community. BRP aims to progressively deliver a collective response to the state-wide targets for an area (i.e. what should and could be done to contribute to the targets), commencing with collaborative project planning in the first half of 2018. This will commit $35.621 million for on-ground biodiversity actions and $2.5 million for marine-targeted actions that will be delivered across three years, commencing in the 2018-19 financial year to 2021.

Victoria has been divided into 11 geographical areas for BRP. Each area has been determined with reference to biophysical characteristics and organisational arrangements through a stakeholder co-design process.

Working Groups will be established for each area that include up to 15 stakeholders who have experience and knowledge of biodiversity planning and/or projects across the geographical area. Each Working Group will be coordinated and supported by an Area Lead and Partnership Facilitator. For 2018, these roles are primarily being undertaken by DELWP and Partner organisations.

The initial task of the Working Group is to develop a prioritised list of on-ground projects for each area, up to an indicative allocation of funding, and put these forward to DELWP by end May 2018 for potential investment. Funded projects for each area will be announced in late 2018.

Why is DELWP employing a new approach to biodiversity conservation?

Victoria’s approach to biodiversity conservation needs to be modernised, with more structured collaboration between stakeholders to drive alignment, accountability and measurable improvement.

While the work of thousands of people and groups contributes to biodiversity conservation, more and better collaborative arrangements are needed, to promote:

* shared identification of objectives and priority actions
* increased complementarity of work through improved communication
* Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians in practising their culture through caring for Country
* improved targeting of effort
* efficiencies by reducing competition for resources
* an increased ability to report on, and communicate what has been achieved, including reporting on progress towards the Biodiversity 2037 targets.

To ensure everyone can participate in this collaborative process, the capacity of all interested parties and stakeholders needs to be supported and enabled. Participants of the co-design process in 2017 identified area-based Working Groups with Partnership Facilitators as the best approach for BRP in 2018.

How will BRP deliver better results for Victoria’s environment?

Historically there has been a lack of adequate alignment, coordination and connection between those involved in the conservation effort across Victoria. Collectively developing a response to the state-wide biodiversity targets for every area of Victoria, and agreeing priority projects to deliver those targets, will ensure that no significant biodiversity outcomes are missed. Responding to biodiversity challenges in a systematic, aligned way will also enable on-ground works to collectively build on the success of other projects, and not lose gains made over time.

*Biodiversity 2037* signalled a move away from species-by-species planning in order to be more effective and efficient by better considering synergies and relationships between many species. The use of the decision-support tool Strategic Management Prospects (SMP) in relevant parts of the Biodiversity Response Planning process will assist participants to consider biodiversity actions that are focussed on these key directions of Biodiversity 2037 and on potential projects that deliver the best overall results for Victoria’s natural environment.

What work is already underway?

Following the stakeholder co-design process in late 2017 (refer *Biodiversity Response Planning Co-design Overview Report*), DELWP has been developing and leading an implementation process in conjunction with key partners and stakeholders that delivers the intent of the co-design report and is practically achievable.

The Area Leads and Partnership Facilitators have been finalised for all 11 geographic areas and the Area Leads have begun to establish the Working Groups for each area. Working Group meetings will begin in most areas in early March 2018. Following that the Working Groups, Area Leads and Partnership Facilitators will be seeking stakeholder and interested community input, particularly in the development of strategic projects within priority landscapes or themes determined by Working Groups. This is likely to occur in late March and April in most areas.

In addition, the next version of the Strategic Management Prospects Tool (SMP) has been released for use in the BRP process. The SMP cost effective action maps are now available online at NatureKit. (<http://maps.biodiversity.vic.gov.au/viewer/?viewer=NatureKit>).

What is DELWP‘s role?

DELWP is responsible for implementing Biodiversity Response Planning across the state. Initially DELWP will also lead the roll-out of BRP within each geographic area and will undertake the role of Area Lead in these areas. DELWP will work closely with CMAs, Traditional Owners and other key partners in delivering this role.

DELWP has a strong interest in supporting other partners and organisations to progressively take up leadership roles in BRP within their geographic areas (including Area Lead and Partnership Facilitator), as BRP becomes more established and understood by the broader sector. A review of Area Lead arrangements will be undertaken later in 2018, as identified in the co-design process (*Biodiversity Response Planning Co-design Overview Report*).

Who is on the BRP Steering Committee?

The BRP Steering Committee is a group of senior executives from key organisations in the biodiversity sector including DELWP, CMAs, Parks Victoria, Trust for Nature, and Traditional Owners. Their role is to:

* oversee the initial steps of establishing the BRP process, including co-design, communications and engagement
* assist the establishment of Biodiversity Response Planning by supporting the outcomes and recommendations of the stakeholder co-design process
* oversee the design and establishment of Biodiversity Response Planning across Victoria
* identify strategic opportunities to connect Biodiversity Response Planning to other relevant processes at local, regional, state or national level.

Why did you need to establish new geographical boundaries?

Existing areas or boundaries are typically arranged to respond to factors other than biodiversity such as waterway health, community connections, population characteristics and the like. The few existing ‘areas’ that are focussed primarily on biodiversity, such as Biolinks or some Conservation Management Networks, do not cover the whole state or are at a relatively small scale.

Having new state-wide areas for BRP, enables discussion and collaboration around an area that focus solely on biodiversity outcomes, particularly whole of landscape characteristics.

The *Biodiversity Response Planning Co-design Overview Report* sets out the criteria that the co-design participants developed to guide the geographical boundaries.

Who can be involved in BRP?

Many organisations and community groups who are involved in on-ground biodiversity projects or planning will have the opportunity to participate in BRP. Participation could be in one of several ways; becoming a member of a Working Group in the appropriate geographical area, participating in collaborative project development or contributing to project delivery.

Members of the Working Group are selected by the Area Leads, based on their ability to represent organisation and/or networks, and/or who have the experience and overview to strategically plan or assess projects for an entire geographical area. Each Working Group will have a maximum of 15 members.

Additionally, individuals and groups with an interest in planning or delivering on-ground biodiversity projects within a priority landscape or theme determined by the Working Group will be encouraged to participate in relevant engagement opportunities. These will be targeted processes identified by the Working Group and Area Lead and assisted by the Partnership Facilitator. Participants will be able to help plan, review and provide feedback on draft projects, and also put their hand up to contribute to the delivery of specific projects in conjunction with other partners.

How will you avoid conflict of interest between Working Group members and project proponents?

Biodiversity Response Planning needs to be undertaken in a way that upholds the fundamental principles of probity - integrity, fairness and honesty. This is particularly the case given the results of the collaborative BRP process will be the expenditure of public money.

An independent probity adviser has been appointed to advise on probity issues and oversee the management of issues that may arise by DELWP and Working Group members. All Working Group Members will be expected to complete Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest forms and probity training will be provided for all Working Group members. Specific management measures will be developed and applied to ensure that conflicts that may arise are managed appropriately and transparently.

A report will be prepared by the independent probity adviser at the end of the initial BRP process, in mid-2018 documenting how conflicts or other probity issues were managed throughout.

Can I propose a project for funding?

The BRP approach is designed to facilitate the collective development of projects in response to Biodiversity 2037 targets and published criteria. The Working Group and Partnerships Facilitators will be working with relevant community and other stakeholders to promote development of collaborative projects. Any strategic projects provided to the Working Group by the community or non-government organisations will be considered, where these are relevant to the published criteria and the priority landscapes or themes determined by the Working Groups.

Who decides what projects will receive DELWP funding?

Projects will be developed by interested stakeholders, including community members, within priority landscapes or themes determined by area-based Working Groups.

Each Working Group will be provided an indicative allocation of funding and will be asked to recommend a package of projects to be funded within that area (70% of available funds). The recommendations from the Working Group will be provided to the Executive Director, Biodiversity Division, DELWP who will have final approval over project funding.

Working Groups can also put forward additional projects as part of a state-wide funding pool (30% of available funds) to be assessed competitively by an independent panel.

All projects need to come through a Working Group in order to be funded. This includes projects funded as part of the state-wide funding pool and assessed by the Independent Panel.

The Working Group and Independent Panel will assess projects against [published criteria](https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/119213/Biodiversity-Response-Planning-Guidance-Note.pdf) and provide their recommendations in May - June 2018.

How will Biodiversity Response Planning integrate with other planning processes?

DELWP recognises the thousands of people and groups who have been contributing to biodiversity conservation and aims to enhance, not replace existing processes that are effective and efficient.

It is anticipated that many on-ground actions that are selected for future investment will complement existing efforts across the landscape already being undertaken by partners and stakeholders.

Partners and stakeholder organisations that participate in BRP can choose the degree to which their organisation’s relevant plans or targets adopt the strategic planning of BRP.

Ideally, organisational plans and targets for ensuring ‘Victoria's natural environment is healthy’ should be aligned where possible to maximise the collective impact of all participants.

How can I find out more information?

To stay up to date with Biodiversity Response Planning, Biodiversity 2037 and other key biodiversity projects across DELWP, sign up for our regular email updates [here](https://signup.e2ma.net/signup/1798450/1755048/)

Updates and area based contact information will also be posted on the DELWP website at: environment.vic.gov.au/biodiversityplan

If you would like to find out more about what is happening in your area and how to get involved please contact the DELWP Customer Contact Centre 136186 or send an email enquiry to [biodiversity.plan@delwp.vic.gov.au](mailto:biodiversity.plan@delwp.vic.gov.au).

Exactly what activities can be funded?

Actions that can be funded as part of Biodiversity Response Planning fall into two themes: those that are currently covered by Strategic Management Prospects (SMP) and those that are described as 'Specific Needs' or area based priorities.

*SMP Projects*

A range of landscape-scale actions are included in SMP (current version V1.2), including revegetation, weed control and vertebrate pest animal (e.g. foxes, goats, rabbits, deer). Projects including actions currently covered by SMP can use the SMP online maps and reports to inform planning (see the Story Map [Using Strategic Management Prospects for Biodiversity Response Planning](http://arcg.is/1e8XPW)). A full list of the modelled threats and managements actions in SMP is available [here.](https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0035/82997/5-NaturePrint-Strategic-Management-Prospects-inputs.pdf)

*Specific Needs Projects and area based priorities*

Specific Needs projects are those where the action is very specific to a particular location or species that requires it, as opposed to the typical landscape-scale actions currently considered by SMP.

Some examples of Specific Needs actions include:

* Translocation and genetic rescue of an endangered marsupial (especially if this is an action recommended in an Action Statement or recovery Plan)
* Hand pollination and/or caging of an important orchid population
* Ecological burning of a high biodiversity value grassland with Spiny Rice-flower
* Conservation actions targeted at species not currently considered in SMP (e.g. invertebrates)
* Construction and deployment of nest boxes in an area deficient of tree hollows

All of these actions can potentially be funded as part of BRP, either as part of the 70% of the budget spend recommended by Working Groups or as part of projects included in the state-wide funding pool (30% of the available budget).

Funding can also be applied for projects which test new management approaches for tackling threats however funding for such projects is only available as part of the state-wide competitive pool.

What activities cannot be funded?

This BRP investment is for on-ground biodiversity management actions, primarily associated with the terrestrial and marine environments, that respond to the state-wide targets associated with the Biodiversity 2037 goal of ‘Victoria’s natural environment is healthy’.

Activities or actions that cannot be funded as part of Biodiversity Response Planning include:

* Surveys, research and monitoring (other than what is necessary to target pest control actions) – these types of activities will be funded as part of implementing the Biodiversity 2037 Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Framework;
* Freshwater biodiversity actions where these are potentially within the scope of existing DELWP investment programs (e.g. Healthy Waterways). Please contact DELWP ([biodiversity.plan@delwp.vic.gov.au](mailto:biodiversity.plan@delwp.vic.gov.au)) if you would like clarification on the eligibility of any freshwater biodiversity actions you are considering.
* Projects focussed on developing skills and capacity building – these types of actions were funded as part of DELWP’s [Community Skills Development Grants](https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/grants/community-skills-development-grants/community-skills-development-grants-projects) – or focussed on community engagement.
* Actions that can be reasonably considered to be someone’s legislative responsibility (e.g. native vegetation offset, control of legislated weeds), unless the proposed action is clearly above the standard required of legislation (e.g. BRP funding could be used to eradicate a weed from land where the legislation only requires its spread to be controlled).

What is meant by permanent protection and how would this action be undertaken?

Permanent protection applies to private land only. It is where a landowner voluntarily signs a legally binding agreement that prevents the destruction or degradation of existing biodiversity values (e.g. native vegetation) on that land. This action could be undertaken by the Trust for Nature, using an on-title Conservation Covenant under the Victorian Conservation Trust Act 1972 or by DELWP using a s69 agreement under the Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987. Management conditions can be included in these agreements.

Biodiversity 2037 recognised the important role that permanent protection of biodiversity values on private land plays and set a 20-year target of 200,000 hectares of new permanently protected areas on private land as one way of driving an increase in the amount of privately protected areas.

How will co-investment be considered as part of the project proposal?

Complementary co-investment is actively promoted in the BRP process where this assists in meeting the targets of Biodiversity 2037. Working Group members will need to work with their networks to understand current investment and ensure that this is reflected in project proposals and how BRP funding is profiled.

Co-investment is not a project criteria, however Working Groups may consider this in determining biodiversity outcomes and cost-effectiveness of the project during their assessment process.

Are all projects expected to be multi-year?

Projects should be 3 years in duration, commencing in 2018/19 financial year. Biodiversity 2037 signals a shift towards sustained investment in actions that secure the greatest benefit for the most species over the longer term. Funding allocation is phased across these three years and individual projects may have their own phasing profile and distribute their funding effort depending on the nature of the project (e.g. planning in year 1 and activities in year 2 and 3).

Can funding be sought to test *new* management actions or experimental interventions?

Yes, funding can be applied for projects which test new management actions or experimental interventions, however this is only available as part of the state-wide competitive pool (refer “Length, number and priority ranking of projects” criterion in [Biodiversity Response Planning: Project Proposals. Guidance Note and Project Criteria for Working Groups](https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0017/119213/Biodiversity-Response-Planning-Guidance-Note.pdf).

These types of projects will develop and apply management approaches for addressing key threats where there are not yet practical, appropriate scale approaches established. They are not research projects as such as they are about “proving up” an approach and should be focussed on outputs including reduction of a known threat. These projects would be expected to lead to management standards that could be applied more broadly. The focus is on testing management actions and outputs, rather than biodiversity outcomes (such projects including research will be addressed through the Biodiversity 2037 Monitoring Evaluation and Reporting Framework).

Examples could include: new methods to implement cat control at scale; reducing or eliminating deer from an area of priority biodiversity impact; exploring options and techniques to manage total grazing pressure including the role of native herbivores; techniques to assist natural regeneration in previously cleared areas; application of ecological fire regimes in high risk settings.

Are actions focusing on aquatic species eligible and in scope?

Funding can be sought for actions that focus on aquatic species, but not where these are potentially within the scope of existing DELWP investment programs (e.g. Healthy Waterways program).

Please contact DELWP ([biodiversity.plan@delwp.vic.gov.au](mailto:biodiversity.plan@delwp.vic.gov.au)) if you would like clarification on the eligibility of any freshwater biodiversity actions you are considering.

How do I find out if a Specific Needs action can be considered in the BRP process?

Specific Needs actions will require their own individualised analysis so that their cost-effectiveness can be compared to the projects currently covered by SMP. Where possible, this will be through SMP analyses, however in other cases this may require less quantified methods such as expert review.

Initial information about any potential Specific Needs actions (including the species of interest, the proposed action/s, the estimated cost of each action in the project area, and the site polygon/s) should be provided by the Area Lead to [nature.print@delwp.vic.gov.au](mailto:nature.print@delwp.vic.gov.au) as soon as potential projects are identified (e.g. as an output of Working Group 2).

The final deadline for submission of Specific Needs Projects for SMP analysis of is **COB Monday 16 April.** This is to allow enough time for analysis and expert review and return of Specific Needs results for Project Leads to finalise their project planning and include their projects in Smarty Grants by 7 May. See the SMP Specific Needs [Story Map](http://arcg.is/1bOHLf) for more detailed information about Specific Needs Projects.

Is monitoring of the project outcomes to be included in the budget for BRP projects?

No. Monitoring outcomes and evaluation of management effectiveness will be funded as part of implementing the Biodiversity 2037 Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Framework. As this will be funded separately, monitoring of project outcomes is not eligible for funding as part of this BRP process.

Monitoring to meet acquittal requirements should however be included within the project. This would include confirmation of contractual obligations having been met (e.g. type, extent and standard of activities delivered).

Is there any guidance in relation to the amount of funding that can be directed towards project administration, staff time or staff management costs? Are there caps on elements of the funding?

Achieving cost-effective biodiversity outcomes is a key driver of this investment and needs to be demonstrated by all projects, including cost-effective project management and delivery methods.

There is a cap of 10% on project management (administration) costs. Working groups may consider project proposals that go over this cap under exceptional circumstances. There are no caps outlined on the other elements that can be funded.

Contractors or project officers or others that are an **essential part of delivering the actual on-ground actions** are not considered part of project management costs. In this case the Working Groups would need to be satisfied that appointing a project officer is necessary to deliver the on-ground action, and do not represent cost-shifting or just increasing organisational capacity.

How should the Working Group (and State-wide Assessment Panel) consider eligibility regarding ‘duty of care’ for invasive species?

The Project Criteria sets out that funding through this process is not intended for actions that are generally part of public or private land mangers Duty of Care. Working Groups should consider how duty of care may be interpreted in the context of specific projects for on-ground action, for example, BRP funding will not be provided for actions that are reasonably considered someone's legal obligations. However, this does not mean BRP cannot fund control of any species listed under CALP Act or other legislation. For example, a BRP project could still invest in rabbits if it is about hastening the control of rabbits above what could reasonably considered someone's obligations or doing the job to a far higher standard - e.g. elimination rather than just reducing the spread.

Are there any considerations for activities and methods used for threat abatement, such as pest control?

In relation to specific pest control activities, please consult with Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources (DEDJTR) to ensure that all legal and animal welfare requirements are met.

Use of threat management techniques including risk management should be addressed in the project plan to ensure that projects comply with the above requirements.

How should the Project Lead enter the project proposal in SmartyGrants that cross geographic area boundaries? Should it be entered as one application or split across the geographic areas?

Ideally projects that cross BRP geographic area boundaries should be entered only once, and associated with the primary BRP area. This assumes that the relevant Area Leads and Working Groups are aware and have agreed for this to occur. This would need to occur prior to the final Working Group meeting.

Where this is not practicable the project proposal can be submitted in SmartyGrants as two separate applications (one in each Geographic Area) even though the same on ground actions are occurring. This may create some duplication of effort in completing the application form for the Project Lead and the Project Lead should also consider the implications if only one component of the project is recommended by the Working Group. (The map provided as part of the application and responses to question 1.2.1 - other geographic areas, will help the Working Group to identify cross boundary projects.)

All projects need to come through a Working Group in order to be funded. This includes projects funded as part of the state-wide funding pool and assessed by the Independent Panel.

What will the project reporting be focussing on – milestones, completion of activities or outcomes?

Projects will be required to report on activities – treatments, areas and locations, including the use of spatial information (e.g. polygons, lines, points). Contracted projects will also be required to provide progress reporting to enable annual milestone payments and acquittal of funds.

Reporting of project biodiversity outcomes will not be required. Monitoring and reporting outcomes will be undertaken as part of implementing the Biodiversity 2037 Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting Framework.

For the Biodiversity Response Planning Area Profile graphs, what do the percentages refer to?

The Action Profiles were calculated using the number of hectares for each management action in the top 20% Cost Effective Actions for each BRP Area. However, the total number of hectares in this calculation is far greater than what can be achieved in the current funding round. The profiles are intended to represent the relative effort towards each action, best expressed by the number of hectares for each action in the right places.

For example, if the Action profile for weed control is 35% in a BRP Area, then ideally, 35% of the area of land treated by the package of projects should include weed control, and this weed control should be targeted where weed control is in the top 20% of actions (e.g. in places where weed control is an action on the Top 20% Cost Effective Action map).

What is the role and expectations for the project lead?

The Project Lead will in most cases act as a central contract and project manager. They must have at least $10 million public liability insurance and be either incorporated, a state government body or registered as a not-for-profit with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC). They must possess an Australian Business Number (ABN) so that no withholding tax is required from the grant payment.

The Project Lead must agree to enter into a contract with the department, receive the grant payment, and be responsible for the disbursement of funds to partner organisations. They are responsible for the delivery of the project including reporting, and importantly, the management and safety of any project volunteers and participants.

It is a requirement that the lead organisations and their partners acknowledge the Victorian Government funding in any publications and promotions generated for the project. The Project Lead will also be responsible for preparing the project application and entering it into SmartyGrants on behalf of project partners.

Lead organisations must also ensure that they and their partners include the following requirements in the project design/ delivery of projects:

* seeking and obtaining the written consent of the property owner/s or land manager/s of the nominated site/s to implement proposed project activities
* seeking and obtaining necessary permissions or support from the relevant traditional owners and/or local Indigenous organisations where proposed activities may directly or indirectly affect Indigenous sites or places of value
* ensuring that the project complies with all requirements set out in any applicable State, Commonwealth, territory and local government laws, including that all necessary planning, approvals and/or permits are/or will be in place prior to the commencement of on ground activities for the Project
* ensuring that all relevant Departmental policies & procedures are complied with, including OHS and safety of all staff, contractors, volunteers and others involved in the project
* compliance with the Victorian Government’s Child Safe Standards to protect children from abuse where they may be involved in project activities such a volunteering.

Why do we need to supply project and activity polygons in Smarty Grants? What is the information used for?

Project and activity polygons along with the required (attribute) information attached to them will be used to assess applications, determine funding and to develop contracts for successful projects.

It will be used for SMP analysis that will inform the Working Group decisions.

SMP reports can be generated for each of the projects submitted in SmartyGrants so the working group can see more detail about the expected biodiversity benefits from the project, including:

* The extent to which project activities at locations align with SMP top 20% actions or specific needs analysis
* which species will benefit the most from the planned actions;
* if any significant species will miss out on benefits (and may need a Specific Needs project)
* the species which have relatively high proportional distribution in the project area.

What is the state-wide competitive pool?

The competitive pool is a secondary funding avenue for projects proposed via Area Based Working Groups, as part of the Biodiversity Response Planning process (Phase I 2018). This funding is in addition to the Area based allocation all Geographic Areas received.

$10.8 million will be competitively allocated to projects proposed via Geographic Area Working Groups. All eleven Geographic Areas will be eligible to put forward projects for the competitive pool although Area 11 Marine will be restricted only to projects above the low tide mark (i.e. restricted to projects above the lowest astronomical tide mark).

An independent panel will select the projects to be funded from the state-wide competitive pool, using the Project Criteria (Guidance Note and Project Criteria for Working Groups) and additional guidance outlined below.

How are projects proposed for the state-wide competitive pool?

A Working Group should provide a list of projects to DELWP via the Area Lead, to be assessed for funding via the state-wide competitive pool, in addition to a recommended list of projects that fit within their Geographic Area indicative budget.

All projects proposed to DELWP must have completed a SmartyGrants application by 7 May 2018 and spatial attributes information table. The list of projects for the within-Area allocation and state-wide competitive pool should be provided to DELWP Biodiversity Division following the final Working Group meeting (week of 21 May 2018).

Projects proposed to DELWP should be prioritised along with the Area Based list (i.e. the top 5-10 for within area, the next 5~ for competitive pool including any projects relating to the ‘on-ground management capability and feasibility’ criterion)

What projects should be proposed for the state-wide competitive pool?

Projects for the competitive pool should either:

* Fit the same criteria as for the “within area” projects, but just be ranked below the indicative funding allocation for that area (i.e. they are overflow projects’) OR
* Be a project that meets the “on-ground management capability and feasibility” criterion - "These projects will develop and test management options for addressing key threats where there are not yet practical, appropriate scale approaches established. These projects would be expected to lead to management standards that could be applied more broadly. The focus is on testing management actions and outputs, rather than biodiversity outcomes, which are being addressed through the Biodiversity 2037 MER Framework. Examples could include: implementing cat control; total grazing pressure control; assisting natural regeneration in previously cleared areas; application of ecological fire regimes in high risk settings" (Project Criteria and Guidance doc pp.10).

All "on-ground management capability and feasibility building projects" that are recommended by a Working Group should be put forward to the Independent Panel for consideration and potential funding under the state-wide competitive pool. Such projects should not be funded out of Geographic Area indicative budget allocations.

A Working Group should provide a list of projects to be assessed for funding via the State-wide competitive pool in addition to a recommended list of projects that fit within their Geographic Area indicative budget. These projects should be prioritised along with the Area Based list (i.e. the top 5-10 for within area, the next 5 (approx.) for competitive pool)

An Independent Panel will assess projects put forward by the Working Groups for the State-wide competitive pool. The Independent Panel will in general be expected to distribute funds to an even mix of Area overflow projects and "on-ground management capability and feasibility projects".

The State-wide competitive pool is $10.8 million

What are the types of projects that should be put forward to the state-wide competitive pool under the "on ground management capability and feasibility building" criteria? How does this differ to the ‘within area’ projects?

Project under this criterion should be focused on on-ground threat reduction in a particular area for a particular threat, where there is not yet an established, practical, cost-effective mechanism to reduce that threat to the standard required to achieve significant - and where practicable, sustained - biodiversity outcomes.

These can be thought of as 'pilot' projects where a threat management action can be delivered as a proof of concept, that could then be delivered more confidently and widely in future projects. They are not research projects as such as they are about “proving up” an implementation approach focussed on outputs including reduction of a known threat as the key result of the project.

These projects would be expected to lead to management standards that could be applied more broadly. The focus is on testing management actions and understanding threat reduction outputs, rather than biodiversity outcomes (such projects including research will be addressed through the Biodiversity 2037 Monitoring Evaluation and Reporting Framework).

Examples could include: new methods to implement cat control at scale; reducing or eliminating deer from an area of priority biodiversity impact; exploring options and techniques to manage total grazing pressure including the role of native herbivores; techniques to assist natural regeneration in previously cleared areas; application of ecological fire regimes in high risk settings (e.g. in peri-urban settings).

Projects in this pool will still be judged on the other criteria outlined in the *Project Criteria and Guidance* document, such as alignment to SMP or Specific Needs, delivery (i.e. the project must still be able to be delivered and achieve biodiversity outcomes in 3-years) and risk management (i.e. the project should not have unmanageable risks)

Projects may be phased and more emphasis placed on early year scoping, (e.g. problem solving, identifying delivery partners, navigating policy or regulatory constraints) and later year action over the three years.

Projects that propose actions that do not have an established method or well-resolved circumstances should be proposed for the competitive pool. However, ‘within area’ projects addressing the types of threat management described above, may be feasible if the method and circumstances are sufficiently well-resolved. These projects will typically be at a smaller scale (see examples below).

##### Example A: Deer

Almost all deer projects recommended by a Working Group should be put forward to the competitive pool. This is because there is limited precedent of cost-effective, large scale, deer control to the standard required to achieve significant and sustained biodiversity outcomes

Projects proposed for the ‘within area’ allocation should have certainty of outcomes and maximise biodiversity returns for the investment. This would be a circumstance where there is an established method of cost-effective deer control action, in a contained location (e.g. island, a fenced area, an area of habitat that is buffered from re-invasion by deer by surrounding land use) and confidence that the action would achieve the level of threat reduction needed to deliver a significantly improved biodiversity outcome.

##### Example B: Cats

All cat control projects recommended by a Working Group should be proposed for the competitive pool. There are limited established cost-effective methods in Victoria to control cats and uncertainty around timeframes for reform and methods that may become available.

To explore the potential benefit of controlling feral cats for the purposes of SMP modelling it is assumed that best practice guidance for feral cat controls adheres to the Federal Government's Threat Abatement Plan for predation by feral cats. This includes actions such as baiting, bait development – new bait, ground shooting, trapping, exclusion fencing, and monitoring. Most of these actions are not currently an option in Victoria.

Landscape-scale BRP cat control projects are not yet feasible on public land until the anticipated legislative changes have been made and suitable control methods are endorsed for Victoria.

BRP predator-control projects on public land may consider initially controlling foxes, and to add cat control if this becomes feasible later in the 3-year project delivery period. BRP Projects which include cat control should include a back-up option (e.g. to extend fox control or to deliver another SMP Cost Effective Action) if feasible options to control cats are not available within the project timeframes. As part of projects submitted to the state-wide pool, there may also be scope to test our ability to control cats (with / without fox control) using currently available methods over smaller sample areas.

What do we do for a project that has an element of "on ground management and capability building" but is also predominantly an area based standard project? For example, a project that may wish to do cat control in year 3 if it is legal (but is not seeking to test options).

In this situation, separate out the “on-ground management and capability” part and submit this as a different project via the Working Group to the competitive pool. The other part of the project should be submitted via the Working Group to be judged together with other ‘within area’ projects.