# Frequently Asked Questions

## About the Biodiversity Response Planning Process

### 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.

Victoria has been divided into 11 geographical areas for BRP. Working Groups were established for each area that included up to 15 stakeholders who have experience and knowledge of biodiversity planning and/or projects across the geographical area. Each Working Group was coordinated and supported by an Area Lead and Partnership Facilitator.

The initial task of the Working Group was 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 June 2018 for potential investment.  Funded projects for each area were announced in August 2018.

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

Historically there has been a lack of adequate alignment, coordination and connection 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) will support better informed planning decision making for biodiversity outcomes.

### How was the Biodiversity Response Planning approach decided?

The implementation of the Biodiversity Response Planning approach, including determination of geographic areas, was co-designed in late 2017 with over 100 stakeholders involved in on-ground biodiversity.

A series of workshops were held over October and November 2017. The first workshop was for Traditional Owners to provide their perspectives and identify key issues to be carried through the remainder of the co-design workshops. The remainder of the workshops included approximately 50 organisations and community groups/networks from across government and non-government, including some Traditional Owner organisations.

### Where do I get the Biodiversity Response Planning co-design report?

The co-design report is online accessed via the FAQ ‘How was the BRP approach decided’ on the BRP webpage <https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/biodiversity/biodiversity-response-planning>

Direct link: <https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0018/119214/BRP-Co-Design-Overview-Report.pdf>

## About Biodiversity Response Planning Evaluation

### What will be covered in the BRP evaluation?

The evaluation covers activities that have occurred since the finalisation of the BRP co-design process late in 2017 up to the recommendation of projects in June 2018. The evaluation will be an opportunity for participants and interested stakeholders to share their perspectives on what worked well and what did not. Part of the evaluation will use the performance criteria established through the BRP stakeholder co-design process in 2017. This will help us to make improvements to future delivery of BRP.

### Who can be involved in the BRP evaluation?

All those involved in Biodiversity Response Planning as well as participants in the BRP co-design process and others will be given an opportunity to provide input into the evaluation via online surveys. Additional processes will be used in addition to surveys where necessary.

In order to gain a deeper understanding of how BRP worked and what improvements may be needed the independent evaluation expert will also be leading a "deep dive" into some of the BRP areas. In these areas additional activities including focus groups and interviews will be arranged with stakeholders.

### What are the next steps for BRP?

The BRP stakeholder co-design report [[link to co-design report]](https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0018/119214/BRP-Co-Design-Overview-Report.pdf) sets out a proposed general approach for future phases of BRP and this will be used to guide implementation, in conjunction with the results of the BRP Phase 1 evaluation. To allow the evaluation to be fully incorporated into future planning, we are not commencing work on subsequent phases of Biodiversity Response Planning until the evaluation of Phase 1 has concluded.

## Further background information on Biodiversity Response Planning Phase 1

### What is DELWP‘s role?

DELWP is responsible for implementing Biodiversity Response Planning across the state.  Initially DELWP led the roll-out of BRP within each geographic area and undertook the role of Area Lead in each area. DELWP worked 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 as BRP becomes more established and understood by the broader sector.

### Why did BRP 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, has enabled discussion and collaboration around an area that focuses 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 was involved in BRP Phase 1?

Many organisations and community groups who are involved in on-ground biodiversity projects or planning had the opportunity to participate in BRP Phase1. Participation happened in a number of ways and included 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 were selected by the Area Leads, based on their ability to represent organisations 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 had a maximum of 15 members.

### Who decided what projects will receive DELWP funding?

Projects were developed by interested stakeholders, including community members, within priority landscapes or themes determined by the Working Groups.

Each Working Group was provided an indicative allocation of funding and were asked to recommend a package of projects to be funded within that area. Additional projects were directed to a statewide pool of funding and were assessed by an independent panel.

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

An independent probity adviser was appointed to advise on probity issues and oversee the management of any issues that were identified by DELWP and Working Group members.

All Working Group Members completed Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest forms and probity guidance and support was provided for all Working Group members throughout the process. Specific management measures were developed and applied to ensure that conflicts that arose were managed appropriately and transparently.

### What type of activities were eligible for funding as part of Biodiversity Response Planning Phase 1?

The BRP Phase 1 process provided investment for on-ground biodiversity management actions, primarily associated with the terrestrial and marine environments. Funding could also be sought for actions that focus on aquatic species where these were not already within the scope of existing DELWP investment programs (e.g. Healthy Waterways program).

DELWP sought projects that maximise net outcomes for biodiversity and respond to the state-wide targets associated with the Biodiversity 2037 goal of ‘Victoria’s natural environment is healthy’. Projects were aiming to be strategic, collaborative, and respond to the thematic or landscape priorities that were determined by the Working Groups. Projects will be three years in duration, from 2018-19 to 2020-21. DELWP’s Strategic Management Prospects tool was used to inform assessment of cost-effective project actions supplemented by local knowledge.

The criteria for assessing proposed projects are provided in Biodiversity Response Planning - Guidance Note and Project Criteria for Working Groups [HYPERLINK].

### 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 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/) [HYPERLINK].

Updates and area based contact information will also be posted on the DELWP website at: https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/biodiversity/biodiversity-response-planning

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).