

What say does the landholder have?

- The landholder decides whether to enter into an agreement at all.
- The landholder decides what land and how much will be included in the covenant.
- The landholder's input into the management plan is essential.
- The landholder retains full ownership and the right to sell the property.

"So, why did I sign the VCA? To get some sense of permanence to my years of labour, to get some professional help in the project, and because I believed (and still do) that the council will follow through on its part of the commitment long after I have departed."

Marta, VCA Landholder, Mooloolah Valley.



Is my property eligible for a VCA?

- When you apply to join the VCA program a site assessment will be undertaken to determine eligibility.
- Properties will potentially be included in the program if the property provides habitat for threatened species of flora or fauna, or has sizeable areas of remnant 'of concern' or 'endangered' regional ecosystems.
- Additional conservation attributes such as size, age, proximity and connectivity to core habitat areas are also taken into account.
- Properties that perform a strategic function, such as a wildlife corridor, will also be considered.
- Even if your property is partially cleared it may still be eligible for a VCA.

Need more information?

Landowners who are interested in finding out more about VCA's should contact a Conservation Partnerships Officer on **(07) 5475 7272**. An appointment can then be made to discuss the program in more detail.

Cover image: Adrian Bell



www.sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au
mail@sunshinecoast.qld.gov.au
T 07 5475 7272 F 07 5475 7277
Locked Bag 72 Sunshine Coast Mail Centre Qld 4560



Voluntary Conservation Agreements

Council and landholders working together to conserve our natural heritage



Your Environment
Levy in action

Voluntary Conservation Agreements

Voluntary Conservation Agreements (VCA) are a unique way of conserving our natural heritage for future generations. Through the VCA program council aims to support landholders to permanently protect ecologically significant areas of privately owned bushland.



Image courtesy of S.Jarman

What is a VCA?

The VCA program fosters partnerships through an agreement between a landholder and council to conserve the natural values of the land.

As a property owner, a VCA assists you to conserve your land's natural values without affecting your property ownership rights:

- Your land remains under your ownership and control.
- Areas can remain exempt from the agreement and can be used for other purposes (e.g. grazing, orchards, open space).
- A VCA does not grant any public right of access to your land.
- It is entirely voluntary.
- It takes into account the particular needs and circumstances of each landholder.
- It provides a range of incentives.

Why conserve bushland on private land?

Conserving wildlife habitat on private land helps:

- contribute to the survival of plants and animals which are dependent on particular habitats
- provide links between isolated conservation reserves, allowing for wildlife movement
- provide greater security for endangered species and ecosystems.

Our region is located in one of the most biologically rich areas of Australia with large tracts of remnant bushland under the management of private landholders.

Council seeks to work with landholders to protect native plants and animals beyond the boundaries of conservation reserves.

Conservation Covenants

A conservation covenant is the legal mechanism used to permanently protect the portion of the property covered by the VCA. It is registered under the *Queensland Land Title Act 1994*.

Conservation covenants place conditions on the title that 'run with the land', these conditions protect vegetation and wildlife habitat.

Covenants are binding on title and on any future owners. Properties with Nature Refuges under the *Queensland Nature Conservation Act 1992* are also eligible to apply for a VCA.



What are the benefits of a VCA?

- **It's free** - The costs of surveying the covenant and costs associated with developing the agreement are all met by council.
- **Financial Assistance** - Council offers annual financial incentives to VCA landholders. The total value of the annual incentive will be determined by the size of the conservation area. Funds are made available primarily for on-ground conservation works. However, a portion of this may be available as a rate rebate.
- **Access to grants and funding** - Properties that have conservation covenants are generally more likely to attract government funding and grants.
- **Environmental Management Plan** - The landholder and council's Conservation Partnerships Officer work together to develop a specific management plan for the VCA area. Ongoing access to management advice is also provided.
- **Flexibility** - The management plan can be amended at anytime by agreement.
- **Security** - For landholders who have spent considerable time and money restoring their bushland, a VCA provides security that their 'conservation area' is protected in perpetuity.

"Since the VCA was declared in 2003, we have received funding from the council to assist with weed control in the forest. This has enabled us to engage the services of a local contractor, resulting in rapid progress in clearing lantana (far beyond what we could have achieved on our own)."

Paul, VCA Landholder, Maleny.