



Abel Ecology

NEWSLETTER

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Abel Ecology News

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Abel Earthcare → Bush Regeneration

The need for bush regeneration services has increased dramatically over the last decade.

Problems typically encountered within the industry stem from inexperienced staff as well as a shortage of labour in general.

The Solution

Abel Earthcare, as a new venture within Abel Ecology, offers a complete bush regeneration package with services covering all aspects of the project life cycle.

As a member of AABR we can tackle each area of the bush regeneration project including:

- Site analysis
- Detailed planning of the works
- Implementation on site
- Monitoring and Evaluation of the progress

Our bush regeneration team members

are highly experienced and qualified in multiple disciplines, each with an excellent work ethic.



Abel Earthcare draws on the resources and experience within the Abel Ecology group so that you can be sure you will receive the best possible outcome from a team of experienced professionals.

For a service you can be confident in please don't hesitate to call. Alternatively you can visit our website to find more information on the services offered, as well as testimonials and previous project examples.

Light News

Whale Calls

George had been studying whales for over 20 years and had made some thrilling breakthroughs regarding their communication. He had managed to decode many of their underwater sounds and to translate them into English. His latest research had proved that they can communi-

cate over a distance of 300 miles. When asked what could they possibly have to say at such distances he replied,

"As best as we can figure, it is something like - Hey, can you hear me now?"

The Planning Assessment Commission

The *Environmental Planning and Assessment Amendment Act 2008* provides for the establishment of the Planning and Assessment Commission (PAC) as an independent statutory authority to determine applications as delegated by the Minister or provide expert advice to the Minister as requested.

The PAC will comprise a Chair and up to eight other part-time members who are experts from a broad range of disciplines with experience in the planning environment.

The Commission will generally sit in panels of three. The composition of each panel will be determined by the Chair having regard to the skills required for the particular application and Commissioner availability.

When required expertise is not available among members, with the approval of the Director-General, the Chairperson may engage external consultants or arrange secondment of staff from other agencies to enable the Commission to exercise its functions.

It is important for the Commission to operate independently of any stakeholders including government agencies, but also be seen to be impartial to all participants.

All members should maintain “arm’s length” relations with stakeholders.

The Commission is responsible to the Minister for Planning and is required to prepare an annual performance report to the Minister.

The commission will have 3 basic roles. They are:

- To act as the determination authority for projects and concept plans under Part 3A as delegated by the Minister
- To provide independent expert advice to the Minister with regard to planning or development matters when requested
- To act as a regional, independent hearing and assessment panel if directed by the minister.

The functions of the Commission include:

- To determine applications for approval of projects and concept plans as delegated by the Minister;
- To review any aspect or environmental aspect of a project, concept plan, activity, or the constitution, alteration or abolition of a development area;
- To provide expert advice to the Minister with regard to planning or development matters, draft planning instruments or the administration or implementation of the EP&A Act or any related matter;
- To act as a regional panel if a regional panel has not been appointed for that part of the State;
- To hold public hearings, report the commission’s findings and recommendations and make the commission report publicly available as provided by the regulations; and
- As a review body to consider objector merit reviews.

To determine applications for approval of projects and concept plans as delegated by the Minister

To act as the determination authority for projects and concept plans under Part 3A as delegated by the Minister

Tidying Up the Farm

The practice of 'tidying up' by removing fallen trees has turned out to be a bad idea. Removal of dead wood and dead trees is a KEY THREATENING PROCESS in Schedule 3 of the Threatened Species Conservation Act.

The accelerated and ongoing removal of standing dead trees and woody debris on the ground caused by human activity has been recognised as a factor contributing to loss of biological diversity. Examples of the process include illegal or poorly regulated firewood collection from forests and woodlands and unsustainable loss of fallen woody debris, which may be stacked, burnt, mulched or otherwise removed from the site. This may be done to remove obstacles to machinery, increase grazing access and productivity,

reduce rabbit harbour and for aesthetic reasons. Local councils and other agencies also "tidy up" by removing dead wood and dead trees from their reserves and from along roadsides.

Professor Ralph MacNally at Monash University has found that coarse woody debris (CWD, fallen wood) has been largely stripped from both rivers and their floodplains in the southern Murray-Darling basin of south-eastern Australia. He suggests that as little as 20 t/ha (on average) remains on floodplains where once the figure may have been closer to 90–125 t/ha. The only remaining native terrestrial mammal (*Antechinus flavipes*) occupies sites in significantly higher densities when wood loads exceed 45 t/ha. Ground- and CWD-

using birds are more prevalent, with richer diversity, in the vicinities of accumulations of woody debris. Restoration targets might reasonably be set at about 40–50 t/ha, but it seems that birds would be aided by the imposition of a high variance in CWD-load densities rather than an even distribution.

Research by Dr Danny Wotherspoon of Abel Ecology has found that restoration of degraded habitat in western Sydney by replacing CWD has resulted in significant increases in bird, bat and reptile fauna species diversity. That research was presented at the XIXth International Congress of Zoology in Beijing and will be published in the international journal *Urban Ecosystems*.

Product News

Bushfire Shutter Protection

Wildfire Protection Services in Victoria are able to supply and fit Radiant Heat & Fire Screens to windows and doors fully compliant to AS3959 with a recent pass to the very latest AS1530.8.1.

This is the only product available commercially worldwide with this accreditation, and is an all-Australian invention, manufactured in the Dandenong factory.

The product is generally 20 to 30% less in cost than aluminium

shutters, with the advantage of being fully compliant for use in Level 1, 2 & 3 Bushfire Prone Zones as well as Flame Zone, due to its pass of AS1530.8. It is safer also from the aspect that people staying to defend their home would not be trapped by these devices lowered over exits.

This system is also adaptable in that it can be manufactured to cover large spans and drops not possible with other systems, making it ideal for not only residential but also



commercial applications.

Take a look at the web site: www.wildfireprotection.com.au

Note: Abel Ecology wishes to make this product known to you however it does not endorse its use.

Project Examples

Right first time is cheaper and less disruptive

The following story indicates the importance of not skimping on site constraints and opportunity analysis.

IN 2004 the NSW Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA) undertook a road realignment project near Lidsdale in the central Tablelands of NSW. However the RTA had not detected a population of the threatened Purple Copper Butterfly within the footprint of the project. The RTA responded promptly when notified of the butterfly's presence by stopping works, and preparing and implementing a butterfly management programme. This programme included modifying the realignment and reducing the development footprint, supple-

mentary planting of habitat, habitat rehabilitation and translocation of individual caterpillars from within the final footprint area. These actions seem to have safeguarded the population at least in the short term; however, further active management of the site will be needed to ensure its long-term viability.

The disturbance to the project was considerable and costly for the RTA. Redesigning a project at such a late stage, engaging a consultant to plan and implement a rescue programme, and having a butterfly rescue team on site for additional work, causing programming delays and required funds for which the RTA

had not budgeted. The project reinforces the importance of thorough predisturbance assessment of a site at the early planning stages.

Abel Ecology was engaged to do a thorough site analysis in the design stage of the Great Western Highway realignment west of Katoomba. The site was a highly sensitive habitat and the project came under intense scrutiny by a range of local resident groups. As a result of Abel Ecology work, RTA planning and design took into account specific local considerations and the project was completed early and under budget expectations, with no disruptions of an environmental nature.

Court News

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Anvil Hill Project Watch Association have succeeded in getting the Commonwealth to reconsider the previous decision on the Anvil Hill Mine (now known as the Mangoola project) by prior Federal Environment Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, in which he decided to have no

controlling provision on the Anvil Hill Mine development and that Anvil Hill Project was not a controlled action as defined under the EPBC Act. The basis of the reconsideration is the likelihood of an endangered ecological community and a number of threatened orchid species on the site, missed because of previous survey and analysis techniques. The mine proposal has

now suffered another lengthy delay. This project was also subject of appeals to the NSW Land and Environment Court and the Federal Court. The lesson to learn is that rigorous site survey and analysis and full disclosure reporting is required to avoid protracted challenges from community interest groups and government regulators and consent authorities.



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