

THEME: ENGAGING OTHERS

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ALSO SEE THE [NATIONAL RESTORATION STANDARDS](#) - [PRINCIPLE 6](#) (SOCIAL ASPECTS ARE CRITICAL TO SUCCESSFUL ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION). LINKS TO A RANGE OF CASE STUDIES RELATING TO ENGAGING OTHER ARE AVAILABLE IN [APPENDIX 1](#).

“Restoration is carried out to satisfy not only conservation values but also socioeconomic values, including cultural ones. Without considering these values, particularly relationships between a site and its stakeholders, a restoration project may not gain the social support needed for success and may fail to deliver important benefits to ecosystems and to society.” p17 National Restoration Standards

Involving and educating the community of stakeholders throughout a restoration project is a high-return investment that can maintain the recovery trajectory of a project after the funding has been expended and after individual champions have moved on. Social engagement, interpretation and education regarding the benefits of restoration to stakeholders are therefore essential components of a restoration project and need to be planned and resourced alongside the physical or biological project components.

Local stakeholder engagement undertaken at the commencement of a project can increase collaboration, facilitating solutions best suited to local ecosystems and cultures.

In addition to environmental benefits, restoration projects also provide social, cultural and economic benefits such as

- Direct and indirect employment
- Improved social outcomes; community cohesion, individual welfare
- Enhanced appreciation of natural systems and
- Greater understanding of negative impacts on the ecosystem.

Stakeholder engagement is a core component of any restoration project and budget strategies need to reflect this. Well-supported community volunteers can play a valuable role in improving outcomes when budgets are limited.

Increasing community motivation to reduce the impact of society’s environmental footprint on natural systems and address the cumulative global effect that drives climate change provides a genuine opportunity to connect people with nature through restoration. State and local governments, agencies and NGOs all support volunteer efforts to redress degradation.

Engaging others greatly assists in addressing anthropogenic causes of degradation that undermine restoration attempts. Gaining the support of stakeholders with mutually agreed and beneficial outcomes will provide optimal conditions for the recovery trajectory to be maintained.

The restoration practitioner requires an ability to communicate to a project's stakeholders the pivotal role the community can play in maintaining restoration outcomes. It is particularly important to communicate how domestic lifestyle decisions can directly impact on natural areas by choices at the household level, such as dealing with garden waste, household nutrients, invasive plants and pets.

"The values and behaviours of humans (whether positive or negative) will dictate the future of ecosystems. Conserving and restoring ecosystems therefore depends upon appreciation by society of the negative and positive effects of different behaviours; and involvement by all stakeholders in finding solutions to ensure that ecosystems and society mutually prosper."p17 National Restoration Standards

With more than 60% (63% in 1993: ABS 1301.1) of Australia's biodiverse lands in private ownership, creating enduring community connections will ultimately benefit the flora and fauna by strengthening connectivity between landholdings. Small urban blocks in conjunction with public lands can create movement corridors for fauna and flora. Larger rural blocks can be a key to reinstating landscape scale connectivity to mitigate the impacts of climate change through enabling movement of individuals and genetic material. Rural landholders registering part of their land as a wildlife refuge or placing it under a conservation agreement with an agency or conservation NGO is a key way community members can contribute to the restoration and conservation management of native ecosystems.

PLANNING & DESIGN OF RESTORATION PROJECTS

The Standards (p18) highlight the role of stakeholder engagement in planning and designing a project.

Stakeholder engagement is essential to the sustained success of any project. Meaningful engagement must be undertaken at the planning stage of a restoration project, with all key stakeholders (including the land or water manager, industry interests, neighbours and Indigenous stakeholders). Plans for public areas or mandatory restoration include a strategy for stakeholder engagement throughout and upon completion of the project. (See tool: The Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation (cmpopenstandards.org/)).

Additional reading on this topic is contained in Version 2 of The International Standards for the Practice of Ecological Restoration, launched in March 2019. The document includes Principle 1- Restoration engages stakeholders, along with a social progress wheel and attribute tables to determine the level of social progress achieved in a project. <https://www.ser.org>