



Conference Declaration

The *Grassy Plains Network* declares that the following actions and recommendations be enacted to ensure the better conservation, protection, management and engagement with Melbourne's Western Grassy Plains:

Respect:

- Seek and create opportunities for traditional owners to provide advice, guidance and assist in the active management of the Grassy Plains of Melbourne.
- Seek and support opportunities to for communities on the Grassy Plains of Melbourne to 'walk country together' with Traditional Owners.

Protect:

- Seek the immediate purchase and management of priority natural areas, before they are lost or further degraded. This includes:
 - the immediate acquisition of all areas with the highest natural values in the *Western Grasslands Reserve* locations (i.e. categorised as 'High Quality Native Grassland' and 'Themeda Grassland' (DSE, 2011)),
 - the immediate acquisition of 'Conservation Areas' identified in the *Biodiversity Conservation Strategy*, within the Western Growth Area (DEPI, 2013),
 - the accelerated acquisition of all areas with high cover of native grasses within the *Western Grasslands Reserve*, including those that have been categorised as 'Austrostipa Grassland' (DSE, 2011) and areas dominated by C3 native grasses.,
 - the acquisition of all unprotected areas with high natural values within the former Urban Growth Boundary and also within the Western Growth Area.
- Secure increased funding for land managers to ensure that management actions maintain or improve the quality of protected natural areas on the grassy plains of Melbourne. In particular, further resources are required for Parks Victoria who have responsibility for managing the *Western Grasslands Reserve*.
- Seek funding for a Traditional Owner rangers program that can work across public and private tenures to manage Grassy Plains landscapes.
- Advocate for all waterways of the west to be allocated to public ownership and managed for conservation and water quality via an integrated approach.
- All approved urban/industrial development projects on remnant habitat must include a plan to save and salvage the soil seedbank and threatened flora and fauna for re-establishment in protected areas.
- Identify and place planning protection such as Environmental Significance Overlays and conservation zoning for significant natural areas in public and private ownership.

- Create large scale seed orchards in conjunction with community, councils, government agencies and industry. Seek collaborative beneficial arrangements such as using recycled water on the seed orchards.

Reconnect:

- Seek to connect people with the natural landscape in areas where they live, work and undertake other activities (e.g. school, sport, community gatherings, shopping).
 - Strengthen and create new connections between all groups, organisations and individuals who take an interest in the Grassy Plains of Melbourne.
 - Engage with new and existing multi-cultural communities to the west of Melbourne with the aim of improved understanding, appreciation and involvement with the natural landscape and its values. Involve all land managers and pursue innovative techniques for this process.
 - Continue to develop new approaches for engaging young people with the natural landscape.
 - Include strategies that are focussed around health and wellbeing, social, spiritual and cultural themes.
 - Use new, creative and engaging methods for engaging people with remnant native grasslands, including: art, film, photography, writing, song and education.
- Establish a *Scientific Advisory Group for the Grassy Plains of Melbourne*, including Traditional Owners). This group will collate existing information, identify knowledge gaps, lead programs of research that are likely to result in improved conservation and management outcomes, and prepare and distribute information in relevant formats/forums for the community and other relevant stakeholders.
- Establish a *Land Management Advisory/Working Group* (including Traditional Owners) to advise, collaborate and share knowledge relating to the practice and experience of managing and restoring the natural landscapes of the Grassy Plains of Melbourne. This group would also collate and disseminate their findings/advice/learnings.
- Create funded Recovery Teams for each group of threatened species within the Grassy plains (e.g. Orchids, Daisies, Insects, Reptiles and Frogs).
- Seek and promote positive examples of development and design that include natural areas or features of the Grassy Plains landscape.

References:

DSE (2011) *Western Grassland Reserves: Grassland management targets and adaptive management*. Department of Sustainability and Environment, East Melbourne.

DEPI, 2013. *Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for Melbourne's Growth Corridors*. Department of Environment and Primary Industries, East Melbourne

