

A close-up photograph of a flowering plant with numerous small, light purple flowers and green, elongated leaves. The background is slightly blurred, showing more of the same plant. The overall scene is vibrant and natural.

HUME CITY COUNCIL

# Conserving our Rural Environment Grant

**Guidelines 2025-2026**

[hume.vic.gov.au](http://hume.vic.gov.au)







## ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF TRADITIONAL OWNERS

**Hume City Council recognises the rich Aboriginal heritage within the municipality and acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, which includes the Gunung Willam Balluk clan, as the Traditional Custodians of this land. Council embraces Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander living cultures as a vital part of Australia's identity and recognises, celebrates and pays respect to the existing family members of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and to Elders past, present and future.**

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# Conserving our Rural Environment Grant

## 1. GRANT OVERVIEW

### 1.1 Program introduction

The Conserving our Rural Environment grant aims to conserve and improve the natural environmental values on private rural property. This will be achieved through the support and funding of on-ground environmental works, training activities and community engagement initiatives.

### 1.2 Who can apply?

- Landowners or managers with property larger than 0.4 hectares that is zoned: Green Wedge, Green Wedge A, Rural Living and Farming.
- Landowners or managers with property identified as conservation within the Biodiversity Conservation Strategy for Melbourne's Growth Corridors.
- Landcare groups and other community groups.

### 1.3 Project Grant — up to \$10,000 (GST exclusive)

A Project Grant assists applicants to undertake on-ground environmental works, capacity-building or community engagement initiatives.

This grant is offered through a competitive process. Applicants will need to demonstrate the merits of their project against the selection criteria with a focus on investing in high quality natural environmental values and applicants or community groups working together.

Applicants must have a Land Management/Project Plan that is less than five years old, or apply for the development of one in their application. Alternatively, land managers may wish to consider developing their own Land Management Plan using the [Council template](#) and seeking advice from a Council Officer. Applicants must obtain a quote for each activity proposed as part of their project.

Council officers will undertake a property visit with applicants to discuss project proposals after receiving an expression of interest.



## 2. GRANT SELECTION CRITERIA

Applicants must complete an application form by the due date to be eligible for the Project Grant. The Project Grant operates under a competitive grant process. Applications that don't meet the criteria will not be successful. Applicants may be offered part funding for projects or may be recommended to reapply the following financial year.

Projects must be additional to applicant's obligations under the Catchment and Land Protection Act 1994 (CaLP Act) and obligations under other incentive or grant programs such as Council's Primary Producer Rate Rebate Program (PPRR).

**Repetitive projects over consecutive years eg: weed control, may be declined due to being already considered a landholder's responsibility under the CaLP Act**

The following criteria will be used to assess and prioritise projects.

- **Environmental Conservation Significance**  
environmental conservation significance relates to the extent and condition of the environmental asset that the project aims to protect or improve. This includes the presence of a threatened animal or plant species or a threatened native vegetation type. Priority is given to projects that focus on enhancing and improving the quality of the vegetation as well as increasing its size.
- **Project Outcomes**  
project outcomes must have a focus on achieving long-term results. Long-term outcomes include revegetation works following on from weed control, fencing of an area of environmental significance from stock, or securing property protection through a conservation covenant. Priority is given to projects that focus on outcomes that can be measured several years after completion.

- **Project Location**

project location relates to where the project is located on the property and proximity to areas of environmental significance such as a waterway, a public conservation reserve or overlays that are a form of protection within the State and Local Planning Policy Framework. Priority will be given to projects that are within or near areas of environmental value, significance and importance at a local and landscape scale.

- **Landscape Connectivity**

landscape connectivity is the degree to which wildlife can move between patches of native vegetation such as woodlands and grasslands or along creeks. Priority is given to projects that aim to better support wildlife to move across the landscape.

- **Land Management Plan**

project proposal clearly links to the objectives of an approved Land Management plan. Project proposals that are not outlined in the Land Management Plan will may be declined.

- **Project Contributions**

project contributions relate to the applicants provision of their own funds or time onto the project. A minimum of 50 per cent of the total grant request must be contributed to the project by the applicant. The contribution must relate to the project or conservation area and cannot be claimed for past investments or as part of another grant program. The in-kind for physical labour is to be calculated at \$50 per hour.

- **Project Collaboration**

project collaboration can include applicants working with their neighbours or within a community. Collaboration on projects is strongly encouraged as similar projects often need to occur beyond a boundary fence or within local communities. The environmental benefits and outcomes of the project significantly increase when applicants work together rather than in isolation.

## 3. ELIGIBLE PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Council will fund a range or combination of activities for on-ground environmental works, capacity-building and community engagement initiatives. All activities must be directed by a land management plan or project plan that is less than five years old. If the applicant does not have a plan then one must be applied for in the first year.

### Stream Frontage Projects

Council will not fund projects proposing works along stream frontages, including banks and riparian areas.

Melbourne Water's Liveable Communities, Liveable Waterways incentive offers funding to landholders to conduct environmental works within the stream frontage. For more information visit:

<https://www.melbournewater.com.au/> or call 131 722 or email [incentives@melbournewater.com.au](mailto:incentives@melbournewater.com.au).

### 3.1 On-ground environmental works

**Noxious and environmental weed control** – to assist in the control and spread of priority weeds in an area of environmental conservation significance undertaken by the applicant or a qualified contractor. For applicants who would like to undertake their own weed control, Council will fund the material and equipment costs, not the labour. Labour is to be included in the application as an in-kind contribution.

**Pest animal control** – to assist in the control and spread of priority pest animals in an area of environmental conservation significance undertaken by the applicant or a qualified contractor. For applicants who would like to undertake their own pest animal control, Council will fund the material and equipment costs, not the labour. Labour is to be included in the application as an in-kind contribution.

**Revegetation works** – to assist with rehabilitating degraded areas, enhance an area or to establish and link native vegetation. For applicants who would like to undertake their own revegetation works, Council will fund the material and equipment costs, not the labour. Labour is to be included in the application as an in-kind contribution.

**Materials and equipment** – to assist applicants with the purchase of materials or equipment to undertake works in an area of environmental conservation significance. Examples include materials to install a rabbit-proof fence, the hiring of specialised equipment to undertake priority weed control or the purchase of herbicide.

### 3.2 Capacity building and community engagement

**Training and development** – to support applicants with fees to attend workshops and conferences or to undertake relevant natural resource or land management tertiary studies, certificates or short courses such as the farm chemical users course or property management planning.

**Management plans** – applicants may apply for funding to engage a qualified consultant to develop a five year land management plan using Council's guideline on Preparing a Land Management Plan. The plan must identify the environmental values on the property and aim to conserve and improve these values.

**Community group activities** – to assist Landcare groups and other community groups to develop relevant educational or capacity-building materials such as fliers, brochures or land management guides. Council will fund other activities associated with organising workshops, field days or group training for members and the community.

**Volunteer recruitment activities** – to assist environmental community groups to undertake recruitment and membership activities such as information sessions, field days and event stalls. Other activities associated with increasing community group memberships such as marketing and promotional materials may be funded.

### 3.3 Other items and activities

Council may consider funding other items and activities if they meet the objectives of the grant. Please discuss any activity not listed with a Council officer prior to a Project Grant application being submitted. To discuss activities, contact the Sustainability Engagement Team on 9205 2200.









**3.4 List of eligible and non-eligible project activities**

<b>On-Ground Environmental Works</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Noxious weed or declared pest animal control carried out by a qualified contractor	✓	
Purchase of herbicide and weed control materials and equipment	✓	
Revegetation with indigenous (locally native) plants (Council will not fund any revegetation works within 50 metres of a dwelling)	✓	
Purchase of materials and equipment to undertake revegetation	✓	
Fencing to exclude stock and pest animals from a conservation area undertaken by a contractor	✓	
Native flora and fauna surveys and assessments	✓	
Purchase of fencing materials and equipment to exclude stock or pest animals from a conservation area	✓	
Burning to manage weeds and regenerate native vegetation (A burning permit must be attained from Council prior to undertaking a burn)	✓	
Works or materials to control native animals or non-declared pest animals in Victoria		✗
Revegetation with non-indigenous plants (not locally native to the area)		✗
Removal of native vegetation or other environmental values		✗
Works or equipment for landscaping with no environmental conservation benefit		✗



## Capacity building and community engagement

Yes No

Consultant fees to develop a land management plan or project plan	✓	
Consultant fees for property management advice	✓	
Fees to attend courses or workshops relevant to natural resource & land management	✓	
Fees for subjects relevant to land management at TAFE or a university	✓	
Purchase of natural resource and land management books or educational resources	✓	
Development of educational or capacity-building materials	✓	
Fees for trainers and expert speakers at community group events	✓	
Costs associated with community group events including venue hire and catering costs	✓	
Activities not related to natural resource, rural land or property management		x
Purchase of infrastructure such as rain tanks		x





## 4. PROJECT GRANT APPLICATION

### 4.1 How can I apply?

- Expressions of interests will be mailed out in February. To access an application you must complete and return an expression of interest form. Council will arrange a property visit to discuss projects in detail. If a project is deemed not suitable, Council can provide advice on how to improve the project.
- Council will send through a link to access an application. To gain access to the application you must complete a property visit with a Rural Engagement Officer to discuss project proposals.
- You must be the landowner of the property to be able to submit an application. If you are a land manager (lease or managing a property on behalf of the landowner) you must provide written consent with your application from the landowner. Council's Rural Engagement Officers can assist with submitting online applications if needed.
- Council will acknowledge receipt of the application via email to the applicant within 10 working days.
- All applications must have quotes or estimates for each activity with an ABN, goods or service description, hourly rates, personnel and the GST amount.
- Council will assess all applications using the selection criteria. Projects will be prioritised and allocated in order of merit until funding is spent. Part-funding may be offered to applicants.
- Both successful and unsuccessful applicants will be notified of the outcome. Please note that successful applicants will have their property details and funded activities reported to Council and available publicly
- Council can only commit to funding one year at a time and applications will be assessed every year.
- Upon completion and auditing of the approved project by Council, tax invoices must be sent to the Sustainability Engagement Team for payment. Council will not pay for approved projects up front or prior to an application being approved.
- All projects must be completed by 31 May 2026. If a project is not going to be completed by this date or the applicant decides to withdraw from the program, the applicant must send all requests in writing to Council.
- Council's terms of payment is 30 days from the date the tax invoice is received by Council. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure contractors and suppliers are aware of

Time-frame	Activity
1 February 2025	Project Grant expression of interest and applications open
<b>25 April 2025</b>	<b>Expression of interests close</b>
14 May 2025	Applications close (applications not accepted after this date)
June 2025	Applications assessed by the Officer Assessment Panel and Executive Review Panel
July 2025	Recommendations taken to Council for endorsement
August 2025	Applicants notified of the outcomes and enter into funding agreement



## 5. APPLICATION TIPS

### 5.1 Project planning

- Discuss the project with a Council's Rural Engagement Officers.
- Only projects that are linked to an existing Land Management Plan will be approved.
- Consider discussing project ideas with neighbours or a local Landcare group and work together on a joint project. Each property will need to submit a separate application.
- Determine if the project requires a planning permit and obtain before submitting an application.
- A permit may be required for native vegetation and soil movement or disturbance.

### 5.2 Supporting Documentation:

#### 5.2.1 Quotes and estimates

- Provide a quote for each activity with the application.
- Quotes need to have the business ABN, goods or service description, hourly rates and the GST amount.
- Fencing quotes need to include the type of materials, the length and any proposed gates.
- If a quote is considered too high, applicants may be requested to supply another to ensure value for money.

#### 5.2.2 Plans and permits

- Provide an excerpt of the Action Plan from your Land/Property Management Plan, indicating the proposed activity. For example: LMP 2021-26 for XXX Hume Rd, Humeville, Year 2 Revegetation of shelter belt on northern fence boundary
- If the applicant does not have a Council endorsed plan then one must be applied for in the application.
- If required obtain any necessary permits from the relevant Council department or agency.
- Where a permit is required for the project, it must be submitted with the application.
- If the applicant is leasing or managing the property, a signed letter of support from the landowner is required.

#### 5.2.3 Aerials and maps

- An aerial or map must be included in the application with the project area clearly identified. Aerial photos can be provided by Council on request, contact the Sustainability Engagement Team on 9205 2200
- Include additional information on the map such as the area of treatment or length of an activity.

## 6. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Successful applicants will be required to enter into a funding agreement with Council. This agreement outlines the roles and responsibilities of Council and the applicant when implementing the approved project.

The agreement cannot be changed, unless a written request is approved by Council. To discuss these roles and responsibilities, contact the Sustainability Engagement Team on 9205 2200.

Where the project relates to on-ground works the applicant must agree for five years within the project area to:

- Not apply fertiliser, disturb soil, construct dams, alter drainage, and/or remove rock or logs.
- Not remove, destroy or lop native vegetation including trees (dead or alive).
- Only plant indigenous (locally native) plant species.
- Maintain all plants planted to ensure their optimum survival.
- Monitor any areas treated for weed control and undertake any follow-up management activities.
- Monitor any areas treated for rabbit control and undertake any follow-up management activities.
- Maintain all fencing constructed under this agreement to the highest standard reasonably possible.
- Not graze stock unless this is an existing activity and only graze for short intervals.
- Allow Council Officers and contractors to audit the project and approved works.



## 7. INFORMATION AND ASSISTANCE

A range of resources and information is available to assist applicants when developing their project.

Information can be found on Council's page at [hume.vic.gov.au](http://hume.vic.gov.au). For all enquires contact the Sustainability Engagement Team on 9205 2200 or email [coregrant@hume.vic.gov.au](mailto:coregrant@hume.vic.gov.au)

### **Land & Biodiversity Guidelines**

Council's Land & Biodiversity Guidelines is a resource to assist in the management of rural land, as well as the conservation and protection of natural environmental values. It includes such topics as:

- weed and pest animal management
- effective grazing
- managing soil erosion
- fire management
- managing native vegetation, revegetating and establishing windbreaks

### **Directory of Service Providers**

To assist with managing your land, Council's Directory of Service Providers provides an up to date list of local contractors and suppliers that service the Hume area. Contractor services include such things as weed control, pest animal control, fencing, revegetation, slashing and farming maintenance/assistance. Suppliers include farm supply stores and plant nurseries.

### **Priority weeds and pest animals**

Council's WEEDeck is a waterproof durable weed identification guide that covers the priority weeds in the Hume area







## 8. SMARTYGRANTS APPLICATION GUIDE

### 8.1 New Users

If this is your first time completing an on-line application, you will need to register an account.

Click Register and complete the registration. It is a good idea to write down your login details so you can directly login next time once you have registered.

The screenshot shows the 'Login or Register' section of the SmartyGrants application. At the top, there is a blue header bar with 'Not logged in.' on the left and 'Current Rounds' on the right. Below the header, the title 'Login or Register' is followed by instructions: 'You must register before you can make an online submission. Registration gives you secure access to your forms allowing you to work on them over time rather than having to complete them all at once. It only takes a moment to register and you can get started on your submission straight after registering. Fields marked with \* must be completed.'

There are two columns: 'Login' and 'Register'. The 'Login' column has the text 'If you're already registered or have started an online form log in here.' and two input fields: 'Email Address: \*' and 'Password: \*'. Below these is a link 'Forgotten your password?' and a note 'By clicking **Log In** you agree to Our Community's Privacy Policy'. The 'Register' column has the text 'If you haven't registered or started filling in a form, register here.' and a 'Register' button.

### 8.2 Existing Users

Simply fill in your details and Login.

If you already have a Smarty Grants account and have forgotten your password click on the link Forgotten your password to have your password reset.

### 8.3 Navigation

You will see three options:

- Fill Out Now - Click this when you are ready to complete the application
- Preview the Form - If you would like to view the form before completing
- Download Preview Form – Download the form in PDF format to view before completing the on-line application

The screenshot shows the navigation menu for the 'Conserving our Rural Environment Small Grant 2020/21' application. At the top, there is a blue header bar with 'Logged in: Cassandra Boag (cassandra@hume.vic.gov.au) My Submissions' on the left and 'Current Rounds' on the right. Below the header, the title 'Conserving our Rural Environment Small Grant 2020/21' is displayed. A red box highlights three navigation options: 'Fill Out Now' (with a document icon), 'Preview the form' (with a magnifying glass icon), and 'Download preview form' (with a document icon).

When you are ready click **Fill Out Now**.

If you cannot finish the application in one go you can Save Progress and come back to the application at a later date.

## 8.4 Application Details

### Applicant Details

This includes basic location details about the property.

### Project Description

You will need to include the activities you are applying for and outline the expected long term goals of the project. Keeping in mind that each application needs to be assessed against the grant criteria. It is a good idea to put some thought and detail into your responses.

**\* Indicates a required field.** When you see a red asterisk, it means that you will need to provide an answer to the question.

### Projects Activities and Quotes

All applications must have at least one quote or estimate for each activity with an ABN, goods or service description, hourly rates, personnel and the GST amount.

Fencing quotes need to include the type of materials, the length and any proposed gates.

If quotes are considered too high or lack enough detail, applicants may be requested to supply another to ensure value for money.

**You must list the price excluding GST amount.**

If the quote is considered too high or not enough detail, applicants may be requested to supply another to ensure value for money.

All amounts listed in the table must exclude GST.

Activity	Total excluding GST
<input type="text"/>	Must be a dollar amount. <input type="text" value="\$"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="\$"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="\$"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="text" value="\$"/>

Description of the activity applying for Eg. Development of a Land Management Plan
Cost of activity per the quote. Remember to exclude GST.
Must be at least 4 rows

**Attachments**

Quote 1 \*  
Attach a file:  No file chosen

Quote 2  
Attach a file:  No file chosen

Click **Choose Files** to attach a quote, if there is more than one click the next **Choose Files** down to attach additional quotes.



- In-Kind Contribution and Costs** You will need to provide a description of how you will be contributing towards the project. This can be cash or labour.
- Labour is to be calculated at \$50 per hour.  
Total Expenditure Amount is calculated automatically.
- Project Map and Photo Points** The purpose of the map is for the applicant to identify the proposed project area and the proposed activities (length of fence, re-vegetation or weed control areas).
- The map can then be scanned or copied into your computer, tablet or phone and attached to the application by clicking Choose Files button.
- It is a requirement of the Grant to provide Council with at least 2 photos of the project area before and after the project.
- Project Checklist** The project checklist is to ensure that the applicant has included everything that is requested for a completed application. Please read through and answer appropriately.
- The Conserving our Rural Environment Guidelines can be accessed through clicking the blue Hyper-link Conserving our Rural Environment Grant Guidelines.
- Privacy Statement and Declaration** The privacy statement outlines Councils policy regarding collection and use of your personal data and set forth your privacy rights.
- Please carefully read the Privacy Statement and Declaration, also making sure to have read the Conserving our Rural Environment Guidelines before signing.
- Review and Submit** Once you have reviewed the application form you can click Submit. You will receive a confirmation email with a PDF of your submitted application.











# HumeLink

Multilingual telephone  
information service

**Enquiries 9205 2200**

للمعلومات باللغة العربية	9679 9815
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## Connect with us



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