

# **LORD HOWE ISLAND BOARD**

## **Business Paper**

### **OPEN SESSION**

#### **ITEM**

Long term plan for revegetation of Blackburn Island.

#### **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Board note the information.

#### **BACKGROUND**

The Lord Howe Island Biodiversity Management Plan 2007 includes several actions relevant to the revegetation of Blackburn Island, which aim to protect and enhance habitat for threatened fauna and rehabilitate high conservation priority areas. These include Action 15.3.1 Revegetate and control Rhodes Grass on Blackburn Island (to protect and enhance habitat for the critically endangered LHI Wood feeding Woodroach) and Action 18.2.2 to reintroduce the LHI Phasmid to the main island. Revegetation of cleared areas dominated by the exotic Rhodes Grass will also protect and enhance habitat for LHI Gecko and LHI Skink.

Blackburn Island is 1.9 hectares in size and provides important habitat for the critically endangered LHI Wood Feeding Roach, the threatened LHI Gecko and LHI Skink and provides nesting habitat for Wedge-tailed Shearwater. The area where the Banyan grows provides the best habitat for the Woodroach, Gecko and Skink and is readily utilised by nesting Wedge-tailed Shearwater's, which nest both on the surface and in burrows across the island. Revegetation that replaces the exotic Rhodes Grass with native species will benefit all these species through enhancing habitat structures and resources including food and shelter.

A LHI Phasmid translocation planning team has been formed comprising staff from Melbourne Zoo invertebrate team, Principal scientist with the Office of Environment & Heritage science division and the Board's Manager Environment World Heritage to progress research into the possible translocation of rodents back onto Lord Howe Island following the successful eradication of rodents. The translocation planning team recommended conducting a trial translocation of LHI Phasmids to Blackburn Island prior to reintroduction to the main island.

In March 2018 the Board submitted a funding application to the NSW Environmental Trust's Restoration and Rehabilitation grants titled Restoring Blackburn Island in Preparation for the Translocation of the LHI Phasmid for \$55,366 and were advised in September 2018 that the grant was successful.

## **CURRENT POSITION**

The Board recently submitted a draft Project Implementation Plan, draft Project Measures Table and revised budget to the NSW Environmental Trust for finalisation of the grant agreement.

The project aims to reconstruct suitable habitat to enable the future translocation of LHI Phasmid to Blackburn Island as a trial prior to translocation to the main island.

The NSW Environmental Trust project will plant 3000 native plants covering 1 hectare aiming to reconstruct wind sheared oceanic rainforest and coastal heathlands. The Project Implementation Plan has identified that trees and materials will be ordered by December 2018, site preparation completed by May 2019 with Melbourne Zoo and Board staff coordinating the planting through the Conservation Volunteers program in the first 2 weeks of August 2019. Ongoing maintenance will be undertaken by Board staff until canopy closure.

The long term plan for the remaining area is to extend revegetation subject to funding, leaving the elevated section of Blackburn Island where the wind sock is located free from tall woody vegetation. This area is intended to be planted with low growing native grasses and herbs such as Poa Grass and Grey Saltbush and Melanthera.

The attached map shows the area to be planted in winter 2019 with NSW Environmental Trust funds, remaining areas that could be revegetated in future subject to funding and the area to only be planted with low growing grasses and herbs.

## **SUMMARY**

Revegetation of Blackburn Island with native plants will improve habitat for numerous species including threatened species and will provide a suitable trial site to monitor the success of translocating LHI Phasmids.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Board note the information.

**Prepared:** Justin Sauvage, Manager Environment Community Services

**Endorsed:** Peter Adams, Chief Executive Officer

### **Attachments:**

Attachment A: Map of Blackburn Island showing long term plan

# Revegetation Plan for Blackburn Island

