

Land Management Job Guarantee

The Proposal

A Land Management Job Guarantee is proposed as a solution for both providing short term economic stimulus activity in response to the COVID 19 pandemic crisis but also as a longer term remedy to address a range of economic, social and environmental issues in remote and rural communities in Tasmania. Activities undertaken could include weeding, feral animal control, walking track construction/ maintenance, fencing and revegetation including assisted natural regeneration, direct seeding and tree planting. It can deliver economic security, social integration, enhanced skills and qualifications and ecological sustainability in one package. The **Local Government Association of Queensland** has identified environmentally focused employment projects as a key opportunity in their COVID stimulus package

<https://www.governmentnews.com.au/qld-councils-draw-up-battle-plan-against-covid-19/>

as has the NT Government <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-05-26/nt-government-proposes-gamba-army-for-war-on-weeds/12283808>

Context

Rural **employment, health and education** indicators in Tasmania are all below par. The cost of disengaged, dysfunctional and unqualified/low skilled community members is high both economically and socially but is avoidable in many cases. One solution to this existing seemingly intractable problem, exacerbated by COVID-19 economic impacts, is to establish an employment program focused on employment and training in environment, land management and sustainability in regions with either long term unemployment or underemployment, or in those that have been heavily impacted by the economic impacts of COVID-19.

Previous Green Army and Green Corps projects have provided strong anecdotal evidence that purposeful, strategic and well-organised conservation land management activities, combined with accredited TAFE training units such as Conservation Land Management (CLM), will achieve excellent economic, social (including improved mental and physical health), educational and environmental outcomes in disadvantaged rural and other affected communities. However to sustain the outcomes of conservation land

management activity there needs to be ongoing rather than short term programs.

There is currently a very large unmet need for more people on the ground to deal with problems, e.g. weed management etc, which are well beyond the current resources of Councils, government agencies, businesses, landowners and managers. Many members of rural communities enjoy doing outdoor practical work, have skills that are relevant to undertaking environment and land management activities, and will gain the benefits of **greater social connection, improved physical and mental health, and skills and qualifications.**

Characteristics of a Land Management Job Guarantee

The following criteria is suggested to maximise the effectiveness and economic, social and environmental outcomes of Job Guarantee and builds on the successful Indigenous Ranger model of northern Australia.

- **Paying a proper wage** (part time 3 days a week)
- Is **not age restricted** which allows for a better mix of age groups in crews
- Provides for **extensive training/education** opportunities in Conservation Land Management ie Conservation Land Management Certificate courses through TasTAFE
- Is **ongoing** rather than a six month program/project
- **Opt in** rather than coercive (noting that when the Green Army projects were run in Break O Day municipality there were far more applicants than positions available)
- **Best practice** standards for Conservation Land Management (ie ensuring projects are strategic, achieve environmental outcomes and participants are undertaking activities where they are guided by knowledgeable supervisors)
- **Bottom up** local community group focus (ie projects are community driven in partnership with Local Councils, Parks and Wildlife etc).
Landcare Tasmania is best placed to oversee and implement such a program as they have unparalleled community connections/relationships across Tasmania including a **“Project Bank”** which identifies projects all over Tasmania that community groups want to carry out but are yet to be funded. https://www.landcaretas.org.au/eoi_map

Conclusion

A well planned and implemented Land Management Job Guarantee program can build a healthier, better educated local community living in a well-cared for natural environment.

Job Guarantee should be viewed as a preventative health policy as well as providing a range of other economic, social and environmental benefits.

There is a **significant "social dividend"** in terms of cost benefit in terms of having a healthy community compared to the costs of managing physical and mental health dysfunction (ie youth suicide/smoking/drug and alcohol abuse/domestic violence/homelessness etc). A Job Guarantee can deliver a level of economic security and social integration that can help ameliorate many current sources of disadvantage and dysfunction.

One source of funding could come from **transferring the costs of Centrelink payments, administration and training courses** into wages for part time (3 days a week) Job Guarantee activities

The **UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration begins in 2021**. A Conservation Land Management Employment and Training program would be both timely in recognising this initiative in Australia and in helping address the economic and employment impacts of COVID-19. Creating more opportunities for participation in land management will mean projects can be scaled up as well as supporting existing local environment projects and the needs of local communities.

Tasmania should be a world leader in conservation land management.

Example of Funding required for Land Management Crews.

The project below would be based in the Break O Day municipality and include working on a variety of sites on public and private land and undertaking a range of activities including weed control, fencing, seed collection, landscaping, track maintenance and ecological restoration including assisted natural regeneration, direct seeding and tree planting.

The funding for the first year is higher to increase opportunities for COVID affected unemployed people to participate. A similar budget can be scaled up according to funds available. For example one crew per local government municipality multiply by 29 = \$37,763,800 or one crew in one municipal area in each region (North, North West, South) multiply by 3 = \$3,906,600

Project – Restore Skyline Tier	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
Number of workers	12	6	6	6	30
Employee expenses	449,280	224,640	224,640	224,640	1,123,200
Capital and operational expenditure	35,600	17,800	17,800	17,800	89,000
Funding administration					
Project management	30,000	20,000	20,000	20,000	90,000
North East Bioregional Network					
Contact; Todd Dudley					Total 1,302,200