

Our Continuing Success Story



Big Scrub Landcare

The Voice of the Rainforest

25 YEARS | 45 PROJECTS | \$5 MILLION VALUE | 600 HA RESTORED | 1,500,000 TREES PLANTED

1. ABOUT, VISION, MISSION & VALUES

ABOUT BIG SCRUB LANDCARE

Big Scrub Landcare (BSL) was formed in 1993 as the community's response to overcoming threats to the survival of the remaining remnants of critically endangered lowland subtropical rainforest (LSR) in the Big Scrub region of north-eastern NSW,

BSL evolved and grew rapidly to become one of the largest, most active and successful Landcare groups in Australia, with more than 500 members, thousands of social media followers and an outstanding record of achievement in restoring lowland subtropical rainforest.

BSL is the voice of the rainforest.

OUR MISSION

Promoting, facilitating and undertaking long-term restoration and ongoing care of critically endangered lowland subtropical rainforest.

OUR VISION

To restore and expand Australia's remaining critically endangered lowland subtropical rainforests and conserve its magnificent biodiversity.

OUR VALUES

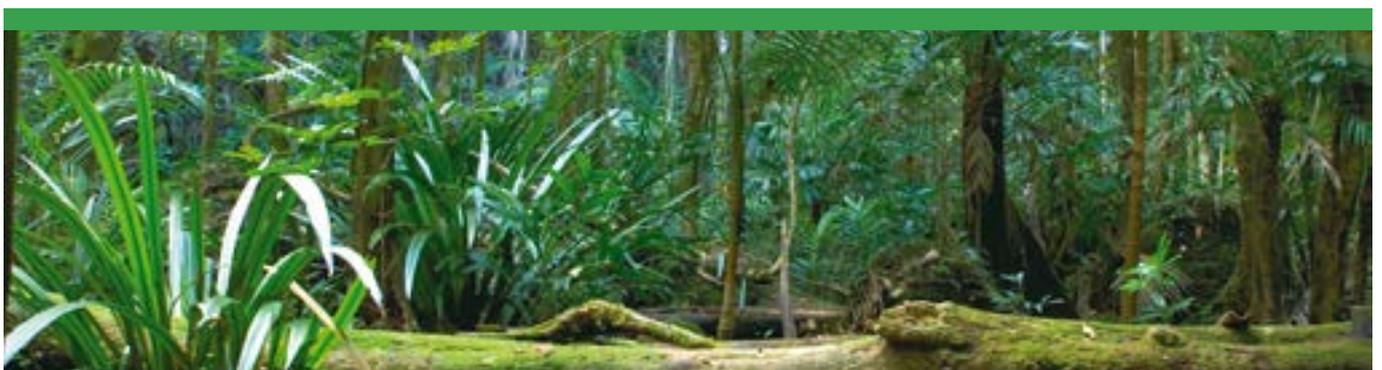
We operate in an ethical and professional manner and hold ourselves accountable to our members, partners, supporters, donors and the community.

We deal fairly and ethically with the people and organisations that provide us with services.

We follow scientific best practice in all of our activities.

We are committed to delivering projects on-time, on-budget and to achieving all targeted outcomes.

At least 85% of the donations we receive go to facilitating and undertaking the restoration and ongoing care of lowland subtropical rainforest.



2. WHAT IS THE BIG SCRUB RAINFOREST?

Prior to European settlement, the Big Scrub covered 75,000 ha and was the largest contiguous area of lowland subtropical rainforest in Australia, accounting for 38% of its total area. Tragically, 99% of this magnificent rainforest was cleared, leaving only 1% as fragmented remnants scattered across the landscape between the northern NSW towns of Byron Bay, Ballina and Lismore.

These remnants are internationally significant, with species whose lineage goes back more than 180 million years to the great rainforests of Gondwana that once covered Australia. The remnants support an incredibly rich biodiversity, home to many hundreds of species including over 38 threatened flora species and 61 threatened fauna species. The survival of these priceless remnants is threatened by 140 species of invasive weeds.



3. PROGRAMS

For more than 25 years BSL has been promoting, facilitating and undertaking long-term restoration and ongoing care of critically endangered lowland subtropical rainforest within the following four key program areas.

Remnant Care Program

Working in partnership with private landholders, NSW National Parks & Wildlife, all levels of government and other community organisations, BSL has developed, funded and delivered outstanding outcomes in more than 40 Remnant Care projects worth more than \$5 million on both private and public land including 10 of the 11 Big Scrub remnants on National Parks or NPWS Nature Reserves. These projects have enabled BSL to contribute to the ecological restoration of more than 50 lowland rainforest remnants of the Big Scrub with a total area of more than 600ha and another 40 remnants elsewhere in the region from Grafton to the Qld border.

Remnant care primarily involves the long-term control of the 140 species of weeds that threatened the survival of lowland subtropical rainforest. BSL's professional rainforest regenerators implement state-of-the-art, species-specific control of weeds. This involves treatment of the initial weed infestation and control of weed regrowth, which for some species can continue for up to ten years, followed by continuing work to control fresh invasions of weeds. Bush regenerators also carry out ongoing monitoring to record improvements in rainforest vegetation condition and weed occurrence.

GIS mapping, air photo interpretation and satellite imagery are used to identify target remnants, to record and map where work is done at a site and for illustration in reports to grantors. Rainforest restoration plans are developed to document in a remnant the environmental values, vegetation condition and strategies and actions to guide weed control and any other required ecological restoration works.

Re-Establishing Rainforest Program

The Re-establishing Rainforest Program involves restoring rainforest on land that was cleared long ago. We work with private and public landholders to restore rainforest by planting and natural regeneration to create new patches of rainforest, to expand existing remnants, to connect remnants and to convert camphor laurel forest and other weed infested areas to rainforest. This increases the area of rainforest habitat and facilitates landscape connectivity and species movement.

To date, BSL has facilitated the planting of about 1.5 million trees across the Big Scrub region, leading to the re-establishment of more than 300 ha of rainforest and increasing the area of rainforest by 30%.

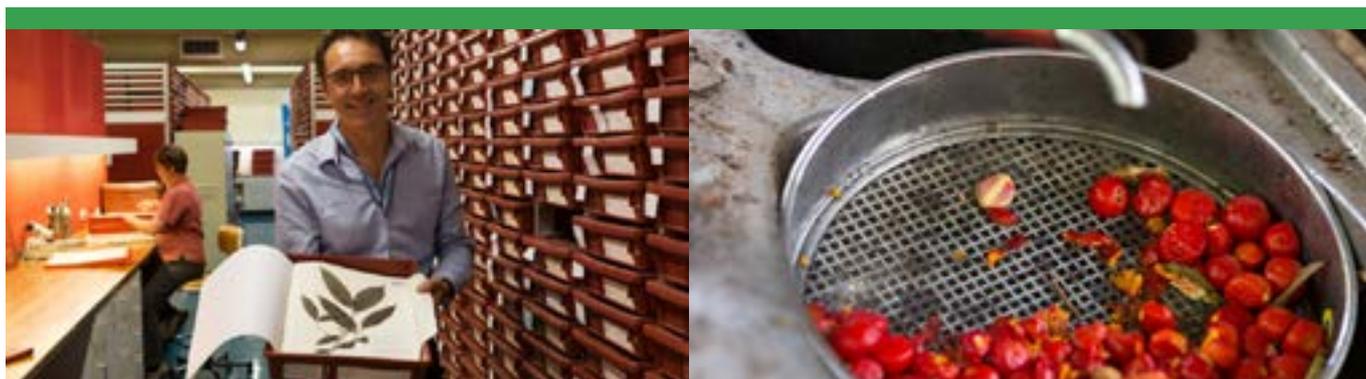
Genetically Diverse Seed Program

Tree plants used in restoration plantings frequently lack the genetic diversity needed to avoid inbreeding and provide resilience to climate change and disease. BSL's genetically diverse seed plantation project will use cutting-edge DNA analysis to provide comprehensive data on the genomes of key species used in restoration plantings.

Genome analysis will allow the selection of 20 individual remnant trees of each species that together have optimal genetic diversity. Cuttings from each tree will be grown on to provide the plants for the plantation. Seed from the 20 individuals of each key species will be harvested, mixed and supplied to nurseries for growing on into planting stock that will have optimal genetic diversity needed to help ensure the long-term resilience and viability of restoration plantings.

An added long-term benefit is that when these trees seed and their seed is spread across the landscape, the genetics and thus the sustainability of the whole population can be expected to improve over time.

The Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney is BSL's key partner in this project. The project will lead the world in ecological restoration practice.



Community Engagement

Community engagement is an important aspect of our rainforest restoration program. The highlight is the Big Scrub Rainforest Day, which BSL has presented annually since 1999. It informs and engages with the community on all aspects of lowland subtropical rainforest and its restoration. The event comprises presentations, panel discussions, workshops, and rainforest walks led by expert rainforest scientists and restoration practitioners. It has attracted more than 25,000 attendees, making it one of the most successful and enduring Landcare community engagement events in Australia.

We also inform and educate landholders and interested community members via field days and site visits. BSL has produced widely acclaimed manuals on subtropical rainforest restoration and on the identification and control of subtropical rainforest weeds that have become standard reference texts in the community.

BSL and Rous County Council have produced a book on the social and ecological values of the Big Scrub written and illustrated by a number of contributing experts. BSL and its members also engage with the community about the restoration of lowland subtropical rainforest via articles in journals and other media and presentations at conferences. We also engage with the broader community via social and other digital media, including our website, facebook and a two-monthly e-newsletter.



Fundraising

Raising funds for on-ground work and other programs is a core activity of BSL. Being a non-political, non-advocacy charity organisation, we are very conscious of our responsibility to deliver value for money to all of our donors and grant providers.

BSL has been successful in obtaining government grants in the past, raising \$2.7 million over the past 20 years. However, with changing political priorities and budgetary pressures, we can no longer rely on government or funding. To continue our vital rainforest restoration and ongoing care work, we have to turn for financial support to the broader community, philanthropic organisations and to local and regional businesses, while seeking government grants when available.

BSL's sister organisation, the Big Scrub Foundation, has been established with the sole objective of providing a regular ongoing funding for facilitating and undertaking the restoration and ongoing care of critically endangered lowland subtropical rainforest in the Big Scrub and nearby areas of NE NSW. The foundation is a registered not-for-profit charity that receives tax-deductible donations and bequests from individual community members, businesses and philanthropic organisations.

The Foundation has set up a perpetual endowment fund that is invested to provide a permanent source of income to help fund BSL activities. The vision of the Foundation is to increase the endowment fund to \$4 million through donations and bequests to provide sufficient permanent income to fund the ongoing care of the rainforest restored in the Big Scrub and nearby areas of NE NSW.

4. MEMBERS

BSL is one of the largest and most successful Landcare groups in Australia with over 400 members from the broader community including scientists, ecologists, rainforest regenerators, public servants, landholders, activists and business owners as well as individuals who care about our rainforest.

BSL's co-founder, President and driving force is Dr. Tony Parkes, who has led BSL with distinction since 1993. He was also co-founder and Chair of Envite for 14 years, and a co-founder and Chair for eight years of Rainforest Rescue. He Chaired the Richmond Vegetation Management Committee and was Vice-chair of the Richmond Catchment Management Committee, two NSW government committees.

5. ACHIEVEMENTS & AWARDS

Big Scrub Landcare has achieved measurable positive impacts on conserving the high biodiversity of lowland rainforest and the habitat it provides for threatened flora and fauna. Big Scrub Landcare's work has improved the condition, connectivity and long-term viability of the rainforest and the habitat it provides for many threatened species.

Big Scrub Landcare's notable achievements included the following:

- BSL played a major role in obtaining the listing of Lowland Rainforest of Subtropical Australia as a critically endangered ecological community under the Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. BSL recruited a team of outstanding ecologists, botanists, zoologists and GIS mappers who helped to develop and process the nomination. BSL also nominated the Big Scrub as a threatened ecological community in NSW, which contributed to the listing of Lowland Rainforest in the NSW North Coast and Sydney Bioregions as endangered under the NSW Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995.
- BSL facilitates the recovery of threatened species as part of its rainforest restoration program. This is illustrated by the recovery of *Isoglossa* (*Isoglossa eranthemoides*) in the Booyong Flora Reserve. Since 1999, when BSL commenced restoration work in this high conservation value remnant of LSR, the estimated population of *Isoglossa* increased from 1000 plants to 140,000 plants.
- Big Scrub Landcare received the **Society of Ecological Restoration Australasia (SERA) Award for Excellence in Ecological Restoration Practice 2016 for large scale projects**. This is the leading scientific award for ecological restoration in Australia and New Zealand and acknowledges Big Scrub Landcare's significant and enduring contribution to the practice of ecological restoration via Big Scrub Rainforest Restoration Program that aims to save our region's critically endangered lowland subtropical rainforest and its magnificent biodiversity.

- Dr Tony Parkes, co-founder and President of Big Scrub Landcare since 1993, won the prestigious **Banksia Award for Community Environmental Leadership in 2016**. This award reflects the commitment of so many people including the bush regenerators, stakeholders, & landowners who strive to protect what's left of our region's critically endangered lowland sub tropical rainforest and its magnificent biodiversity.
- Big Scrub Landcare received the **United Nations Australia's 2016 World Environmental Day Award** for Biodiversity Conservation.
- Big Scrub Landcare received **NSW Landcare Awards** in 2001 and 2015 and its President was NSW Individual Landcarer of the Year in those years.

6. PARTNERSHIPS & SUPPORTERS

BSL works with the following national, state and local government departments and agencies in delivering its programs:

- NSW Environmental Trust
- NSW Office of Environment and Heritage
- Australian Department of the Environment
- NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service
- Rous County Council
- Ballina Shire Council
- Lismore City Council

BSL receives donations from individuals, businesses and philanthropic organisations that enable it to deliver its rainforest restoration programs. Recent supporters include:

- The Big Scrub Foundation
- WWW Foundation
- Tides Foundation
- Nogunosa Foundation
- Brookfarm
- Stone & Wood
- Flow Hive





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