



volunteering with **BUSHCARE**



"You learn to appreciate nature better, you get so close to it, so intimate with it, it becomes not just a pretty tree or flower, it becomes the insects that go with that plant, the dragonflies that feed on it."

PAUL, BUSHCARE VOLUNTEER





CONTACT BUSHCARE

The Bushcare office is located at:
22 South St
Katoomba NSW 2780

Our postal address is:
BMCC
Locked Bag 1005
Katoomba NSW 2780.

Phone: (02) 4780 5623
Email: bushcare@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

COVER PHOTO: EKENNEDY





Welcome to Bushcare!

Welcome to the Blue Mountains City Council Bushcare Program. We support community volunteers undertaking bush regeneration on Council managed bushland reserves (Bushcare) and on bushland on private properties, as well as other non-Council managed land such as schools (Landcare). We manage event-based programs such as Swampcare, Remote Area Bushcare and local one-off planting and weeding days. There are also opportunities to be involved in activities such as seed collecting and fauna surveys. This booklet explains how to get started as a Bushcare volunteer.



CONTENTS:

BUSHCARE BENEFITS.....	2
BECOMING A VOLUNTEER	3
HOW BUSHCARE WORKS	4
TERMS OF AGREEMENT	6
CONTACTS	7
BUSHCARE SITES MAP.....	8-9

BUSHCARE PROCEDURES MANUAL

The Bushcare Procedures Manual is a different document providing a greater level of detail and guidance around the ongoing functioning of the Bushcare Group. It sets out the processes and standards to be followed by volunteers and staff so that there is consistency in service delivery and clarity for participants. Ask your Bushcare Officer for a copy or download from www.bushcarebluemountains.org.au

LEFT: Clearing weeds at the top of the catchment helps protect areas further down. Photo by Tanya Mein

OPPOSITE PAGE (from top left): Powerful Owl (detail) by Ákos Lumnitzer, Tussock Skink by Michael Hensen, Giant Dragonfly by Ian Baird, moth by Michael Hensen, male Spotted Pardalote by Bas Hensen, Sugar Glider by Mathew Baker, Giant Spiny Crayfish by Tanya Mein and Australian Owlet-nightjar by Bas Hensen.



Bushcare benefits

Bushcare creates valuable connections with your neighbours and your local bushland. By working together we achieve outcomes that have enormous benefits to the environment that reach much further than each Bushcare site. Every moment of effort is another step towards protecting our World Heritage Area and the native animals that depend on it. Bushcare is long-term nurturing of the bush that connects us with the rhythms of our unique environment.

LEARNING ON THE JOB

Bush regeneration projects require a long term commitment to restore, maintain and improve the habitat for native plants and animals in the bushland on the site. Bushcare and Landcare Groups generally focus on regenerating their site over many years. Some of our original Bushcare Groups have been working on their sites for over 20 years!

Volunteers develop considerable expertise in managing their sites through a combination of on-going training by Bushcare Officers and their own observations and research. Bush regeneration can be hard and painstaking work at times but the rewards of seeing your site return to healthy bushland are immense.

There are over 50 Bushcare and Landcare sites throughout the Blue Mountains. To find a group near you go to www.bushcarebluemountains.org.au

COMING TOGETHER

The Bushcare Program supports Council's extensive bushland management program that includes:

- The Urban Weeds Team inspecting over 5000 properties annually and weed control in urban public areas
- The Bush Regeneration Team (and contractors) undertaking the more challenging work on Council owned bushland
- The Walking Track Team monitoring and upgrading over 130km of track

Collectively our efforts contribute to a healthy bushland and biodiversity conservation across both private and public land.

SOCIAL BENEFITS TO PARTICIPANTS INCLUDE:

- Meeting your neighbours
- The satisfaction of watching bushland improve and animals return
- Having fun and improving your fitness
- A great outdoor work environment
- Learning more about the bushland we live in and how you can contribute to looking after it
- developing new skills



LEFT: Coming together to improve our bushland. Photo by GSLLS

Becoming a volunteer

Volunteering is an essential part of our community and we provide different ways for you to be involved. You can be a regular member of a group working on your local bushland area and/or participate in special one off events throughout the year.



WHAT IS A VOLUNTEER?

A volunteer is a person who performs a service voluntarily to benefit the community and/or environment at their own free will with no financial payment.

Under the *Work Health & Safety Act, 2011* volunteers are also defined as workers, with the same safe working environment rights and duty of care responsibilities as Council employees.

Council has sole liability for management of volunteers working on Council premises, assets or projects, regardless of how they are engaged.

A range of activities are available within Bushcare to enable participation by all. Everyone in the community has something to contribute and is encouraged to get involved.

VOLUNTEER APPLICATION PROCESS

To register interest in joining Bushcare, go online to www.bushcarebluemountains.org.au and click on the JOIN tab or speak directly to one of our Bushcare staff on 4780 5623.

The Bushcare office needs to receive the following documentation to complete the volunteer application process

- Registration Form
- Signed Position Description
- Signed Volunteer Agreement
- Photographic Consent Form

The relevant Bushcare Officer will make contact with the new volunteer to advise where to meet, what time, appropriate clothing, what is planned at the next Bushcare session, wet weather contingency plans and any other important information.

TRAINING

Training starts on your first day when your Bushcare Officer does a Work Health and Safety (WHS) induction with you and introduces you to the basic principles of bush regeneration and weed control.

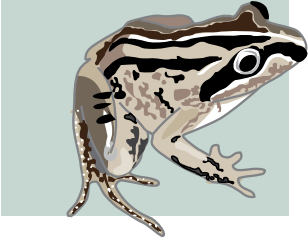
They will then provide you with tools and basic instruction to be able to start working with the rest of the group. At each work session you'll learn a bit more about the site and develop weed control and site management skills.



RIGHT: Our Bushcare Officer will guide you on each visit. Photos by BMCC

How Bushcare works

Bushcare Groups meet monthly and you are invited to attend each time or you can discuss your availability with the Bushcare Officer. Our Bushcare Officer will be on site and can provide training and guide you on each visit.



HOW A GROUP WORKS

Each Bushcare or Landcare Group meets on a regular basis, usually on the same morning or afternoon once a month, and works for 3 or 4 hours.

Groups work to a site restoration plan which has been developed by the group and the supervising Bushcare Officer. The plan is based on the principles of bush regeneration which is 'the practice of restoring bushland by focusing on reinstating and reinforcing the system's on going natural regeneration processes' (Australian Association of Bush Regenerators). The plan outlines strategies to assist the native fauna and flora to recover and flourish and identifies tasks to be implemented to address degrading impacts such as weed invasion and stormwater damage.

WHAT A BUSHCARE OFFICER DOES

A Council Officer (usually a Bushcare Officer) will be appointed to each Bushcare/Landcare Group. The Bushcare Officer provides induction for new volunteers, ongoing on-site training and technical advice and work health and safety supervision. They will also supply appropriate tools, equipment and herbicide so that all group members can carry out their work safely and effectively.

The Bushcare Officer is the primary contact between the group and Council. They will provide guidance to ensure that the group complies with safe working practices and adheres to Council policies and bushland management program strategies.

BELOW: Clearing weeds from around urban wetlands helps protect the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.
Photos by Tanya Mein, BMCC and Nathan Summers, BMCC





WHAT A VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR DOES

A member of each Bushcare Group will be appointed by the group to act as Coordinator. The role can be shared if the group wishes, provided it is clear who the primary contact person is. The Group Coordinator is the primary contact for the Bushcare Officer, other parts of Council, other organisations and the general public and liaises between the group members and Council. They may also take on other duties as agreed with the supervising Bushcare Officer.

WHAT VOLUNTEERS DO

Tasks from the site plan will be offered to Bushcare volunteers to regenerate the bushland on the site. These tasks can include weed removal, planting, mulching, installing erosion control structures, seed collection and monitoring activities. Group members may also contribute to activities to promote the group in the community. Contributions to morning or afternoon tea are always encouraged.

Weed control can sometimes include the use of herbicides, but volunteers can choose not to use herbicides, in which case alternative tasks will be offered. The use of herbicide must always be in accordance with Council guidelines and the manufacturer's instructions.

Volunteers have no obligation to attend every work day or to participate in all tasks. All levels of participation are appreciated.

SETTING UP A NEW GROUP

If you want to start a new group, contact Council's Bushcare Office to discuss the possibility of forming a new Bushcare or Landcare Group.

Council's capacity to support Bushcare and Landcare Groups is linked to funding levels, and the number of staff available to attend workdays and manage Bushcare projects. There may be a waiting list to establish new groups.

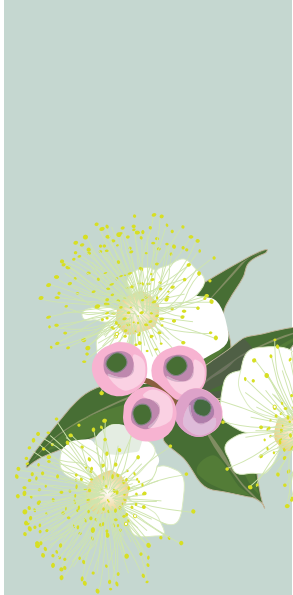
As resources become available or another group ceases activities, Council will consider support for new Bushcare and Landcare projects that comply with basic criteria such as land status and ownership, ecological or cultural value of the proposed site and volunteer commitment.

Landcare Groups must obtain written consent from all relevant landowners before commencing work on their site. (Refer to Procedures for more detail)

CLOSURE OF GROUPS

At times, a group can become unviable because of reduced member numbers, change of land ownership or inconsistent commitment of volunteers. Under these circumstances Council reserves the right to close the group after discussion with the remaining members..

"We have to look at the old photographs to remember what it used to be like, it's so beautiful now, it looks like it had always been like that but it hasn't, the changes have been enormous." ALAN, BUSHCARE VOLUNTEER



Terms of agreement

To ensure the best outcome for the bush and our volunteers, you will be given a copy of our agreement to sign as part of the volunteer application process. Please read through what is expected of volunteers and what you can expect from Council below. Please feel free to discuss the terms with our Bushcare Officer.



THE COUNCIL VOLUNTEER AGREES TO:

- Provide information requested on the registration form
- Read and sign off on the Volunteer Position Description and Volunteer Agreement
- Participate in the onsite induction and training
- Follow reasonable instructions from Bushcare Officers and other Council staff
- Co-operate with other volunteers as appropriate
- When needed, seek clarification on information and/or instructions
- Undertake all activities in a safe manner
- Report hazards, incidents, accidents and near misses affecting either volunteers and/or the general public immediately
- Not be under the influence of alcohol or drugs when volunteering
- Update your Bushcare Officer or Council staff with medical conditions not previously identified
- Adhere to relevant legislation, Council policies, Bushcare guidelines and site strategies
- Represent Council in a way which complies with Council's Code of Conduct

WHAT VOLUNTEERS CAN EXPECT FROM COUNCIL

- Bushcare Procedures Manual and Bushcare Volunteer Position Description
- Direction, supervision and support from qualified staff (Bushcare Officers)
- A safety induction and relevant training and skill development onsite
- Sufficient tools, resources and personal protective equipment including gloves and a sunhat
- A site plan and work that is suitable for the skills and ability of the group
- A safe work environment as per the WHS Act
- Acknowledgement of the rights of volunteer workers and information on your rights and responsibilities
- Adequate insurance coverage when working on Council land (refer to Part 4 of the Council Volunteer Policy) and liaison with The Greater Sydney Local Land Services to provide insurance for Landcare Groups
- Encouragement and appreciation of your work
- Feedback on work that has been carried out and opportunities to develop skills.
- Consultation on matters affecting your site or substantive changes to the delivery of the program

"I feel good for my own wellbeing, my own spirit, my own soul, I love being in the bush. I want to be able to do something that makes a difference." JENNY, BUSHCARE VOLUNTEER



ABOVE: Photo by Ian Brown

COMMUNICATION AND EDUCATION

Council staff will provide promotion through various media forms for Bushcare Groups and events. Promotion of activities needs to be discussed first with the Bushcare Officer or Bushcare Team Leader to ensure the team has enough resources to support the event and that any publication has approval from the Coordinator of Bushland Operations.

Bushcare Groups are encouraged to put forward articles for the website and Facebook through their Bushcare Officer or Bushcare Team Leader. There is a program specific website at www.bushcarebluemountains.org.au that has more detailed information about groups, events and articles of interest. Groups are able to contribute and update their own webpage on this site.

Bushcare's newsletter is called the Gecko and is distributed twice a year to all Bushcare volunteers that wish to receive it. You can subscribe to the Gecko on www.bushcarebluemountains.org.au

Council also hosts Weeds of the Blue Mountains website www.weedsbluemountains.org.au. This is a useful resource to identify and learn about garden plants that have become invasive in the Blue Mountains bushland.

BUSHCARE NETWORK

The Blue Mountains Bushcare Network is an unincorporated community based committee of Community Conservation Program Volunteers. It represents Blue Mountains Bushcare and Landcare Groups and supports the work of the Bushcare Program of Council. All Bushcare Volunteers are welcome to become members and to attend regular network meetings.

CONTACT BUSHCARE

The Bushcare Program is part of Blue Mountains City Council's Community Conservation Program administered through the Environment and Culture Branch.

Address: BMCC

Locked Bag 1005

Katoomba NSW 2780.

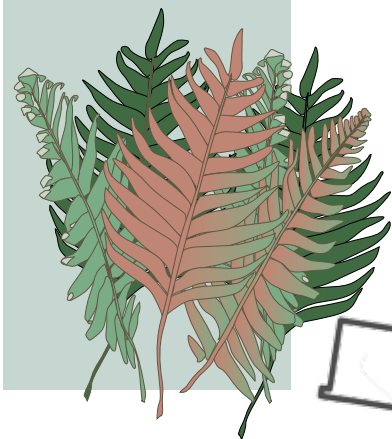
Phone: (02) 4780 5623

Email: bushcare@bmcc.nsw.gov.au

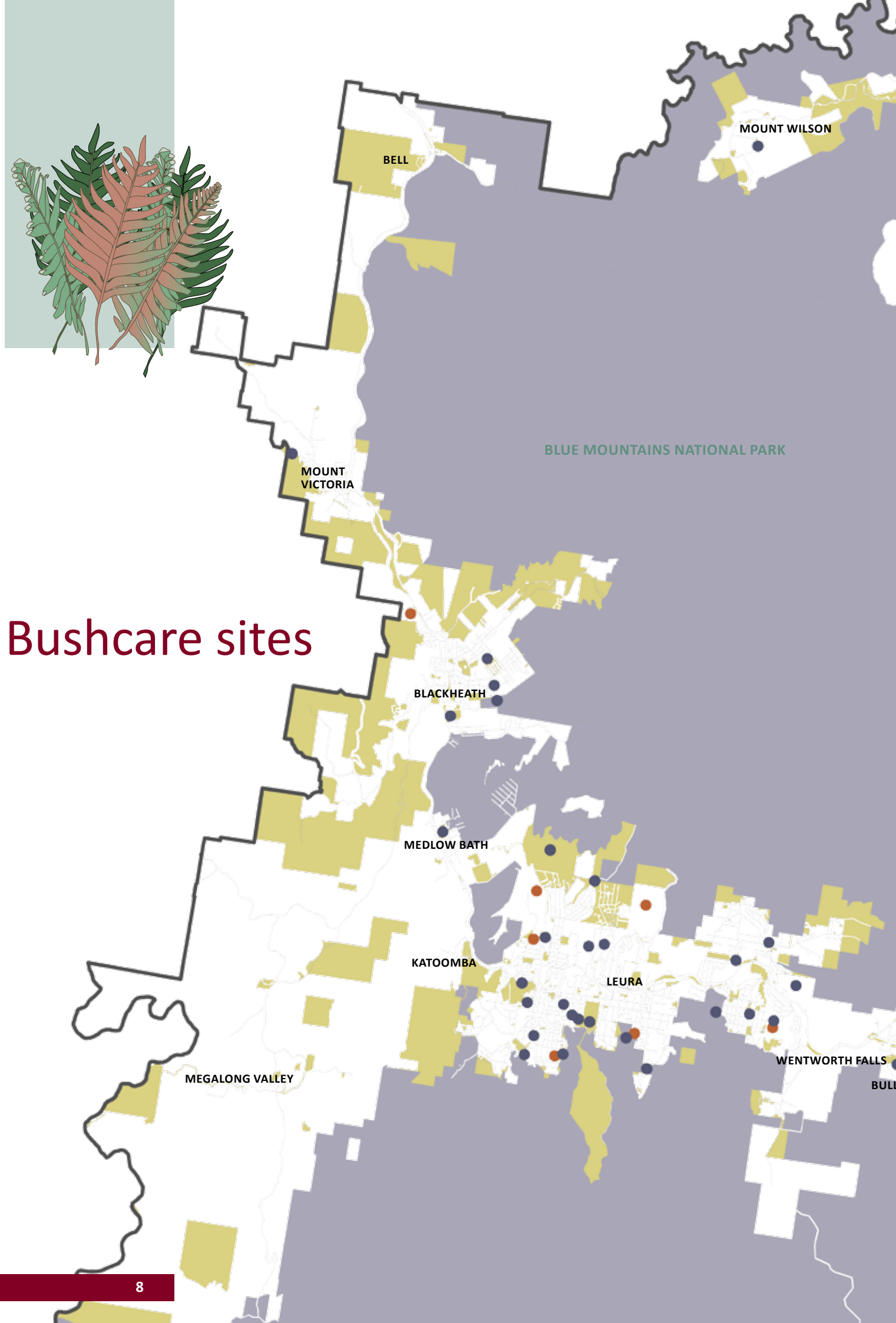
All suggestions, issues and concerns about your group and site should be directed initially to your Bushcare Officer or, if necessary, to the Bushcare Team Leader.

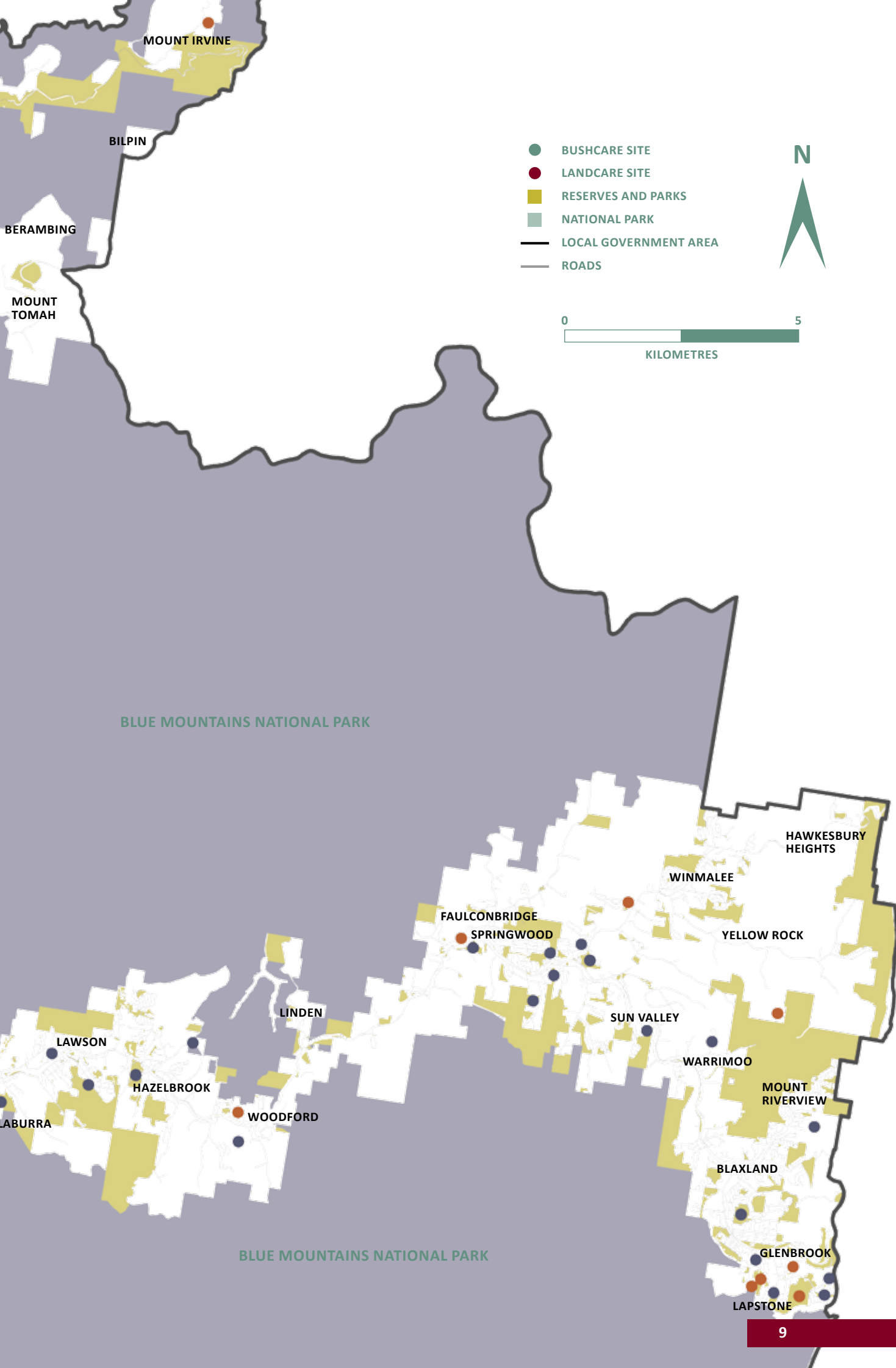


RIGHT: Photo by BMCC



Bushcare sites





"I call it the 'gentle art' of Bushcare. There's something lovely about being able to take little steps and make a little difference and then the bush starts to come back and you notice things happening." JENNY, BUSHCARE VOLUNTEER



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