



NSW ROADSIDE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

ANNUAL REPORT 2023-24

The NSW Roadside Environment Committee (REC) ceased operation on 30 June 2024. It will be replaced by the NSW Linear Reserves Environment Network. The REC's achievements include:

- Bringing together all the range of stakeholders and disparate interests in linear reserve environmental management across NSW.
- Brokering and helping support \$14 million in grants to local councils for roadside environmental management activities.
- Developing guides for linear reserve environmental assessments.
- Running three statewide forums on linear reserve environmental management.
- Issuing over 50 editions of the REC Newsletter.
- Providing advice and training to promote good practices in linear reserve environmental management.
- Providing a network for linear reserve land managers.

The REC Chairperson, Martin Driver, and REC member representatives wish to thank all those involved with the REC during its 30 years of operation. This is the final Annual Report for the REC.

The NSW Roadside Environment Committee

The NSW Roadside Environment Committee (REC) was established in 1994 by the NSW Government in recognition of the environmental values of linear reserves. The REC is an umbrella body of state agencies and environment groups that promotes and coordinates leading practice in linear reserve environmental management across the State.

The vision of the REC was:

Environmental values of linear corridors are actively managed in balance with other functional needs.

The REC comprised 14 organisations with interests in the environmental management of roadside and other linear reserves in NSW. The REC member organisations were:

- Ausgrid
- Australian Rail Track Corporation (ARTC)
- Biodiversity Conservation Trust (BCT)
- Essential Energy
- Institute of Public Works Engineering Australia (IPWEA) NSW & ACT
- Local Government NSW (LGNSW)
- Local Land Services (LLS)
- Nature Conservation Council (NCC)
- NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW)
- NSW Department of Industry - Crown Lands
- Rural Fire Service (RFS)
- Transgrid
- Transport for NSW
- UGL Regional Linx (Country Regional Network)

The REC was funded by Transport for NSW. Member organisations provided in-kind support.

Strategic plan

To work towards its vision, the REC developed a strategic plan for 2023-2026. The plan is provided in Appendix 1.

There are two outcomes in the strategic plan:

1. REC members understand and share good practices
2. Stakeholders aware of REC's key initiatives

Key issues

In developing its 2023-26 Strategic Plan, the REC identified the following key issues that it focussed on.

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT	CORPORATE
Fauna and Flora	Staff
Weed and biosecurity management	Coordination and collaboration
Native vegetation as habitat (including hazard tree management)	Training
Wildlife management	Operations
Bushfire management including cultural burns	Planning
Revegetation and Restoration	Resilience
Heritage	Data management
Indigenous heritage	Compliance
Non-indigenous heritage	Incident response
Illegal activities	Disaster management
Firewood collection	Regulator relationships
Illegal dumping & litter (waste management)	Stakeholder engagement
Pollution	Community expectations
Contaminated land	Community education
Acid sulphate soils	Communications
Water quality	
Contaminants	
Other	
Scenic amenity	
Noise	
Rest areas	
Signage	
Livestock management	

Achievements

In 2023-24, the REC carried out actions related to the 2023-26 Strategic Plan. These actions included:

- Supporting and promoting the outputs of the Linear Reserves Program funded by the NSW Environmental Trust (Action 1.1 in the Strategic Plan). The Linear Reserves Program consisted of two programs:
 - Managing Travelling Stock Reserves for Sustainable Conservation Outcomes managed by LLS (\$4.75 million over three years)
 - Council Roadside Reserves Project managed by LGNSW (\$2.08 million over three years).
- Organising and running a regional REC meeting held at Wagga Wagga on 8 and 9 August 2023 (Action 2.1). The regional meeting was an opportunity for local land managers to showcase linear reserve environmental management initiatives and discuss issues with REC member representatives.

The meeting program included a field trip to observe indigenous cultural burn practices on a travelling stock reserve and the Wiradjuri Trail managed by Wagga Wagga City Council.

Local meeting participants included representatives from Riverina Local Land Services, Transport for NSW, Wagga Wagga City Council and Lockhart Shire Council.



REC meeting participants learning about cultural burning practices on a travelling stock reserve near Wagga Wagga

- Actively continuing the REC Facebook and Twitter sites during 2023-24 (Action 2.4). The Facebook site has 130 followers (up from 120 in June 2023) and the Twitter site has 247 followers (up from 205 in June 2023).
- Responding to numerous community and stakeholder enquiries via the REC Secretariat (Action 2.3).
- Implementing the REC Communication Plan (Action 2.3). Measures of the performance of the Communication Plan implementation in 2023-24 include:
 - Mailing list of stakeholders increased from 450 to 460 individuals/organisations during the year
 - Hits on the REC website averaged 140 per month
 - Four editions of the REC newsletter (see below) were produced and distributed electronically to stakeholders during the year as planned.

Do wildlife crossing structures work?

The widespread impacts of roads on animal movement have led to the search for innovative mitigation tools. Wildlife crossing structures (tunnels or bridges) are a common approach; however, their effectiveness remains unclear beyond isolated case studies.

A team of researchers led by Kylie Soanes conducted an extensive literature review and synthesis to address the question: What is the evidence that wildlife crossing structures mitigate the barrier effect of roads on wildlife movement?

In an analysis of 313 studies (analysis see figure right), only 14% evaluated whether wildlife crossing structures resulted in a change in animal movement across roads. The researchers identified critical problems in existing studies, especially the lack of benchmarks (e.g. pre-road, pre-mitigation, or control data) and the use of biased comparisons.

The researchers found that 'evidence to date suggests that wildlife crossing structures can mitigate the barrier effect of roads on wildlife movement, but in many cases have been poorly implemented or evaluated. The most supported measures were the addition of ledges and vegetation cover to increase movement for small mammals; underpasses to prevent the decline in movement of ungulates following road construction; and improving road-crossing for arboreal mammals using canopy bridges and vegetated medians.'

The researchers 'strongly recommend that future use of crossing structures closely adheres to species-specific, best-practice guidelines to improve implementation and be paired with a thorough evaluation that includes benchmark comparisons.'

The article can be accessed at

<https://besjournals.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/1365-2664.14582>

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- Presenting at the International Conference of the Australasian Network for Ecology and Transport (ANET) held in Christchurch, New Zealand during November 2023.



SPEAKER BIOGRAPHY



NEIL DUFTY
NSW ROADSIDE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Neil Duffy is the Executive Officer of the NSW Roadside Environment Committee commissioned in this role by Transport for NSW. He has over 40 years of experience in environmental management and has worked as a ranger for the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service. He was the Principal at several Environmental Education Centres run by the NSW Department of Education. He is currently a Principal at Water Technology Pty Ltd, an environmental and natural hazards consultancy based in Parramatta, NSW.

PRESENTATION | THE ROLE OF LINEAR RESERVES IN NSW BIODIVERSITY CONSERVATION

ABSTRACT

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Linear reserves in New South Wales (NSW), Australia, consist mainly of roadside reserves, travelling stock corridors, rail corridors, utility easements and paper roads. They comprise approximately 6% of the land area of NSW. This paper explores the environmental, economic and social values of NSW linear reserves. In particular, it outlines the benefits of linear reserves in biodiversity conservation including in the preservation of endangered ecological communities and threatened species. It provides case studies to demonstrate the environmental importance of linear reserves including the Box Gum Grassy Woodland communities of which there are only approximately 2% remaining in NSW, most of which are found in linear reserves. The paper examines some of the issues faced by linear infrastructure managers including potential conservation conflicts with road safety requirements, bushfire management, weed management, illegal firewood collection and ecological recovery from natural disasters. Emerging issues are identified including the ecological impacts of climate change, future changes in infrastructure construction and use, and weed and pest incursions. The paper concludes with examples of initiatives in NSW to better manage linear reserve environments. The initiatives include the NSW Roadside Environment Committee (REC), a NSW government committee comprising 13 linear reserve infrastructure managers and a peak conservation group (NSW Nature Conservation REC) and the Rapid Assessment Methodology developed by NSW linear reserves by facilitating networking between its member organisations and promoting good practices to local communities and other stakeholders. Other initiatives described include the Biodiversity Policy used by Transport for NSW for NSW main road reserves and the Rapid Assessment Methodology developed to assess linear reserve environments across NSW.

The REC carried out a range of other activities in 2023-24 related to the Strategic Plan. The activities included:

- Developing the 2023-26 REC Strategic Plan
- Receiving a presentation on Using Technology and Innovation for TSR Management (Jonathan Berryman, LLS)
- Receiving a presentation on the Wiradjuri Trail (Rob Owers, Wagga Wagga City Council)
- Receiving a presentation on Significant Roadside Vegetation (Mel Cotterill, TfNSW)
- Receiving a presentation on the Sloane's Froglet Habitat Restoration (Dan Francis, TfNSW)
- Receiving a presentation on an Update from the Biodiversity Conservation Trust (Erin Giuliani, CEO, BCT)
- Receiving a presentation on the Roads Disaster Resilience Project (Roland van Amstel, Water Technology Pty Ltd)
- Holding interagency sharing sessions to improve linear reserve environmental management practices across NSW (Action 1.1).

Meetings

The REC met four times during 2023-24. All were virtual meetings except the regional meeting held in Wagga Wagga on 8 and 9 August 2024.

The following persons represented the member organisations on the REC during 2023-24:

Martin Driver (NCC) - Chairperson
Chris Dunn (Essential Energy)
Nathan Hegerty (Essential Energy)
Julie Ravallion (Transport for NSW)
Lloyd Van Der Wallen (RFS)
Luke Durrington (Transport for NSW)
Josh Devitt (IPWEA NSW & ACT)
Carys Parkinson (LGNSW)
Tara O'Brien (Crown Lands)
Eve Bleuel (Ausgrid)
Sam Hand (LLS)
Stuart Ross (ARTC)
Bruce Thompson (BCT)
Wajid Javed (UGL Regional Linx)
Dave Donehue (Transgrid)

The following persons acted as alternates to the above:

Jane Gye (NCC)
Kris Le Mottee (Transport for NSW)

Water Technology Pty Ltd was contracted by Transport for NSW to provide secretariat services to the REC during 2023-24. Neil Dufty of Water Technology was the Executive Officer of the REC and was supported by Roland van Amstel and Ruth Fernando of the same company.

APPENDIX 1 - NSW ROADSIDE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE STRATEGIC PLAN 2023–2026

Outcome 1: REC members understand and share good practices

Action	Measure of Success	Priority	Timing	Responsibility
1.1 Share approaches to manage vegetation for environmental & transport safety objectives	- Sharing sessions at meetings - Improved awareness of REC members	H	Ongoing	Infrastructure members of the REC
1.2 Focus REC meetings on key issues and share policies, procedures, learnings etc.	- Meetings on key issues	H	Annual	REC members Secretariat
1.3 Define and describe attribution elements of spatial products	- Improved spatial coverage of assessments	M	Ongoing	REC members
1.4 Brief each REC member on all relevant major government reforms and changes to legislation	- Briefings occur on new reforms and legislation	M	Ongoing	REC members
1.5 Identify gaps in REC membership and add if required	- New members added when required	M	Ongoing	REC members Secretariat

Outcome 2: Stakeholders aware of REC's key initiatives

Action	Measure of Success	Priority	Timing	Responsibility
2.1 Communicate ways to manage priority issues	- Hold at least one regional meeting to discuss local issues	H	Annually	Secretariat, REC members
2.2 Communicate the REC's purpose and activities	- REC communications strategy used including REC website, Annual Report, Speaker's Kit	H	Ongoing	REC members Secretariat
2.3 Promote examples of good practices	- REC newsletter - Social media posts - REC website	M	Ongoing	REC members Secretariat
2.4 Organise a state-wide linear corridor forum	- Forum successfully held	M	2025	REC members Secretariat
2.5 Sponsor the NSW Roadside Environmental Management Award	- Award sponsored annually	M	Annual	Transport for NSW, Secretariat