



BUILD BACK NATURE

OUR NATURE BLOCKS

CITIZEN CONSERVATION INITIATIVE IS MAKING AN IMPACT

Committed to measuring and evaluating our work and impact on people and nature

Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA) is Australia's leading conservation organisation, empowering people to take action for nature since 1982.

We aim to have impact at scale by focusing on biodiversity restoration; the health of our ocean, wetlands, and rivers; and on strengthening climate resilience.

We place conservation in the hands of everyone by using inclusive initiatives and digital strategies. We understand that working in nature improves your physical and mental wellbeing, making you feel good. That's why our goal is to foster a community of Nature Stewards who feel inspired to build back nature in their local areas and beyond.

Our initiatives strive to improve the ecosystems in which we live, cultivate deep roots in Australians, and create lasting environmental change.

In partnership with government, businesses, and Traditional Owners, we leverage our collective knowledge from over 40 years, our resources, and our passion to co-design projects that make a meaningful impact on a large scale.

Who we are

Connecting People and Nature since 1982



WE BUILD ENVIRONMENTAL RESILIENCE TOGETHER

Our impact is focused on empowering all Australians to take simple yet meaningful actions to protect and restore biodiversity and ecosystems, and build climate resilience.



WE CO-DESIGN FOR IMPACT AT SCALE

With government, businesses, and First Nations peoples we leverage our collective knowledge, resources, and passion to protect our natural heritage.



WE BUILD COMMUNITY AND IMPROVE WELLBEING

We encourage people to connect with each other and with nature through our projects that restore biodiversity and ecosystems.



WE INSPIRE NATURE STEWARDSHIP

Our inclusive and fun initiatives aim to build and inspire an eco-conscious community who act for nature in their local area and beyond.



WE KNOW CONSERVATION WORK

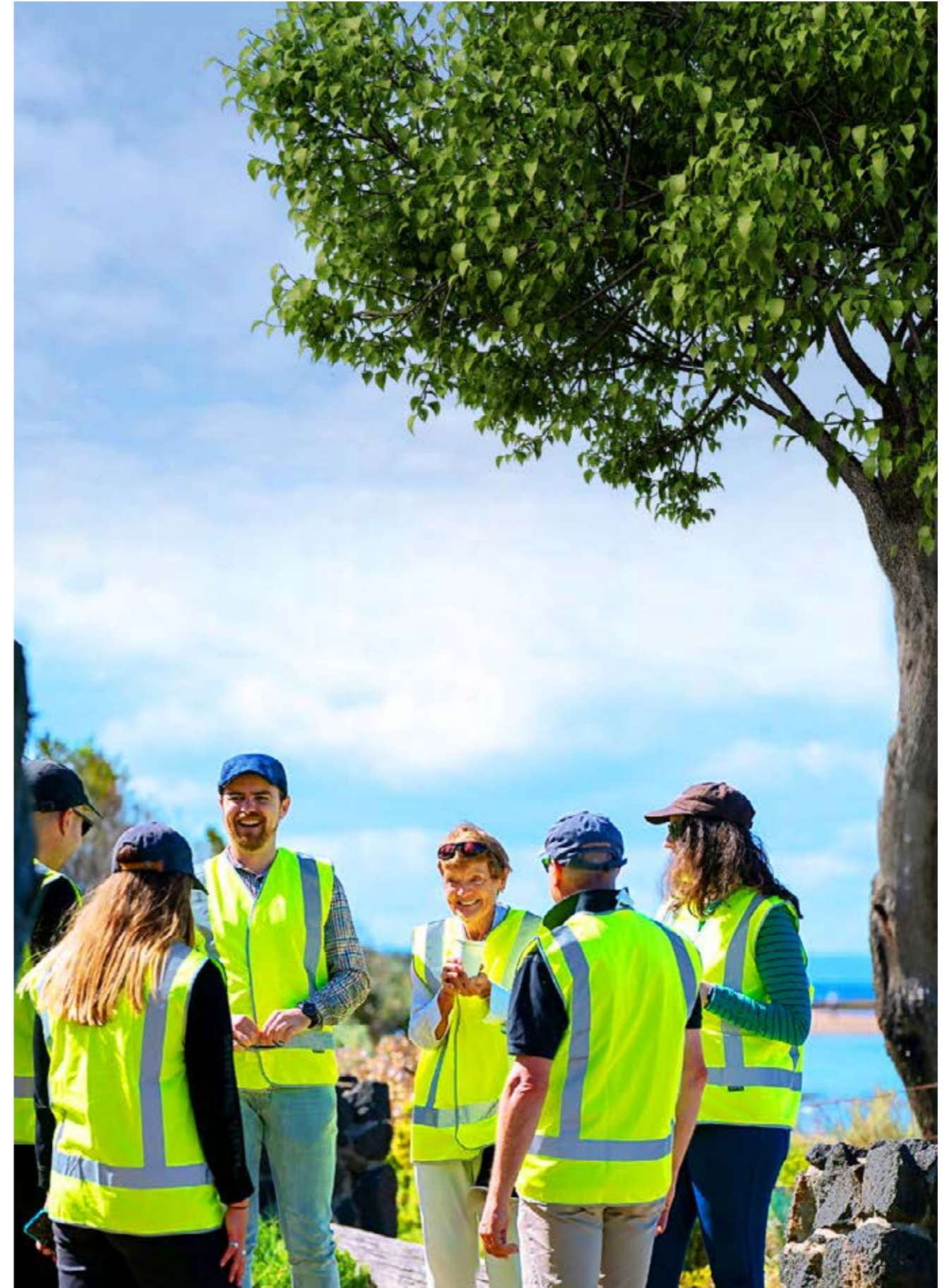
For 40 years, tens of thousands of people have taken action for nature with CVA to help care for Australia's unique plants and wildlife and to build climate resilience.



OUR AMBITION

Another million actions for nature by

2030



Conservation Priority: Biodiversity & Threatened Species

The world is experiencing a biodiversity crisis, driven by land use change, resource exploitation, invasive species, pollution, and climate change, which all pose a significant threat to wildlife.

To understand the true scale of the problem, in 2023 we commissioned a report that showed a net increase of about 150 threatened species nationally in the two years since the landmark 2021 State of the Environment Report, compared to about 130 between the SOE 2011 and 2021 editions (released every five years).

“The future of Australia’s threatened species continues to get worse, not better. This is backed by our finding that the share of species now listed as critically endangered – the last step before extinction – has doubled in the past decade.” — Phil Harrison, CEO of Conservation Volunteers Australia

About half of all Australia’s threatened species live in urban areas, alongside 96% of the human population. As our need for urban housing grows, so does their need for habitat – which most often puts us at odds.

Creating habitat corridors and patches offers positive impacts to urban wildlife, including increased food availability, better quality and variety of essential habitat, and potentially facilitating gene flow between isolated populations.

At CVA, we know that communities and citizens can play a role in conserving and restoring habitat through a range of actions. To that end, CVA has initiated the Nature Blocks program.



“One of the most important places for conservation is in your own backyard.”

— Professor Brendan Wintle, Director of the Melbourne Biodiversity Institute at University of Melbourne

**References*

ARUP, Biodiversity in your Backyard Report, Sept 2023
The benefits of contact with nature for mental health and well-being, Mardie Townsend and Rona Weerasuriya, Deakin University Australia.



“This is backed by our findings that the share of species now listed as critically endangered – the last step before extinction – has doubled the past decade.” — Phil Harrison, CEO of Conservation Volunteers Australia

BUILD BACK NATURE





Nature Blocks Program

Nature Blocks is an urban habitat restoration initiative. The concept is simple. Even an area as small as 1 metre x 1 metre, in an unused corner of a backyard or balcony, can contribute to filling critical missing pieces in the urban habitat puzzle.

This is particularly true for smaller species like birds, bees, butterflies, and other insects, which have seen a rapid rise in threatened status in recent years. Informed by the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) developed at COP15, our approach addresses Target 2: the restoration of 30% of degraded ecosystems by 2030.

The intent behind Nature Blocks is to give personal solutions to the 97% of everyday Australians who are demanding increased biodiversity actions ([Biodiversity Council Report, 2023](#)).

To achieve change at scale, Nature Blocks reconnects people with nature right in the heart of our cities, transforming concrete balconies and empty backyards into lush, vibrant ecosystems, one small block at a time.

**It's time to accelerate our impact.
Join us to deliver a healthy future
for people and planet.**

In July 2023, CVA joined the United Nations Global Compact, the world's largest voluntary corporate sustainability initiative. This reflects CVA's unwavering commitment to the Compact's 10 principles, with a particular focus on the environment, human rights, labour, and anti-corruption. CVA's objective remains clear: maximise our contribution to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) with a special emphasis on six key areas (2, 3, 11, 13, 14, 15), where our impact can be most significant.

Our Nature Blocks initiative contributes to 9 of the 17 SDGs:



Take action and feel good with Nature Blocks

Nature Positive SDGs

SDG
11 SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES

Target
11.4
11.6

Sustainable cities and communities

Urban areas often suffer from higher temperatures compared to rural and suburban regions. The replacement of vegetation with heat-absorbing surfaces like pavement and buildings is a significant factor. However, anyone can play a crucial role in cooling their city by adding a Nature Block to their backyard or balcony habitat, allowing nature's cooling effect to bring relief to otherwise hot surroundings.

Nature Blocks make direct contributions to protecting and safeguarding our natural environment, thereby reducing several adverse impacts of urban development.

Plants have the remarkable ability to bring life, colour, and vibrancy to any space. Nature Blocks can be used to enhance urban spaces and make them more beautiful and relaxing.

Nature Blocks are powerful tools for placemaking, a participatory process for shaping public space that harnesses the ideas and assets of the people who use it. It is designed to facilitate new connections, make friendships, and increase participants' sense of purpose.

SDG
13 CLIMATE ACTION

Target
13.1

Climate action

Nature Blocks play a crucial role in cooling our cities by restoring vegetation in urban areas that often suffer from higher temperatures compared to rural and suburban regions.

Vegetation plays a vital role in the natural water cycle and can slow down the flow of water into our waterways after heavy rainfall. Therefore, Nature Blocks contribute to mitigating the impact of future flooding events.

SDG
15 LIFE ON LAND

Target
15.1
15.3
15.5
15.8

Life on land

Human actions have put approximately 370 species at risk in our Australian cities. Habitat loss, pollution, and climate change have taken their toll. Creating a Nature Block provides much-needed habitat and becomes a biodiversity hotspot for these threatened species.

Australia has committed to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF), joining 187 other countries in this global endeavour. The GBF aims to restore at least 30% (30/30) of degraded terrestrial, inland water, marine, and coastal ecosystems by 2030. Restoring biodiversity in your backyard or balcony directly contributes to this national effort and helps enhance biodiversity, ecosystem services, ecological integrity, and connectivity.

SDG
17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

Target
17.14
17.16
17.17
17.19

Partnerships for the goals

Nature Blocks provides a method through which multi-stakeholder partnerships can be used to create scale and greater impact through the intentional integration of business practices, government policy and community mobilisation. Nature Blocks can also provide a model for application in other contexts internationally, particularly for locations that are seeking to address urban biodiversity and greener city development.

Other relevant SDGs

SDG
2 ZERO HUNGER

Target
2.4

Zero hunger

By creating habitats for our threatened pollinator species Nature Blocks contributes to ensuring sustainable and resilient food production.

By encouraging the use of a diverse range of native plants Nature Blocks contributes to maintaining the genetic diversity of wild species.

SDG
3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Target
3.4
3.9

Good health & well-being

Nature has a profound impact on our physical and mental well-being. Studies have shown that spending time in nature improves physical health, helps with allergies and cardiovascular problems, and boosts our immune system. By creating a Nature Block, you assist the little critters around you and improve your health in the process.

SDG
4 QUALITY EDUCATION

Target
4.7

Quality education

Nature Blocks provide free online biodiversity and conservation knowledge to all Australians. We also promote First Nations education.

SDG
6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION

Target
6.3

Clean water and sanitation

The "Rain Garden" and "Nature Strip" Nature Blocks activities directly contribute to improving water quality by helping reduce pollution and sedimentation coming from household water-run-off.

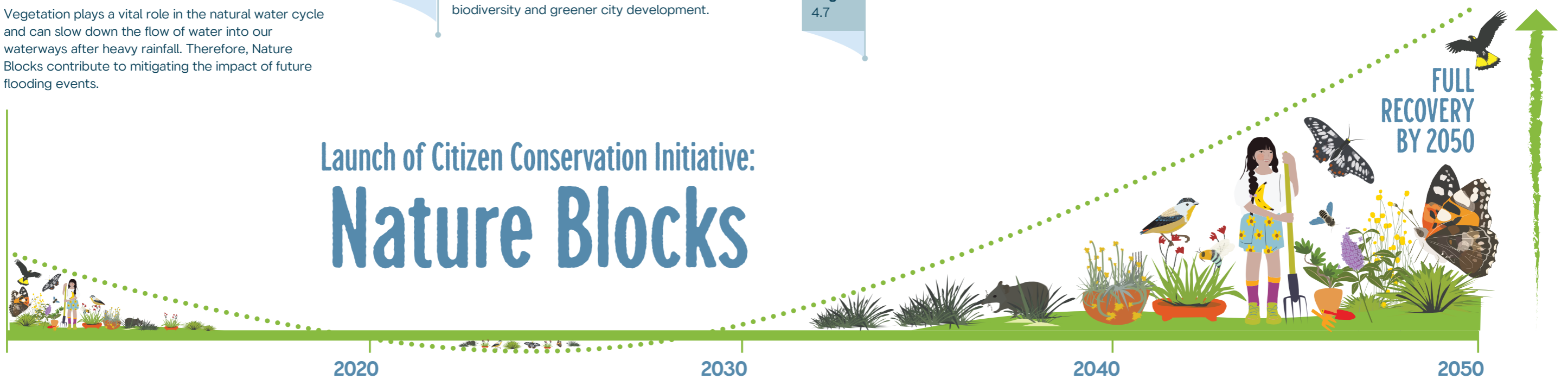
SDG
10 REDUCED INEQUALITIES

Target
10.2

Reduced inequalities

Participation in Nature Blocks is free and accessible online and through our app for everyone to use, anywhere.

INDICATORS OF BIODIVERSITY



Launch of Citizen Conservation Initiative:
Nature Blocks

FULL RECOVERY BY 2050

Another million actions for nature by 2030



“When it comes to sustainability, collaboration is vital to creating meaningful change. That’s why our Foundation has partnered with Conservation Volunteers Australia to deliver meaningful, healthy and practical programs such as Nature Blocks. Together, we want to help build a national movement of people who understand, value and benefit from connecting with and nurturing our environment.” — Roger Sharp, Bupa APAC Chief Sustainability & Corporate Affairs Officer

Our visionary partnership with Bupa

CVA officially launched Nature Blocks in August 2023, a visionary and collaborative partnership with the Bupa Foundation, designed to make nature conservation accessible, fun, and fulfilling for all.

Beyond the positive impact on nature, Nature Blocks responds to the escalating rates of mental illness and social isolation, recognising the emergence of the eco-anxiety phenomenon, by making simple actions available to everyone.

The benefits of engaging with nature are backed by a growing body of scientific evidence*. Regular contact with nature has been shown to increase feelings of calmness, boost endorphin levels, and enhance concentration. It can also mitigate symptoms of anxiety and depression while fostering a sense of community.

A study, commissioned by Beyond Blue and carried out by researchers at Deakin University found that connecting with nature, as a way of restoring health, is something that humans have been doing for centuries.

“We all have a role in protecting and restoring Australian nature and it can be as simple as planting something seasonal in a shoebox-sized Nature Block which can sit anywhere.

As an added bonus, you’ll feel better too!”
— Phil Harrison, CEO of Conservation Volunteers Australia.

*Reference

Building for Life: Designing and Understanding the Human-Nature Connection; Stephen Robert Kellert Yale University, January 2005.

With little space, time or financial commitment required, Nature Blocks aims to address one of the biggest perceived barriers to maintaining health and wellbeing for Australians, as 70% of people nominate cost or time pressures as their biggest challenges to living a healthy lifestyle.

Roger Sharp, Chief Sustainability & Corporate Affairs Officer, Bupa Asia Pacific said the Nature Blocks initiative aims to support people to take simple, tangible actions to help create the healthy planet people want to live in.

“As a health and care company, we know the link between the health of the planet and the health of people is undeniable and that we all have a role to play in protecting and regenerating nature, particularly in our cities.” — Roger Sharp, Bupa APAC Chief Sustainability & Corporate Affairs Officer.

Nature Blocks illustrates how CVA’s actions work to achieve the vision of a world where “people and nature thrive, together”, and articulates the interrelationship between human wellbeing and healthier environments.



Connecting with nature is a journey that can provide better mental and physical health for individuals and a more sustainable future for our planet.

Citizen conservation initiative Nature Blocks is making impact

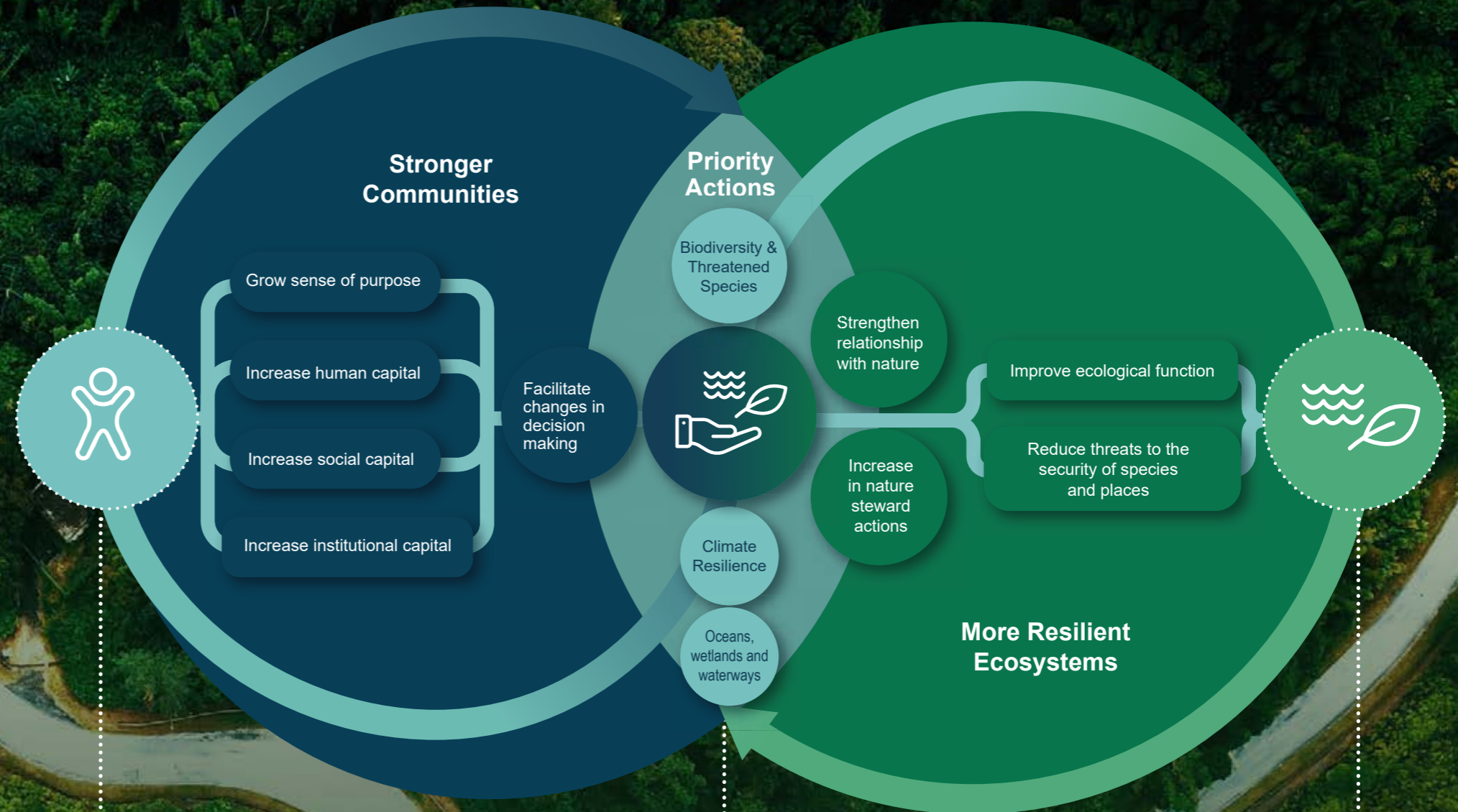
Committed to measuring and evaluating our work and impact on people and nature.

CVA's unique contribution to conservation lies in the people we engage. Every Australian performing an action for nature becomes an agent for nature-positive change in their community, amplifying the growth of stewardship in each community. The guidance we provide ensures that the actions taken make meaningful contributions to the needs of nature at the local level.

To ensure that our methodology is sound and can be measured, we've developed an Impact Measurement Framework (IMF, Sep 2021) which outlines the intended impact of our work with people and nature.

The IMF illustrates how CVA's actions work to achieve our vision and articulates the interrelationship between human wellbeing and healthier environments. The impact strategy further outlines an accountability framework that ensures our performance achieves that vision. Using outcomes-based measurement and reporting, with a focus on learning and continuous improvement, we can self-assess our impacts and plan for their expansion. To enhance our impact, we employ a cohesive approach that aligns all our engagement pathways within a common model, in turn creating sufficient space and time alongside delivery to plan, prepare, review, report and effectively nurture our supporter community.

Lastly, we measure and gather evidence for the aggregated contribution that we are making towards the high-value, priority objectives and commitments that we share with our partners.



INCREASED WELLBEING



97%
of surveyed
participants have showed an
improvement on health
and wellbeing.

MORE ACTIVE STEWARDSHIP FOR NATURE



18,750
people engaged



72,802
people

87%
increased motivation
to take action for nature

HEALTHIER ENVIRONMENTS



250
Nature Blocks
completed



600
Nature Blocks

79%
improved their environmental
knowledge & skills



Who can make a Nature Block?

Nature Blocks adapt to any location, space and level of conservation knowledge. In a park, backyard or small city balcony, a Nature Block is a space where nature is respected and flourishes.

Everyone can take action and create a Nature Block.

There are many shapes and forms of Nature Blocks: Nature pot, lizard lounge, pollinator garden, and edible garden.

And many more to come!

Creating a Nature Block is an integrated and inclusive experience. It could be the very first step you take in your conservation journey or be a fulfilling way to make an impact in between volunteering experiences.



The transformative potential of citizen conservation

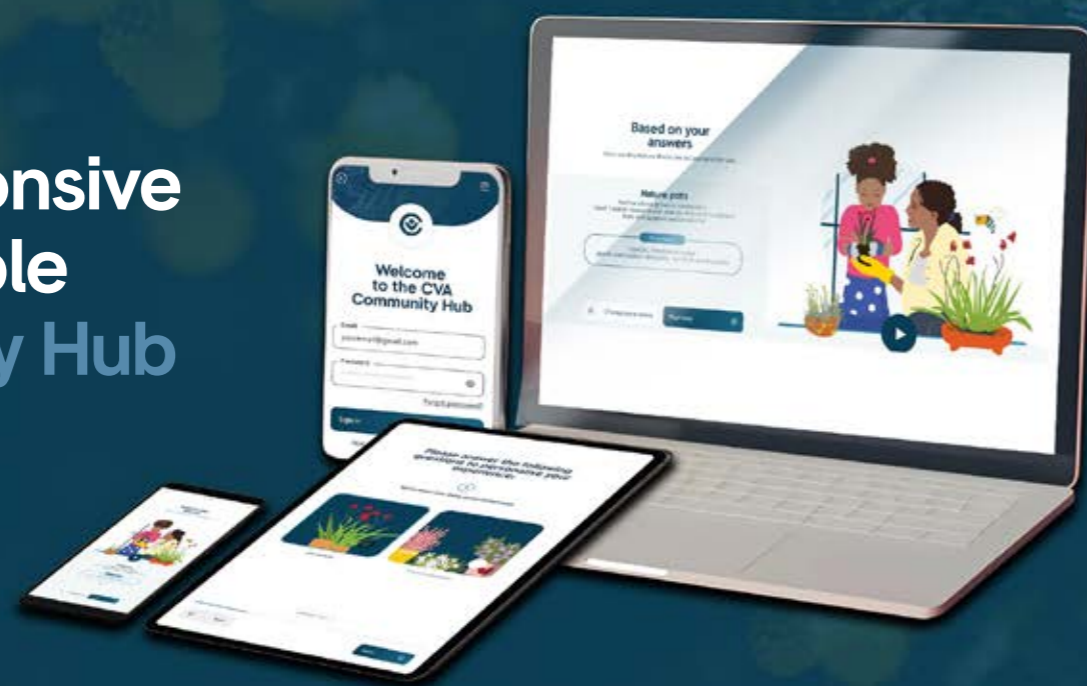
Citizen conservation empowers people who want to make a difference. Citizen conservation has the potential to raise awareness, motivate people to take action, build up knowledge, and positively impact on the environment.

While there is currently no official Citizen Conservation representation in Australia, CVA has embraced the principles of Citizen Science outlined by the Australian Citizen Science Association* in the development of Nature Blocks.

The CVA Community app creates a personalised journey that allows participants to browse and register for on-ground events alongside our CVA experts (traditional conservation model) or take actions for nature from the comfort of their own home (citizen conservation model) with our app-led activities such as Nature Blocks.

Participants can download the new [CVA app](#) to access explanatory videos and resources on how to take part in conservation activities that suit their location, interests, living conditions and experience level.

Fully Responsive and Available Community Hub



*Source

10 Principles of Citizen Science, Australian Citizen Science Association.

Download the new CVA app

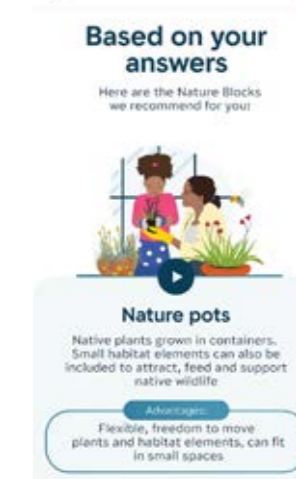
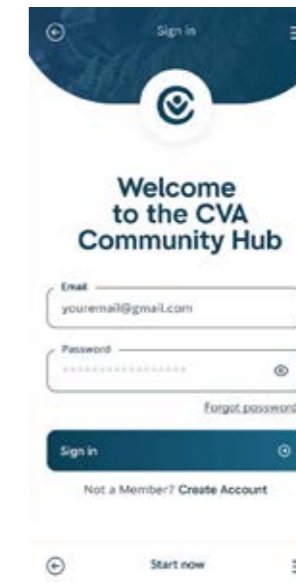


How to get started?

Implementing the Nature Blocks program can be done by anyone, anywhere. Clare Bowditch, CVA's Nature Blocks ambassador and iconic Australian musician, expressed her personal connection to nature and her passionate support for Nature Blocks, saying, "We start small. We fall in love with nature. Then we'll fight for it for the rest of our lives."

Nature Blocks is unique due to its integrative approach, blending the conventional conservation model with innovative technology. This pioneering initiative, a first in its industry worldwide, merges on-ground event calendars with at-home digital experiences, creating a unified, inclusive, customisable, data-driven, and impactful platform.

The digital engine behind this initiative is the CVA Community App, a distinctive digital outreach platform. Unlike other programs that focus on separate platforms, the CVA Community App provides a holistic, integrated app-led experience designed to offer users a personalised conservation journey. The app includes many features such as gamification, badges, social media sharing, community connection, mapping of native habitats, observations, survey data, First Nations knowledge, and localised recommendations for volunteering.





MORE ACTIVE NATURE STEWARDSHIP

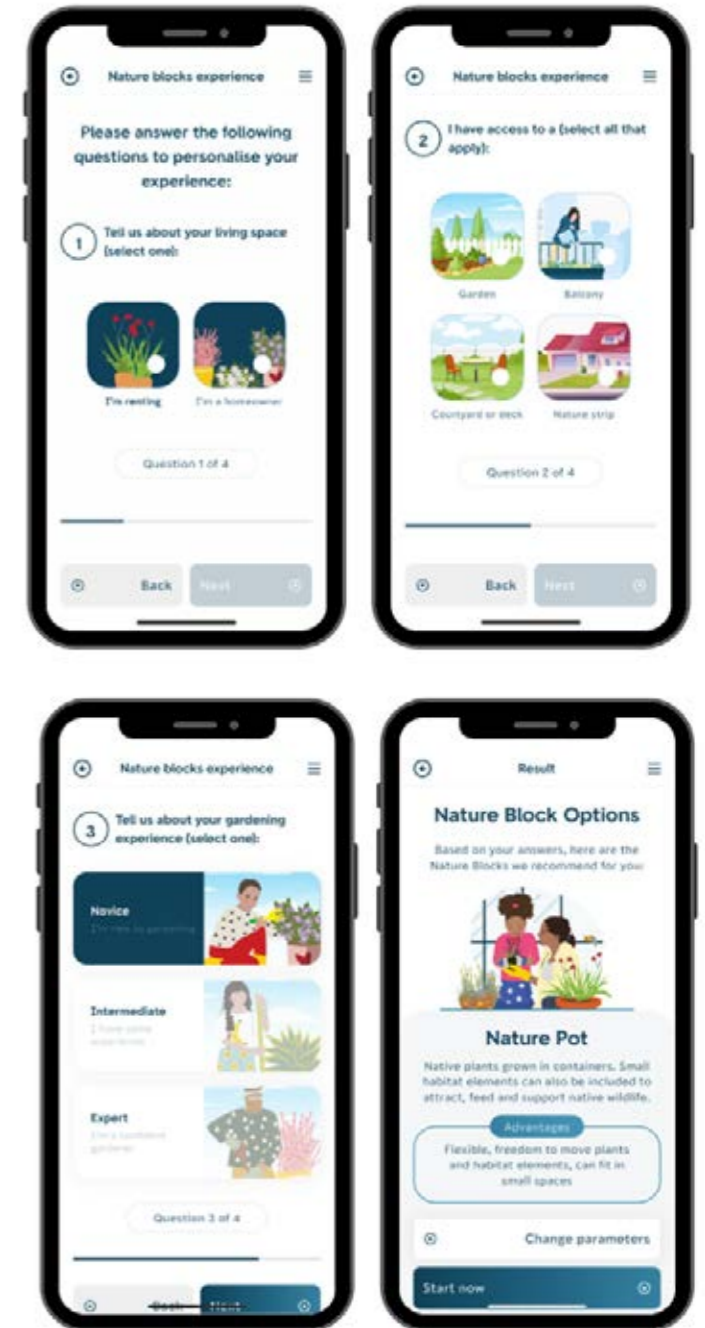
Nature Blocks actively involve citizens in Nature Stewardship

Generating new knowledge or understanding

CVA chose to embrace the power of technology to engage the public at scale, making conservation and action for nature accessible to everyone. The user-friendly app interface is carefully designed to guide each user through a personalised Nature Blocks experience. After a brief set of questions to tailor the experience, the app offers up to 10 activities ranging from potted plants and pollinator gardens to rain gardens, insect hotels and nest boxes.

Allowing a more proactive participation to conservation

Each activity is accompanied by step-by-step instructions, educational materials, video tutorials, and a supportive community. During the activities, users are encouraged to plant a minimum of four different native plants, equivalent to restoring 1 square meter of nature, and add a simple habitat element, such as a water dish or shelter component. This contributes to filling critical missing links in urban biodiversity habitats, especially for our smaller “building block” species like birds, bees, butterflies, and other insects that have driven the alarming increase in threatened species.





Strengthening bonds through community and nature

Over the past 40 years, powered by the volunteer efforts of tens of thousands of Australians, we have carried out impressive conservation work around the country.

In 2023, with Nature Blocks as our major call to action from August to December, we held over 109 community volunteering action events within 18 projects across QLD, NSW, VIC, SA, TAS, and WA, making a real and tangible impact on biodiversity and threatened species.

Nature conservation is a living project – plants take time to grow and need to be nurtured. We work with nature to keep it alive for future generations and for the planet. Together with CVA Nature Stewards, we planted 44,778 native plants. As the lungs of the earth, we are proud of the impact our native planting has on restoring native habitat and building climate resilience.

Conservation biologist Sanjay Gubbi has said that conservation is 90% communication and 10% conservation.

Our community conservation projects are useful communication methods which can help inspire meaningful action and support long-lasting change.

Because pro-nature behaviour and skills require active nurturing.

Many of our long-lasting volunteers have become Nature Blocks Ambassadors and work within their communities and through their networks to promote and empower citizen conservation action.

We also work with other community groups to care for nature and people together.

With strong partnerships and a deliberate focus on community engagement at scale, we are confident that our impact will continue to grow in breadth and depth, and that we can help even more Australians along their stewardship journey.



Zoom on some of our community projects

Twilight Trails

In Sydney, we ran a unique “Twilight Trails” series that seamlessly combined education and hands-on activities to create a memorable and impactful experience.

With a focus on the charismatic Ringtail Possum, volunteers heard from experts in wildlife conservation about the ecological significance of possum habitats within urban environments and the crucial role they play in maintaining biodiversity.

A habitat crafting segment followed, allowing everyone to roll up their sleeves and get involved in crafting a ringtail possum house! These were later installed in the reserve to create safe spaces for possums to thrive in the midst of urban landscapes.

At sunset the park transitioned into night and the spotlight adventure began! Volunteers were guided through a carefully selected area known for its possum population providing the chance to observe these elusive creatures in their natural habitat, with many other creatures of the night spotted like frogs, owls, and bats!

This hands-on encounter provided everyone with a deeper appreciation of the city’s after-dark wonders and highlighted the importance of preserving urban biodiversity, making it an engaging outing for nature enthusiasts of all ages.



Urban Shade Forest Initiative

Through our Urban Shade Forest Initiative, supported by Chevron Australia, we are actively working with the community to create cooler and more liveable cities whilst helping to build back nature.

In 2023, over 1,200 volunteers joined us to help breathe new life into Spring Valley Park in Springvale South, VIC. The reserve – which was previously a landfill site – is being transformed from an open turf area into a bustling and biodiverse urban oasis. Thanks to our amazing volunteers, over 12,000 newly planted native grasses, shrubs, and trees are now setting down their roots in the reserve.

Not only will this new Urban Forest provide vital shade and cooling air for the local community, but it will also become an important place for urban wildlife to feed, find shelter, and thrive! By participating in these events, locals have emphatically answered the call to take collective action in restoring canopy cover — and ultimately biodiversity — in public spaces.

Our volunteers have also been empowered to grow and expand our Urban Shade Forests at home, thus continuing our mission to restore cooling vegetation across the urban landscape.





Inspiring people to care for nature & empowering them to take action

While we think that biodiversity should really be celebrated year-round, National Biodiversity Month (in September every year) is a great reason to stop and admire species of all shapes and sizes, and to remember why having diverse and healthy green spaces is so important. Not only that, the two key themes of Biodiversity Month are central to our work here at CVA – **connecting with nature, and caring for nature in all of its diversity**. We think that’s definitely worth celebrating!

In 2023, we co-hosted a workshop with the team from PlantingSeeds, to celebrate our native insect pollinators and the plant species that support them. Insects will be one of the first groups of species that benefit from our newly planted Urban Shade Forest, so it was only fitting to showcase our unique native insect species. People of all ages crafted bee hotels for the iconic blue-banded bee, and learned about the tiny but mighty insect species that keep Melbourne moving. With bee hotels and plants in hand, paired with access to the CVA Community app, participants can now confidently take action at home to create a greener, cooler, and more liveable city.

In October 2023, we partnered with Sustainable Gardening Australia and the City of Greater Dandenong to deliver a “Building Urban Forests at home” workshop. Attendees spent the morning at a local community hub, learning about the theory behind Urban Heat Islands and the practical steps that residents could take to foster their own Urban Shade Forests at home – from cultivating healthy soils, to garden design and the strategic selection of plant species.

To support their journeys, attendees were also guided through the Nature Blocks experience, and provided with vouchers to a local indigenous plant nursery. When an individual was ready to begin their Nature Blocks journey, they were able to claim their chosen plants from the Nursery, and establish their very own Urban Shade Forest at home. As part of the Project, we have given away 400+ native seedlings to residents, which have now been planted in backyards and balconies, across Melbourne.

By taking action at both the individual and community scale, we have successfully activated everyday Australians to collectively build back nature in south-east Melbourne, one Nature Block at a time.



Harnessing local community-led conservation with Relationships Australia

CVA partners with Relationships Australia and is proud to uphold and promote the principles of Neighbours Every Day.

[Research from Relationships Australia](#) shows us that when people connect with their communities, they have a greater sense of belonging, which leads to improved well-being and a reduction in loneliness.

It also contributes to strength and resilience in the face of external pressures (such as the COVID pandemic and natural disasters).

Through this important collaboration, we help increase respectful relationships across Australia and create belonging through the power of conservation volunteering. CVA understands the importance of increasing social connection in neighbourly communities as research continues to demonstrate the mental health and wellbeing benefits of reconnecting with nature, including combating social isolation and loneliness.



By fostering collaboration across sectors, we can significantly contribute to urban biodiversity preservation and contribute to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework Targets, while building stronger communities and improving individual and collective well-being.



Nature Blocks: An approach backed by science

Our block-by-block approach is backed by research that shows small patches of habitat are crucial for species survival and should be an immediate conservation priority (Wintle et al., 2018, Riva & Fahrig, 2022, Mata et al. 2023). Our own research, in collaboration with ARUP, demonstrates that restoring just 30% of backyards across properties, even within the heart of Australia's most populous inner cities could create habitat corridors, support native wildlife, and foster a human-nature connection (ARUP 2023).

Our emphasis on native species and diversity, urging participants to plant a minimum of 4 different native plants with varied structures, is recognised as particularly advantageous in sustaining high indigenous insect biodiversity in urban settings (Mata et al., 2021).

*References

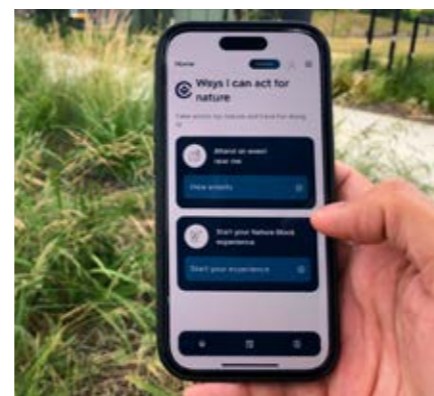
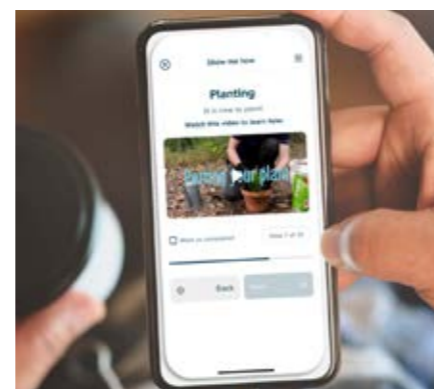
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CVA Community app users receive feedback from their contribution

The CVA Community app was developed in accordance with our Privacy Policy which is subject to the Privacy Act and APPs and regulates how we collect, use and disclose personal information. A Personal Information Collection Statement is publicly available via our website and a link is included as people sign up for the app.

CVA's Impact Dashboard provides a collective view of the simple yet powerful actions taken by people of all ages to assist in rejuvenating and restoring Australia's unique biodiversity. The Impact Dashboard gives users access to a vast amount of data on the Nature Blocks campaign, including how many hectares established Nature Blocks now cover,

the number of plants in the ground that form Nature Blocks, the areas in which Nature Blocks have been created nationwide, the different types of Nature Blocks created, and even pledges to support CVA. It also gives individuals access to the organisation's on-ground event data so they can track the impact that these simple actions have on the local environment. Combined with the CVA app, the Impact Dashboard will continue to transform Australia's conservation experience and empower more Australians to contribute to native restoration efforts.

We are committed to acknowledge our Citizen Nature Stewards

This can include acknowledgement in communications, result reporting and publications.



To read the full report, visit:

<https://www.arup.com/perspectives/publications/research/section/biodiversity-in-your-backyard>

Insights & research collaborations

The implementation of our initiative underscored the paramount importance of seeking feedback from users early in the process.

By actively engaging with our audience, we gained valuable insights which allowed data-driven enhancements with regards to user experience, learning, personal enjoyment, social benefits, as well as the need for publication of research outputs and scientific evidence.

During the testing period, we embraced an agile development approach, recognising the dynamic nature of our project. This flexibility enabled us to iterate quickly, respond to user feedback promptly, and refine the initiative to better meet the needs of our community.

Furthermore, the initiative highlighted the significance of language choice and accessibility. We ensured that our materials and resources catered to all levels of knowledge, emphasising inclusivity. This commitment to accessibility not only broadened the reach of our initiative but also contributed to a more enriching and educational experience for users of varying backgrounds and expertise levels.

We partnered with [ARUP](#) to help identify optimal locations for habitat corridors in Melbourne, Sydney, and Brisbane, and quantify the potential impact of Nature Blocks.

The ARUP report illustrates the importance of addressing Australia's biodiversity crisis, particularly in urban areas, through the creation of wildlife habitat corridors. The report identifies optimal locations for habitat corridors in Melbourne, Sydney, and Brisbane, with the potential to cumulatively create 127 hectares of habitat through restored land, equivalent to 178 soccer pitches. This report, as well as the key learnings so far from Nature Blocks, were shared with industry leaders at our recent 'Leaders For Nature Forum' in November 2023.

There is potential for Nature Blocks to be incorporated into accreditation/validation mechanisms such as NABERS (National Australian Built Environment Rating System), which promote and recognise sustainable urban design. Over time there is scope to use Nature Blocks as one of a set of nature-based solutions that can support mitigation of both urban biodiversity loss and climate impacts.



<https://youtu.be/B91rb2D-Rr0?si=hlLzGWhmXK4452Mc>

Committed to measuring and evaluating our work and impact on people and nature

Nature Blocks is built from an awareness and understanding of the link between planet and human health.

Nature Blocks was designed to educate and protect communities against the impacts of environmental threats on human health. It is being designed to actively evaluate health and wellbeing impacts and environmental impacts, and their interdependence.

This has initially been done through the systematic surveying of our volunteers after completing Nature Blocks activities. A live dashboard has also been developed to ensure the data is appropriately represented and reported on.

Here is what our volunteers have to say:



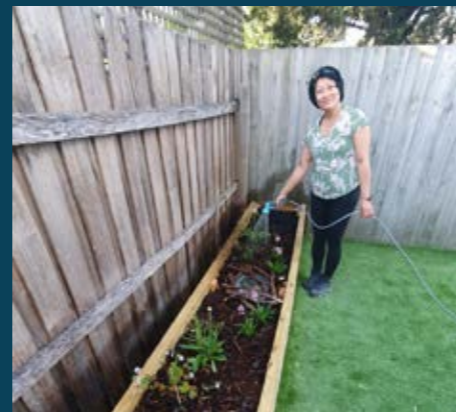
“It was very easy to use...I was also impressed there was really clear information for someone with a balcony, because I don't have a really big garden.” Lizzie Tota

“The most valuable feature was the step-by-step suggestions, to start with nothing and end with my own Nature Block! I love gardening and making a little habitat for bees and other pollinators.” Anonymous app user.

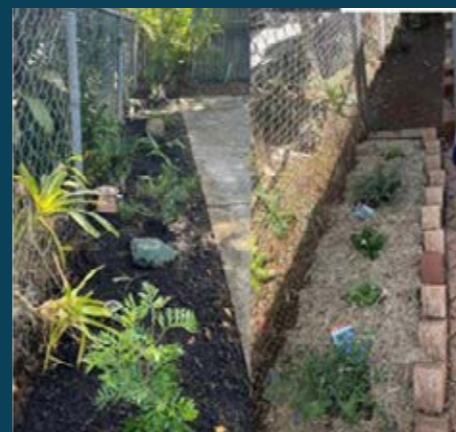
“The guided user experience, with flexibility based upon living arrangements and space...was the most valuable part. I also loved the warm, inclusive graphics.” Anonymous app user.



Some of our Nature Blocks Stories across the country



Tran, Victoria



Jacqui, Queensland



Gayle, New South Wales





97% of participants we surveyed reported an improvement in health and wellbeing.



INCREASED WELLBEING

The benefits of reconnecting with nature on mental health and wellbeing are backed by a growing body of scientific evidence.

Research* shows 94% of people report a significant increase in their sense of belonging and purpose, as well as increased environmental literacy, skills and capabilities after participating in CVA activities.

The American Psychological Association states that spending time in nature is linked to both cognitive benefits* and improvements in mood, mental health and emotional wellbeing. A growing scientific field called ecotherapy has shown a strong connection between time spent in nature and reduced stress, anxiety and depression.

Planting your Nature Block can help reduce stress

Whether you have a sprawling backyard or just a windowsill, planting native species can bring a slice of nature into your life. Gardening has been scientifically proven to reduce stress hormones, and planting native species also supports local biodiversity. A small pot of native flowers can attract pollinators, promote local ecosystems, and serve as your personal oasis of calm.

*Sources

Clear Horizon EMF Workshop Report, August 2022
[Nurtured by nature](#), Kirsten Weir, American Psychological Association

Spending time with your Nature Block can help improve attention

Birdwatching and other nature gazing activities have been shown to improve mental health by promoting mindfulness, a form of directed attention that has therapeutic effects. Take five minutes out of your busy day to sit with your Nature Block, and observe, listen, smell. You'll likely notice an improvement in your attention span and cognitive skills.

Regular contact with nature has been shown to increase feelings of calmness, lower blood pressure and levels of the stress hormone cortisol, boost endorphin levels, and enhance concentration. It can also mitigate symptoms of anxiety and depression while fostering a sense of community.

Healthy planet, healthy people

In 2024, we will continue to collect and analyse health and wellbeing data with the aim to improve Nature Blocks' impact on human health.

This will be done through better communication on the benefits with our volunteers, but also in collaboration with research. Bringing together the worlds of research and grassroots evidence will advance both science and practice. We believe this effort promises to inspire more impactful actions.



Building momentum for biodiversity

Yarra Trams Community Partnerships Program and the Power of Communication in Conservation

The Yarra Trams Community Partnerships Program provides in-kind advertising annually to community organisations. The theme for 2023 was “Building a Resilient and Sustainable Melbourne”, with participating Community Partners promoting climate resilience, environmental sustainability, economic resilience, and equitable opportunity. Yarra Trams CEO, Carla Purcell, praised CVA’s Nature Blocks initiative for its important effort to introduce green spaces into our cities to build climate resilience.

Communication plays a pivotal role in conservation. Through clear and compelling messaging, initiatives like Nature Blocks can educate about the urgency and importance of biodiversity conservation.

Even though conservation heavily depends on science, many Australians may not have a comprehensive knowledge of ecological and geological sciences.

Through comprehensive and collaborative communication, we have successfully generated widespread awareness of Nature Blocks as a solution to the biodiversity crisis and as a catalyst for behaviour change. Nature Blocks activation was communicated through various channels, including social media posts, blogs, YouTube videos, email campaigns, and a billboard campaign in Melbourne. Effective communication can jumpstart any change.”

“As Nature Blocks are built, these create micro-habitats and can contribute to connectivity corridors, which are critical for the native wildlife that make their home in our major cities and by creating Nature Blocks, each person can take a positive step to support Australia’s precious biodiversity and help our cities and towns to be healthier places for us all to live.”
— Phil Harrison, CEO of Conservation Volunteers Australia



Nature Blocks Advocates

Clare Bowditch

Singer, Actress & Author, Nature Blocks Ambassador

“We start small. We fall in love with nature. Then we’ll fight for it for the rest of our lives.”



Roger Sharp

Chief Sustainability & Corporate Affairs Officer
Bupa Asia Pacific

“As a health and care company, we know the link between the health of the planet and the health of people is undeniable. And that we all have a role to play in protecting and regenerating nature, particularly in cities. Nature Blocks works well with our Healthy Cities program. By planting more trees, more plants, we create a healthier environment for better opportunities for mental and physical health.”



Dr Beth Hill

Psychology for a Safe Climate

“Nature Blocks really supports people because it’s about getting out and connecting with something in your local area. With climate distress, a lot of the time what you’re suffering with is a sense of overwhelm, powerlessness, and a disconnection from nature. Nature Blocks gives people a chance to get out of their house and connect with something real and helps them feel like they’re doing something.”



Anna Carlile

Singer, Actress & Author, Nature Blocks Ambassador

“Community and being in nature are the essence of me being a happy human. I’m also totally motivated by beauty. And to me, nature is the most beautiful thing.”



Germain Briand

Managing Director | Urban Canopee

“This is a fantastic initiative 🙌❤️🌿”



Lizzie Tota

Bupa Australia Employee

“The CVA Community Hub app was very easy to use. It’s super simple and I was also impressed there was clear information for someone with a balcony, because I don’t have a big garden, so I appreciated that. It was also a relief because there was information on starting a very small Nature Block. So, I can start basic - with just one plant”





BUILD BACK NATURE

HELP RESTORE OUR NATIVE HABITAT
VISIT MYNATUREBLOCK.ORG



GET STARTED TODAY!



A partnership with CVA means you become part of our community of Nature Stewards. Our network of like-minded partners work closely with us to help achieve shared impact and improve the health of planet and people.

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Connect with us

