

Independent Council for Ecosystem Restoration (ICER)

Note: At time of writing this entity is still under formation, however for the purpose of this submission the group thought it important to attach to the Regen Action submission to give the scientific rigour that such a proposal would warrant. By the time that the committee considers the alternative proposals this entity will be launched.

1. Introduction

The Independent Council for Ecosystem Restoration (ICER) is an independent, multidisciplinary peak body advising land managers, Government and various stakeholders on best practice for ecosystem restoration.

Ecosystem Restoration (ER) is now a fast moving, relatively new paradigm. The establishment of this field of knowledge has mainly been through the efforts of a few, but gradually increasing number of Pioneers, Land Managers and Scientists, who recognised ahead of the curve, the rapid degradation of the Australian landscape.

However, ER is now achieving greater momentum and recognition as it has become evident that it offers key solutions to the recent un-natural harmful experiences of raging bushfires, extended drought, global warming, disappearing top-soils, desertification and growing greenhouse gas emissions, and food and water security. Long-time advocates and pioneers of ER know with certainty that this practice of restoring the landscape to its once self-sustaining, self-managing, automatic abundance, is the ultimate solution to all these eco-system ailments created by human intervention.

As the world awakes to this, there will undoubtedly be a charge from all and sundry to enter this space.

Many with right and honourable intentions know we have to act and organise now if we are going to leave future generations with a healthy planet.

2. The Need For Stewardship

Stewardship via an independent, multidisciplinary, apolitical entity such as ICER is very important.

ICER would operate as a ecosystem restoration industry body charged with ensuring:

- that the uniqueness of its ecosystem (science) is fully understood, and that the natural patterns, processes, functions and efficiencies that once existed can be restored and enhanced for the benefit of all future generations.
- the best outcomes for the Australian landscape - as the protector of its existence, and oversight of all anthropogenic influences applied to it.
- the Biosphere, including all the flora and fauna that exists upon and within, is not for exclusive ownership by Government, corporations or other entities or individuals.

There needs to be an embodiment of the understanding that the landscape is indeed a gift of nature which needs to be nurtured, protected, and the responsibility of all humanity.

ICER will resemble other 'Councils of Wisdom' that were customary in indigenous cultures. They decided how the environment, and the associated effect on it, would be determined.

At its inception it will be known and recognised as ICER, an acronym for an "Independent Council for Ecosystem Restoration".

3. ICER's Suggested Responsibilities:

- a. Establish the minimum standards required within the ER community to be recognised as an endorsed Practitioner, Landscape Manager or as having influence in the field of ER.
- b. Have the best Practitioners develop, train and endorse the first level of competent Trainers for strategic regional implementation.
- c. Determine the industry best science and facilitate the collection, storage, dissemination and continual upgrading of this information for availability within the community.
- d. Have access to the leading living models and demonstration sites of ER for both practical and scientific evaluation and reference.
- e. Establish and maintain data and records necessary to monitor and record the outcomes of all ER projects undertaken.
- f. Establish a membership capacity for all stakeholders to avail themselves of the most recent practice, science and information in the industry.
- g. Be the industry representative body to provide a bridge between all stakeholders and regulatory authorities.
- h. Design the most effective strategy for maximum roll out of the associated principles and practices.
- i. Launch ICER to create maximum awareness by incorporating all or any three major restoration projects as outlined below.

Note: As this is a self-organising entity it will in time determine its own responsibilities. The above are only suggestions made by the steering group Regen Action and individual concerned citizens.

4. Establishing ICER

ICER will naturally and subtly evolve into an industry leadership role. This recognition will come because as an independent, multidisciplinary, apolitical body it acts under the guidance, advice and wisdom of best and most competent leaders in their field, invited/selected for their integrity, wisdom and passion.

5. ICER Organisational Structure:

5.1 A Multidisciplinary Panel of Science Advisors: Highly capable, passionate ecosystem restoration individuals with integrative Eco Science capabilities (initially 10 – 20 persons) who:

- Are highly competent, recognised leaders in this field who can offer the most rigorous of scientific evidence that is supported only by data considerable of time and space.
- Will continually monitor and appraise the science and deliver proven best practice.
- Will act as a custodian for the land through holistic application of ecosystem restoration methods.
- Will hold the ethos and the values of ICER plus encourage a succession strategy to ensure long term sustainability.
- Will provide scientific evaluation for newly encountered specific applications.
- As a foundation pioneer member, will adhere and comply with the determinations of this group.
- Will declare any conflicting or compromising influences or interests immediately.

- Agree to be the essential part of creating, defining and documenting all of the above.
- Agree to partake in establishing the foundational Constitution/Rules of ICER.

Status: At the time of writing, over 17 highly credentialed Scientists have agreed to become founding members with many more in the enrolment stage. See attached Appendix Table 1.

5.2 Pioneer Advisor Practitioners acting as Consultants to the Panel: (initially 4 – 6 persons) who:

- Act as the primary source of practical on-ground knowledge and experience of the application of ecosystem restoration.
- Act as the intermediary between the current best reference sites available and ICER Science Panel. ICER will utilise these models to further demonstrate the science embedded in the landscape.
- Have the skills and knowledge to Train the Trainers to the minimum standard determined.
- Will monitor, appraise and evaluate Practitioners' best practice.
- Act as custodians for the land through holistic application of ecosystem restoration methods.
- Hold the ethos and the values of ICER and encourage a succession strategy to ensure long-term sustainability.
- Will uphold and implement the approved science as determined by the Science Panel.
- As a foundation pioneer member, will adhere and comply with the determinations of this group.
- Will declare any conflicting or compromising influences or interests immediately.
- Agree to be the essential participants of creating, defining and documenting all of the above.
- Agree to partake in establishing the foundational Constitution/Rules of this entity.

Status: Complete with four (4) Pioneer Advisor Practitioners agreeing to become founding support members to the Science Panel.

5.3 Board of Governors: (min 3 – max 5)

- Requires individuals who are highly competent in advocacy, influencing and negotiating to represent and promote the cause of ICER.
- Persons of high integrity to nurture and protect the total independence and ethos of ICER.
- A passion to promote and accelerate the adoption of ecosystem restoration.
- Nominated and approved individuals with the capacity to work collaboratively with all stakeholders to ensure objectives are attained for quality oversight and governance.

Status: Completion pending

5.4 Secretariat Team: (initially 2 to 5 persons) who:

- Initially consists of: 1 - CEO/Org development; 1 - PR/Media; 1 – Project Management; 2 – Admin/Research; 1 x Fundraiser.
- Guide and conduct the administration requirements that evolve out of the meetings between all of the parties above.
- Assist in the facilitation of the creation of the Constitution for ICER including its Purpose, Values and Mission.
- Create, initiate and facilitate the signing of a pledge by all participants to uphold the terms and conditions of ICER.
- Design the supporting structure to deliver the administration requirements of the Purpose, Values and Mission.
- In the short term, take responsibility for the marketing and promotion requirements of the entity including initial public release.
- Facilitate meetings, agendas, records of the entity.
- Formulate and instigate an industry wide membership drive.
- Initiate a fund-raising strategy to provide seed capital.

Status: This function has been assigned to Regen Action -Wingecarribee as a Community action group to formulate. Three (3) individuals are available immediately to transition the organisation. The “Head Office” for this virtual organisation will be domiciled in Southern Highlands of NSW.

6. Potential Projects:

The steering group, when considering the launch of ICER, innately recognises that the restoration of our environment is the single most critical concern that faces humanity and our world today.

They also recognise that this fundamental and essential understanding is not yet predominant in mass thinking.

So in order to raise the level of awareness:

- a. for the need to begin this journey to enable development to significant scale and,
 - b. to accept and recognise ICER as a significant requirement for this to occur,
- the following projects were identified as having the potential to create enough attention to achieve these two outcomes. Three exciting, good news stories that could significantly shift the thinking of the majority of the population.

Based in order of possible release times, these are the projects that ICER will immediately focus on:

6.1 Bullatale NSW:

A 10,500-acre Merino Sheep property on a Delta floodplain of Australia’s major inland river, The River Murray. The owner has requested that the principles of NSF, with a design by Peter Andrews AOM, be the cornerstone of the project to be carried out by practitioners closely connected to ICER.

This project has the capacity to fund the work of ICER, which will, also at the request of the owner, be able to record and collect the rigorous data relevant to the entire project. This will form the basis of a full scientific evaluation from method to outcomes.

ICER will work in conjunction with collaborative universities to provide internships to capture and evaluate the predetermined critical performance indicators.

We believe that as a project using these ecosystem restoration principles, we have the best potential to set an industry benchmark for carbon sequestration, and so establish a pathway for other landowners.

This project will take advantage of the current carbon trading arrangement established through the Federal Government’s Clean Energy Regulator with the

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estimated expectation that the entire restoration process could be funded by this scheme. Such scientific validation will create a huge incentive for other properties to adopt ecosystem restoration methods and thereby accelerate the entire country's restoration objectives.

It is estimated that this project can be released with the introduction of ICER in January 2022.

6.2 An Alternative to Raising the Height of Warragamba Dam:

This is a project that, in collaboration with the NSW State Government, would involve restoration of the entire catchment area for Warragamba Dam - approximately 1.35 million acres that provides the drinking water for Sydney. Currently, there is a separate proposal before the Government to install an extension to the wall height to mitigate flooding on the downstream Sydney basin. Our preliminary analysis is that we can achieve the same end by using a Nature Based Solution via storing water in the landscape within the catchment as a result of adopting restoration techniques.

This will then allow a retention of flood velocity and volume as a better control measure. It will also alleviate the raft of violations of Indigenous culture and environmental damage from the Dam wall raising.

It will simultaneously bring a host of other benefits such as drought resilience, bushfire retention, water storage and filtration, carbon and soil enhancement, and much more.

Economically it is estimated that this could all be achieved for approximately one third of the State Government's current construction budget for raising the wall. We have the good fortune to have the counsel of Dr Michal Kravčík on our ICER Science Panel. Dr Kravčík is a world recognised water scientist and has just received parliamentary approval in his home region of Košice, Slovenia for a 1.7 million acre restoration project. He has kindly agreed to provide the information and research he undertook for his project, and to assist us validate our assumptions in order to attain the first stage requirements.

6.2.1 First Stage:

The first stage of this project is to **obtain funding to conduct a feasibility study** to confirm, in association with the Government, the claims we make.

We are confident that with the current overwhelming community support and the status of the political climate, the decision to make a sound environmental choice will prevail.

This project has the capacity to become a world leading restoration model on the doorstep of one of the world most recognised cities.

The earliest probable date for an announcement for Stage 1 – The Funded Feasibility would be by Jan 31/2022 and the full project release by the end of May.

6.3 Regen Action -Wingecarribee

Regen Action -Wingecarribee is a local community-based organisation that can provide an alternative to point 6.2 above should that project not prove successful. The Wingecarribee Shire is geographically located in the centre of the Warragamba catchment and is approximately one third of the area of that total catchment land mass.

Regen Action already has a whole of Shire objective to have 50% of its land under regeneration within 10 years. This is to see our local shire achieve zero emissions from 1% – 2% carbon sequestration primarily through the utilisation of water & plants. This would be a significant standalone project and will proceed hopefully

under project 6.2 (above), however, if that is not the short-term outcome this project will proceed on its own merits.

Postscript: ICER has the support of most of the key Community groups in the phase shire all of which will be provided with supporting documentation for the next level of discussions. Also attached is the current Panel of Science Advisers who have committed to being members of ICER.

Full profiles and qualifications will also be included in that future documentation.

Kind regards,

To Contact ICER in this interim phase please contact the Steering Group Project Leader:-

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