

Rehabilitating Roe 8: A standard approach to a not so standard restoration project.

Atkinson, Tom¹, Omodei, Rachel¹, Sollis, Joseph²

Emerge Associates¹ Creating Communities²

Corresponding author email: Tom.Atkinson@emergeassociates.com.au

Addressing the social aspects of restoration projects can demand at least as much attention as getting the ecological aspects right, especially in cases that have attracted significant public interest. In high profile situations it makes sense to adhere to agreed standards of practice that may best meet community and stakeholder expectations. This paper reports on the experience of an environmental and community engagement consultant team who assisted in the preparation of a restoration plan associated with the controversial 'Roe 8' highway extension in Western Australia. Some 18 hectares of bushland were cleared along the proposed alignment of Roe 8 before construction on the project was suspended in April 2017. This clearing was (and still is) a source of significant concern for many Western Australians and interested community and stakeholders have since urged management authorities to ensure that the cleared areas are fully restored. In addition to addressing 'ecological' impacts, the restoration plan for Roe 8 was required to attend to the 'social' impacts of clearing, such that both the bushland and the community may be 'rehabilitated'. Close attention was paid during the plan's preparation to the *National Standards for the Practice of Ecological Restoration in Australia*, as a source of agreed, principles and approaches. The *Standards* provided a systematic yet flexible framework through which clear goals and objectives were defined over a ten-year implementation period, in a process involving extensive community and stakeholder consultation. The resulting restoration plan combines social orientated activities ('communications, engagement and involvement') with activities that are more typically linked to ecological restoration ('management' and 'monitoring, evaluation and reporting'). 'Rehabilitating Roe 8' is therefore not a standard restoration project and provides a unique, recent example of the benefits of applying the *Standards* to restoration planning and management in a complex social and ecological context.

Topics: 'The national and international standards in restoration', 'social dimensions of restoration', 'urban restoration'.

Key words: 'Standards', 'social', 'urban', 'plan'.