

Win win for native grasslands with central Queensland harvesting project

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National not-for-profit [Bush Heritage Australia](#) recently wrapped up the second phase of an innovative Queensland Bluegrass (*Dichanthium sericeum*) grass seed harvesting project on [Carnarvon Station Reserve](#), Bidjara country in the Queensland Brigalow Belt region.

Bluegrass species typically grow best on fertile clay soils that are suited for grazing and cropping. As a result, their extent and condition has declined dramatically since the introduction of large-scale agricultural practices.

Approximately 700 kilograms of native grass seeds were harvested in 2021, mostly bluegrass with up to a dozen other native grass species in the mix. It's an increase of almost 30% from the 550kg of seeds harvested in the inaugural trial in 2020 and reflects an exceptional wet season after five years of below average rainfall.

The harvested seeds will be sent to specialist soil, land and ecological restoration consultants Highlands Environmental in Emerald, Queensland for use in grassland regeneration and mined land rehabilitation programs throughout the Brigalow Belt bioregion.

“Not only does this project provide Bush Heritage with a sustainable income stream to support on-ground conservation work, but it facilitates the uptake of native grasses in other locations,” said Carnarvon Reserve Manager Chris Wilson.

“It's absolutely critical we maintain healthy grasslands as they attract insects, the start of the food chain, which then flows on to birds, small rodents and native mammals. Native grasses help to retain all these species, and also reduce the impact of the more intense bushfires predicted under climate change.”

The brush harvester used has minimal impact on the plants and takes only 10-15% of available ripe seed, leaving the rest to go back into the ecosystem. Scientists from Highlands Environmental are undertaking soil and vegetation condition monitoring pre- and post-harvesting to build up a solid ecological dataset over time.

“I am absolutely delighted to be working with Chris and the Bush Heritage team on such a worthy project,” said Highlands Environmental Managing Director Terry Short.

Carnarvon quick facts

- Purchased by Bush Heritage in 2001
- The Traditional Owners are the Bidjara people
- Provides habitat for more than 170 animal species including Common Dunnart, Koala, Herbert's Rock Wallaby, Greater Glider and Glossy Black-cockatoo
- They are important for species such as the Narrow-nosed Planigale which makes its home within the cracks of the clay soil, and the Rufous Bettong which digs up fungi and tubers from the fertile soil