

Caring for our Country Business Plan 2009-10

Priorities for investment

These pages have been extracted from the full document which is available at: www.nrm.gov.au/publications/books/business-plan.html

© Commonwealth of Australia 2008

Selected passages and maps may be reproduced provided due acknowledgement is made. Permission will be required for the reproduction of any photographs.

The Australian Government acting through the Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry has exercised due care and skill in the preparation and compilation of the information set out in this publication. Notwithstanding, the Australian Government, its employees and advisers disclaim all liability, including liability for negligence, for any loss, damage, injury, expense or cost incurred by any person as a result of accessing, using or relying upon any of the information in this publication to the maximum extent permitted by the law.



Priorities for Investment

A series of short-term Caring for our Country targets have been developed that will help to prioritise the Caring for our Country investment and deliver the five-year outcomes by 2013 (details of the Caring for our Country outcomes are available at www.nrm.gov.au).

The following table outlines the targets for which investment proposals are currently being sought.

It is important that the comprehensive information in the section *Guiding Information* is carefully considered before an investment proposal is prepared. This information includes the rationale, eligibility criteria, and where relevant, maps of high priority areas that have been prepared for each Caring for our Country target to assist in developing proposals.

Priorities for Investment

Through this 2009-10 business plan, the Australian Government is seeking proposals for the delivery of the Caring for our Country targets outlined in Table 1.

The targets include a variety of time frames (one, two, three and four years) depending on the nature of the target. It is expected that proposals will be submitted that seek to deliver portions of targets in a variety of timeframes. It is not a requirement that all submissions are for three or four years.

Regional bodies are required to submit proposals for their guaranteed funding through the process identified in this business plan, outlining how they will contribute to the delivery of these targets (Table 1).

These targets and many of the existing commitments include a number of the 2007 election commitments including:

- » rescue the Great Barrier Reef (\$200 million)
- » repair our fragile coastal ecosystems (\$100 million)
- » save the endangered Tasmanian devil (\$10 million)
- » improve water quality in the Gippsland Lakes (\$5.25 million) and Tuggerah Lakes Estuary (\$20 million)
- » fight the cane toad menace (\$2 million)
- » employ additional Indigenous rangers (\$90 million)
- » expand the Indigenous Protected Area network (\$50 million)
- » assist Indigenous Australians enter the carbon trading market (\$10 million).



Nick Rains

Table 1: Caring for our Country targets for which proposals are being sought

National Reserve System

The Australian Government has boosted funding for the National Reserve System with \$180 million over five years as part of Caring for our Country. The National Reserve System will help to conserve Australia's distinctive landscapes, plants and animals through a comprehensive, adequate and representative system of reserves across Australia.

Five year outcomes

Targets

Expand the area that is protected within the National Reserve System to at least 125 million hectares (a 25 per cent increase), with priority to be given to increasing the area that is protected in under-represented bioregions.

Increasing the National Reserve System—To increase the area that is protected within the National Reserve System by 5 million hectares a year in under-represented bioregions.

See page 44 for further guidance and information.

Expand the contribution of Indigenous Protected Areas to the National Reserve System by between 8 and 16 million hectares (an increase of at least 40 per cent).

Increasing Indigenous Protected Areas—To increase the area of Indigenous-owned land declared as Indigenous Protected Areas by 2 million hectares a year in under-represented bioregions and managed as part of the National Reserve System.

See page 46 and 84 for further guidance and information.

Increase from 70 per cent to 100 per cent, the proportion of Australian Government-funded protected areas under the National Reserve System that are effectively implementing plans of management.

Managing the National Reserve System—To complete management plans for 100 per cent of Australian Government-funded protected areas under the National Reserve System, over the next four years.

See page 44 for further guidance and information.

Biodiversity and natural icons

The Australian Government has acknowledged the need to take action to protect our biodiversity and natural icons. Priorities for government funding will include protecting World Heritage Areas, tackling weeds and pest animals that threaten biodiversity, and improving outcomes for nationally threatened species and communities.

Five year outcomes

Targets

Increase, by at least one million hectares, the area of native habitat and vegetation that is managed to reduce critical threats to biodiversity and to enhance the condition, connectivity and resilience of habitats and landscapes. This is additional to the 125 million hectares that is to be protected within the National Reserve System.

Increasing native habitat—To increase by at least 400 000 hectares, over the next two years, the area of native habitat and vegetation that is managed to reduce critical threats to biodiversity and enhance the condition, connectivity and resilience of habitats and landscapes in priority regions.

See page 48 for further guidance and information.

Table 1: Caring for our Country targets for which proposals are being sought

Biodiversity and natural icons (cont'd)

Five year outcomes	Targets
<p>Reduce the impact of invasive species:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » the southern and westward migration of cane toads » camels in at least one priority area » at least four other priority areas. <p>In this business plan the additional priority areas are: exotic rodents on small high-priority islands, rabbit populations, Weeds of National Significance and foxes in Tasmania (see page 17).</p>	<p>Reducing the impact of cane toads—To undertake 1500 community volunteer days of cane toad control in 2009–10, particularly in areas that will slow the southern and westward migration of cane toads.</p> <p>Reducing the impact of cane toads—To research the development of feasible, sustainable control measures and/or management and eradication solutions for the cane toad menace in 2009–10.</p> <p>See page 50 for further guidance and information.</p> <p>Reducing the impact of camels—To protect the identified refuges for biodiversity in northern and remote Australia that are under threat from camels, by reducing the density of the camel populations in the surrounding areas to less than 0.1 animal per km² over the next two years.</p> <p>See page 52 for further guidance and information.</p> <p>Reducing the impact of exotic rodents on small islands—To eliminate or mitigate the impact of exotic rodents on small high-priority islands over the next three years, to protect threatened species occurring on these islands including Babel, Badger, Cape Barren, Great Dog, Lord Howe, Maer, Mt Chappell, Sunday and Truant Islands.</p> <p>See page 54 for further guidance and information.</p> <p>Reducing the impact of rabbits—To suppress rabbit populations over the next three years to densities that are low enough to allow regeneration and recovery of critically endangered and endangered species and communities in identified priority areas.</p> <p>See page 56 for further guidance and information.</p> <p>Reducing the impact of weeds—To reduce the impact and spread of Weeds of National Significance over the next two years. Priority will be given to collaborative activities that address outliers, containment lines, and strategic management of core infestations where appropriate.</p> <p>See page 58 for further guidance and information.</p>
<p>Secure management arrangements for all World Heritage Areas that meet the requirements of the World Heritage Convention.</p>	<p>Managing World Heritage Areas—To identify significant emerging threats to the outstanding universal values of Australia's World Heritage Areas each year and ensure effective mitigation measures are in place.</p> <p>See page 60 for further guidance and information.</p>

Table 1: Caring for our Country targets for which proposals are being sought

Coastal environments and critical aquatic habitats

Our coastal environments and critical aquatic habitats face a range of threats. The Australian Government will deliver outcomes for these important areas—including delivering the Great Barrier Reef Rescue package, protecting and rehabilitating areas for critically endangered and endangered species and migratory shorebirds, improving the quality of water discharged into coastal environments, and protecting Ramsar wetlands.

Five year outcomes	Targets
Reduce the discharge of dissolved nutrients and chemicals from agricultural lands to the Great Barrier Reef lagoon by 25 per cent.	<p>Protecting the Reef—To increase the number of farmers who have adopted land management practices that will improve the quality of water reaching the reef lagoon by a further 1300 over three years.</p> <p>See page 40 for the Reef Rescue process and page 62 for further guidance and information.</p>
Reduce the discharge of sediment and nutrients from agricultural lands to the Great Barrier Reef lagoon by 10 per cent.	<p>Protecting the Reef—To increase the number of pastoralists who have improved ground cover monitoring and management in areas where run-off from grazing is contributing significantly to sediment loads and a decline in the quality of water reaching the reef lagoon by a further 1500 over three years.</p> <p>See page 40 for the Reef Rescue process and page 62 for further guidance and information.</p>
<p>Deliver actions that sustain the environmental values of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » priority sites in the Ramsar estate, particularly sites in northern and remote Australia » an additional 25 per cent of (non-Ramsar) priority coastal and inland high conservation value aquatic ecosystems including, as a priority, sites in the Murray–Darling Basin. 	<p>Protecting Ramsar wetlands—To address the threats posed by invasive plant and animal species to the ecological character of Ramsar-listed wetlands, over the next two years.</p> <p>See page 66 for further guidance and information.</p> <p>Protecting critical aquatic habitats—To address the threats posed by invasive plant and animal species to the environmental values of high priority non-Ramsar high conservation value aquatic ecosystems, over the next two years.</p> <p>See page 68 for further guidance and information.</p>
Increase the community's participation in protecting and rehabilitating coastal environments and critical aquatic habitats.	<p>Improving coastal hotspots—To address the threats affecting the environmental values of coastal hotspots over the next two years, such as declining or poor water quality, disturbance of acid sulfate soils or ecosystem disturbance leading to habitat loss and biodiversity decline.</p> <p>See page 72 for further guidance and information.</p> <p>Increasing coastal community engagement—To engage at least 500 community organisations in coastal rehabilitation, restoration and conservation projects over the next two years.</p> <p>See page 74 for further guidance and information.</p>

Table 1: Caring for our Country targets for which proposals are being sought

Sustainable farm practices

The Australian Government has committed to building on the success of the National Landcare Program to encourage the adoption of on-farm land management practices that continue to maintain and improve production and deliver ecosystem services for the whole community.

Five year outcomes

Targets

Assist at least 30 per cent of farmers to increase their uptake of sustainable farm and land management practices that deliver improved ecosystem services.

Improving land management practices—To increase by 42 000 farmers in identified priority regions that have improved their management to reduce the risk of soil acidification and soil loss through wind erosion, water erosion and improve carbon content of soils, or have adopted other improved soil management methods.

See page 76 for further guidance and information.

Increase the number of farmers who adopt stewardship, covenanting, property management plans or other arrangements to improve the environment both on-farm and off-farm.

Increasing landscape scale conservation—To increase by 6700 farmers in priority regions adopting activities that contribute to the ongoing conservation and protection of biodiversity over four years.

See page 82 for further guidance and information.

Improve the knowledge, skills and engagement of at least 30 per cent of land managers and farmers in managing our natural resources and the environment.

Improving knowledge and skills of land managers—To increase by 42 000 land managers and farmers over four years who have demonstrated an improvement in knowledge and skills in natural resource management.

See page 86 for further guidance and information.

Community skills, knowledge and engagement

Communities have an important role to play in managing our natural resources. This priority area will invest in the skills and knowledge of Indigenous people, volunteers and communities to enable them to partner more effectively with regional and other organisations to deliver landscape-scale change. This priority is important for building on the work undertaken by landcare, coastcare and other community and productivity groups over many years.

Five year outcomes

Targets

Improve the access to knowledge and skills of urban and regional communities in managing natural resources sustainably and helping protect the environment.

Increasing community knowledge and skills—To ensure all regional natural resource management organisations assist local communities, including Indigenous, landcare and coastcare groups over the next two years to access knowledge and skills in managing natural resources, including:

- » providing easily accessible, free information to groups and individuals
- » providing training opportunities to local groups.

See page 86 for further guidance and information.

Table 1: Caring for our Country targets for which proposals are being sought

Community skills, knowledge and engagement (cont'd)

Five year outcomes	Targets
Increase the engagement and participation rates of urban and regional communities in activities to manage natural resources and to help protect the environment.	<p>Increasing participation in natural resource management—To increase the recruitment and retention of volunteers in community groups involved in managing natural resources, over the next two years, in particular youth.</p> <p>Increasing participation in natural resource management—To increase the opportunities for short-term members or visitors to contribute to and partake in the protection and management of natural resources.</p> <p>Increasing participation in natural resource management—To ensure all regional natural resource management organisations provide support for community groups (eg through devolved grants) to undertake local projects over the next two years.</p> <p>See page 86 for further guidance and information.</p>
Position all regional natural resource management organisations to deliver best-practice landscape conservation and sustainable land use planning to communities and land managers within their regions.	<p>Improving delivery of best practice—To ensure all regional natural resource management organisations have best-practice governance arrangements in place within the next two years.</p> <p>See page 86 for further guidance and information.</p>
Ensure the continued use, support, and reinvigoration of traditional ecological knowledge to underpin biodiversity conservation.	<p>Engaging Indigenous communities—To develop at least 20 Indigenous partnerships over two years that engage Indigenous communities in delivering Caring for our Country.</p> <p>See page 84 for further guidance and information.</p> <p>Increasing Indigenous best management practice—To use traditional ecological knowledge in the development of management plans in at least 32 newly initiated Indigenous Protected Area projects over four years.</p> <p>See page 46 & 84 for further guidance and information.</p> <p>Utilising traditional ecological knowledge—To involve at least 15 projects in the use or recording of Indigenous traditional knowledge from Indigenous communities over two years.</p> <p>See page 84 for further guidance and information.</p>

Note: It is expected that many of the community skills, knowledge and engagement targets will be addressed in conjunction with the other targets outlined in Table 1 and should be considered by proponents in developing their proposals.

Northern and remote Australia

The Australian Government will secure better environmental and natural resource outcomes in northern and remote Australia, particularly for Indigenous groups.

Funding of \$50 million has been committed through Caring for our Country for Indigenous Protected Areas and \$90 million for the employment of an additional 300 Indigenous rangers across Australia.

The environmental, social and economic challenges faced by northern and remote Australia require a tailored approach to sustainable natural resource use and environmental protection.

The small and dispersed population and unique environmental, social and economic challenges require different approaches to investment from those in the more developed areas of the country.

Northern and remote Australia contains some of our most intact high conservation value landscapes, significant environmental assets and cultural values. It also contains valuable productive resources with a high potential for future development.

This area will be a major focus for Australian Government environmental and natural resource management effort in coming years.

Caring for our Country will particularly seek to invest in opportunities relevant to Indigenous peoples, such as the employment of Indigenous rangers, the sustainable management of coastal areas and threatened ecological communities, and activities to position Indigenous land managers seeking to enter emissions trading markets.

The Australian Government expects that proponents will address Caring for our Country targets in northern and remote Australia by using and building on information from previous northern and remote Australian natural resource management research undertaken by organisations such as the Tropical Savannas Cooperative Research Centre, TRaCK (Tropical Rivers and Coastal Knowledge) and from the Australian Government's initiatives such as the Northern Australia Land and Water Taskforce (the secretariat of the taskforce is within the Office of Northern Australia).

The alliances between regions and organisations that enhance cross-border and cross-regional collaboration are crucial in northern and remote Australia in delivering the environment and resource management objectives of the Australian Government.



Source Data: © The Australian Government with the cooperation of state and territory government agencies
Topographic Data 1:10,000,000 © The Australian Government, Geoscience Australia
Map Produced by: Environmental Resource Information Network (ERIN), Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, 2008

Existing Commitments

The following Caring for our Country targets and activities have already been committed for 2009–10 through funding of multi-year projects and election commitments. The Australian Government is therefore not seeking proposals for these works.

Previous commitments via multi-year funding:

- » Landcare Sustainable Practices grants from 2008–09 for projects of greater than one year duration
- » Environmental Stewardship is currently targeting the critically endangered White Box, Yellow Box and Blakely's Red Gum grassy woodland and derived grasslands ecological community as detailed in the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (1999)*. Other target areas have yet to be determined but will be provided for in future business plans
- » Existing negotiations and their multi-year commitments for National Reserve System, Indigenous Protected Areas and Working on Country.



Election commitments

The following components have existing agreed delivery processes and delivery agents:

- » development of a Cane Toad Threat Abatement Plan ready for implementation to curb the southern and westward spread of cane toads
- » preparation of the Ningaloo Reef nomination for submission to the World Heritage Centre
- » support for research into the Tasmanian devil facial disease, a disease that has resulted in severe decline in the local Tasmanian devil population. Activities to be undertaken include disease diagnostics, population monitoring, and wild and captive management to increase the number of healthy and disease free Tasmanian devils, improve the genetic diversity of the Tasmanian devil population and prevent ecological impacts of a reduced Tasmanian devil population over its natural range
- » a 10 per cent increase in the uptake of land management practices in the Gippsland Lakes catchments including in the Macalister Irrigation District that will reduce nutrient levels in water flowing into the Gippsland Lakes
- » completion of infrastructure to slow the run off and improve the quality of water delivered to the wetland constructed for the Eastern Creek Wetlands and flood mitigation program
- » completion of four kilometres of stream bank rehabilitation to reduce sediment input to streams over 19 per cent of the Tuggerah Lakes estuary area identified at risk
- » restoration and enhancement of over one hectare of salt marsh vegetation to return ecosystem function to three per cent of the area of degraded marsh in the Tuggerah Lakes estuary
- » Indigenous Rangers have been contracted through Working on Country funding calls in 2007–08 and 2008–09 with over 200 Indigenous rangers to be recruited by June 2009. There will be further calls for Indigenous rangers in 2010–11 and subsequent years
- » Indigenous emissions trading will support Indigenous participation in emerging carbon markets with a focus on opportunities for generating carbon credits arising from fire management in northern Australia. This commitment will investigate the legal framework for creation of carbon credits for altered fire regimes, support local capacity and partnerships between the private sector and Indigenous communities, and research the scientific and market potential.



Dragi Markovic – DEWHA

Other commitments with state governments

These are other commitments that the Australian Government and state governments have agreed to undertake to protect or improve important natural assets.

These commitments are an important part of Caring for our Country, and are matched by the relevant state government:

- » reduce the impact of rabbits and rodents on Macquarie Island (Tasmania)—in 2009–2010 detector dog training will be completed and dogs and handlers will arrive on Macquarie Island to continue the control process
- » fox-free Tasmania—the Australian Government, in partnership with the Tasmanian Government, is working to eradicate foxes from Tasmania. This project supports a range of measures, including strategic baiting, scat detection and analysis, dog training, community awareness and education, and impact assessment for species threatened by foxes
- » management arrangements for the extended Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area secured in 2009–10 to tackle threats to the outstanding universal values of the property through the development and implementation of more integrated management arrangements, including a vegetation plan, a revised fire management plan and better monitoring and management of newly discovered values
- » management arrangements secured for the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area in 2009–10, through increased engagement in management and partnerships with the rainforest Aboriginal people, the general community and other organisations
- » national coordination of the delivery of the Weeds of National Significance Strategy.

Foundational activities

There are some activities that will enable the Australian Government to better identify future priorities or refine strategies for Caring for our Country.

Limited tenders may be sought for the development and delivery of foundational activities for the successful and more targeted delivery of Caring for our Country.

Examples of such projects that may be delivered include:

- » review of Australia's Ramsar sites to provide information on the status and condition of Australia's Ramsar-listed wetlands
- » biodiversity resilience and habitat connectivity prioritisation study, particularly on private land
- » Great Barrier Reef water quality research and development
- » mapping and monitoring of soil condition
- » preparation of a draft national framework for the identification, classification and management of Australia's high conservation value aquatic ecosystems (HCVAE).

Provision will be made for funding some potential projects that arise outside of the normal business plan funding cycle to ensure that projects of a critical nature can be undertaken.