

Natural Resource TALK...

Budget

The Australian Government's 2007-08 Budget will see new levels of investment in Australia's environment and water resources, with an increase in overall spending across government to \$4.3 billion.

For Natural Resource Management, this means a further \$2 billion over five years from 2008-09 to build on the achievements of the \$3.1 billion Natural Heritage Trust and \$1.4 billion National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality.

The Minister for the Environment and Water Resources, Malcolm Turnbull, said the \$2 billion package would ensure that action continues on a local, regional and national scale.

The Budget also includes \$112.1 million for the National Landcare Programme from 2008-09 to 2010-11. Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Peter McGauran, said the latest investment would ensure the National Landcare Programme continues to play a key role in strengthening the links between farmers and regional natural resource managers. In addition, \$50 million will be provided for the new Environmental Stewardship Programme, which will help farmers protect our natural resources. Visit Minister Turnbull's media site: <http://www.environment.gov.au/minister/env/2007/pubs/mr08may07.pdf> or Minister McGauran's: <http://www.maff.gov.au/releases/07/07B013.html>



Training

Thirty six Australian Government facilitators have nominated to do NRM Facilitation accreditation. The Australian Institute of Agricultural Science and Technology is supporting and promoting the development of AgCredited, Australia's first recognised national accreditation and professional development programme for those working in agriculture and NRM. Candidates need to meet specified national core and specialist competencies according to the Vocational and Education Training System. They then have the option of completing an additional two units to achieve a Diploma in Conservation and Land Management. Accreditation lasts for five years. The first NRM participants are the Australian Government South Australian facilitator team plus one Canberra officer.

Survey

A recent survey of Australian companies shows that environmental performance is not a critical concern, with many saying that they would like to improve their environmental performance but that it's not a necessity. The survey, by Pricewaterhouse Coopers, shows that there is a significant difference in attitudes towards environmental management

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Drought update

While rainfall has improved, inflows to the River Murray system in both February and March set new record lows for each of these months. MDBC storage reserves remain at very low levels.

Water availability for 2007-08 is projected to be extremely low unless there is a significant increase in inflow.

The Bureau of Meteorology has announced that the 2006/07 El Nino event has ended, and there is an increased chance of a La Nina event developing in 2007 – so there is now a better chance of improvement in rainfall in winter/spring 2007.

Managing climate

The Managing Climate Variability Programme assists Australian farmers to manage climate risk on-the-ground, providing them with practical tools to incorporate weather and climate information into farm business decisions. It is a successor programme to the Climate Variability in Agriculture Programme established under the National Drought Policy in 1992 and extended under the Australian Government's Advancing Australian Agriculture initiative in 1998. More information is available at www.managingclimate.gov.au

between public and private companies, with 66 per cent of public companies active in improving their performance and only 51 per cent of private companies actively pursuing improvement. Business owners were generally confused by future environmental issues and how they should respond to them. Visit <http://news.envirocentre.com.au/enviroinfo/newsletter.php?issue=2007-03-22>

The Grains Council of Australia invites producers to provide information in a survey (no financial details required) about current farming practices to assist in highlighting the efficient and sustainable practices across the grains sector. More information and the survey can be accessed at www.grainscouncil.com/EMS/about_ems.htm

News

The Board of the Australian Local Government Association has adopted *Sustainable Cities - A National Action Plan for Urban Australia* as a foundation for sustainable urban planning and climate change. The Plan provides a blueprint for the future sustainable management of urban centres and enables Urban Action Plans to be developed at a local and regional level, including issues such as integrated water/stormwater management, bushland conservation and protection of urban green zones. Visit www.aiqs.com.au/Publications/QuickDownloads/Sustainable%20Communities.pdf



Feedback

The annual meeting of all 56 NRM region chairs and federal and state NRM Ministers was held last month in Brisbane. This year the meeting focused

on the roll-out of the next national NRM programme that will follow the completion of the existing programme in June 2008. National NRM Working Group chairman, Mike Berwick, said there were three key issues facing regional communities: climate variability, building community capacity to manage natural resources and closer alignment of efforts by all levels of government.

Mr Berwick said that although they were "enthusiastic" about the proposed new national programme, many NRM regions had entered uncharted territory in terms of water scarcity and drought. However, he said that where there had been long-term investment through the Natural Heritage Trust, the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality and Landcare, there was a noticeable improvement in the retention of ground cover, despite the drought.

Feedback from facilitators is sought on a report launched by Land & Water Australia and the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation titled *'Enabling Regional Natural Resource Management Boards: a Discussion Paper on Capacity Building Options'*. The report outlines 22 capacity building strategies with the potential to raise the human, social, institutional and economic capacities of the Boards of Australia's 56 NRM regions. **Feedback due 31st May 2007.** For a copy of the report contact 02 6230 6779 or email lisa@cres.anu.edu.au or visit www.landcarefacilitator.com.au/public/content/ViewCategory.aspx?id=39

Funding

Round 10 Threatened Species Network grants are now open. Community groups are invited to apply for up to \$50,000 to conduct on-ground conservation work for the ongoing health of our natural environment, specifically targeting the needs of nationally threatened species and ecological communities. **Closing date for applications is Friday, 1st June.** More information can be accessed at www.wwf.org.au/tsn or phone the Programme Grants Officer on 1800 032 551.

Envirofund Round 9 has now closed. Based on sector feedback and the number of enquiries received for Round 9, we are

anticipating more than 2,000 applications, a record number for Envirofund.

For progress updates or information about Round 10 visit www.nht.gov.au/envirofund

Community Water Grants Round 3 are now open for applications. **Closing date is 22nd June 2007.** Online applications close 11am, 4th July 2007. The Round 2 assessment process took three months therefore the assessment timeframe should be similar for Round 3, however the exact assessment time will depend on the number of applications received. For progress updates visit <http://www.communitywatergrants.gov.au/grants/round3/index.html>

Awards

Science and Innovation Awards for Young People in Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry aims to encourage people between the ages of 18-35 years to use science, technology and innovation to advance the future of agriculture, fisheries, forestry, food and natural resource management industries. **Closing date 15th June 2007.** Visit www.daffa.gov.au/brs/science-awards

WWF International Smart Gear Competition is seeking new designs for fishing gear that reduces marine bycatch - the accidental catch and related deaths of marine mammals, birds, sea turtles and fish species in fishing gear. Many millions of tonnes of what is caught in the course of fishing are thrown back into the sea dead, or dying, each year. \$30,000 prize for winning idea. **Closing date: 31st July 2007.** Visit: <http://www.wwf.org.au/news/prize-for-winning-idea-to-save-seas-and-species/>

Nuffield Scholarship applications for 2007 are now open for farmers across Australia interested in extending their knowledge overseas. Closing date is 30th June 2007. The objective is to increase practical farming knowledge and management skills and techniques generally. These scholarships give Australian citizens the opportunity to study farming practices in New Zealand, Europe, Asia and the Americas and those

countries best suited to the Scholar. Upon returning to Australia it is expected that Scholars will be able to actively spread the knowledge and understanding they have gained among their fellow farmers and others. Visit www.nuffield.com.au



Calendar

5th Australian Stream Management Conference, Albury, 21 - 25 May 2007. Hosted by the Institute for Land, Water and Society, this conference is an opportunity for Australian scientists, managers and practitioners to share the outcomes of their environmental research. They will showcase new developments as well as reflect on the impediments, problems and lessons learned. Visit <http://www.csu.edu.au/research/ilws/news/conference.html>

Water Efficiency 2007 conference, Brisbane, May 17-18, 2007. The focus of this conference is evaluating major themes and issues that are affecting the water industry including: Updating the Water Smart Australia Programme; water efficient policies and innovation; best practice case studies and updates on successful water efficient programmes, the financial costs and benefits of water efficiency and consumer benefits of water efficient behaviours. Visit www.iir.com.au/water

2007 UrbanSalt Conference "Dealing With Salinity in Urban Environments," Sydney, 22 - 23 May 2007. An opportunity to learn from the experts in urban salinity from around Australia. The conference will be attended by key

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New school

The Australian National University will establish a new Fenner School of Environment and Society to focus on issues such as climate change, water management and biodiversity loss. The School will combine the resources of the former Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies, and the School for Resources, Environment and Society. It will be headed by Earth System scientist Professor Will Steffen, former CRES Director and Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research).

Natural Resource Talk

New research facility

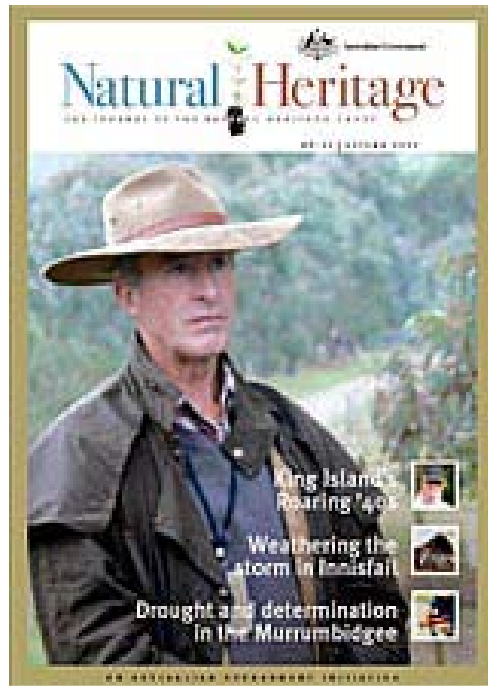
Representatives of regional business and industry, research organisations, Indigenous and community groups will come together to advise the Australian Government on its \$40 million marine and tropical science research programme.

The Advisory Council for the Marine and Tropical Sciences Research Facility programme is a multi-disciplinary approach to pursuing big-picture environmental research aimed at protecting North Queensland's unique reefs and rainforests, such as the Great Barrier Reef and its catchments, tropical rainforests, including the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area and the Torres Strait.

For more information: <http://www.environment.gov.au/minister/env/2007/pubs/mr12mar207.pdf>

decision makers from local government, state and federal government agencies, representatives of catchment management authorities, environmental scientists, geotechnical officers, landscape architects, builders and developers, engineers and building repairers. Visit <http://www.wsroc.com.au/>

Bushfire in a Heating World, 31 May - 1 June 2007, Sydney. The conference will focus on delivering ecologically sustainable bushfire management in the context of Australia's changing climate. There will be an emphasis on achieving best possible biodiversity outcomes. Speakers will be including practical elements based on experiences and case studies. Visit http://www.nccnsw.org.au/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1651&Itemid=821



Library

The latest edition of the Natural Heritage Journal is out now. This season's theme is "NRM facilitators," which profiles 12 people including Australian Government, Regional, Local Government and Indigenous Land Management Facilitators. To join the mailing list email heritage@canmail.com.au or download the latest edition from www.nht.gov.au/publications/journal/index.html

The Australian Bankers' Association has helped publish guides for landholders

affected by drought, including *Financing Your Farm - a Practical Guide to financial growth*, a reference when planning, financing and managing farm businesses, providing independent information, tools and accounting case studies for farm businesses. In recognition of the seriousness of the drought, two chapters have been published online. *Access and Manage Farm Viability* gives the farmer tools to assess the long-term viability of the business, suggestions on how to cope with financial stress and options for resolving a financial crisis. Visit: www.bankers.asn.au/ArticleDocuments/FYFChapter15-web.pdf

Innovative Farmers Coming Through Drought - Land & Water Australia and partner organisations began the Masters of the Climate project in 1999 with a group of farmers from across the country providing information about how they use climate tools to better manage their land resources and farm businesses. This is a culmination of stories and practices from these farmers eight years on. Visit www.lwa.gov.au/products_list.asp or contact Canprint Communications on 1800 776 616 quote Product Code PK050943

The Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics has published a research report on Groundwater management: efficiency and sustainability. This provides an overview of issues related to sustainable use of groundwater resources and considers the impact of scientific uncertainty on policy design and the importance of monitoring groundwater use. Visit http://www.abareconomics.com/publications_html/news/news.html

New Grain & Graze Project Guide - The Grain & Graze Programme invests in research to improve on-farm profitability while better managing natural resources such as water, soil and biodiversity. This new Guide describes the programme's four national projects and 57 regional projects. Visit www.grainandgraze.com.au/

Land and Water Australia Catalogue - a range of publications are available from Land and Water Australia's publication catalogue. For free CD-ROMs, books and brochures visit www.lwa.gov.au or call 1800 776 616.



Please keep us informed of your NRM news. Email: georgia.curry@environment.gov.au



Australian Government

Department of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry

Department of the Environment
and Water Resources

Rainman - a climate management CD-based software package of rainfall information, designed to assist in the management of rainfall variability. Rainman contains historical monthly and daily rainfall data for about 3,800 locations and monthly and daily stream flows for 400 locations throughout Australia, plus monthly rainfall records for 9500 locations throughout the world. Farmers can calculate chances of monthly and seasonal rain, display historical data as tables or graphs, and forecast seasonal rain, dry periods and effective rain for their own location. Contact 07 4688 1375 or email ian.partridge@dpi.qld.gov.au

The Aquatic Biodiversity Assessment and Mapping Method identifies relative wetland conservation values within a specified study area. The method is used to produce an Aquatic Conservation Assessment of wetlands using available data. For details of the method and results of an ACA in the Burnett River catchment, visit www.epa.qld.gov.au/register/p02017aa.pdf

Groundwater Management Handbook – A guide for Local Government - contains technical and management information that can be applied throughout NSW with a particular focus on the Sydney coastal region. It is the only one of its kind in NSW. Visit www.sydneycoastalcouncils.com.au

Australia's first set of national guidelines for water recycling has been released. The first phase of the guidelines features environmental and health risk assessment benchmarks for the use of stormwater and treated sewage for irrigation of urban open spaces as well as agricultural uses. Visit www.ephc.gov.au/ephc/water_recycling.html.

Systems in Action – EMS national pilot programme booklet contains summaries of the EMS pilots and can be downloaded at www.daffa.gov.au/natural-resources/land-salinity/ems or phone 02 6272 3031

SALTdeck helps in saltland plant species identification and selection. It covers volunteer species, weeds and common productive saltland pasture species. Visit www.landwaterwool.gov.au/news.asp?news=50



Cybersurf

The Multi-Criteria Analysis Shell for Spatial Decision Support is a tool that could be useful for farmers to cross-reference water availability with weather conditions and pest prevalence in order to determine the best places to graze cattle or plant crops. Visit www.brs.gov.au/mcass

Healthy Soils for Sustainable Farms Programme website, managed by Land & Water Australia, works with farmers, communities and researchers to bring together and build on existing soil health information. Visit www.healthysoils.gov.au/

Economic Ready Reckoner for Evaporation Mitigation Systems. A ready reckoner (spreadsheet calculator) has been developed for the National Programme for Sustainable Irrigation for farmers to work out how much water they are losing from dams and whether it is worth investing in systems to reduce evaporation. Visit www.npsi.gov.au/readyreckoner/index.html

The Rainfall to Pasture Growth Outlook Tool developed by the Bureau of Rural Sciences on behalf of Meat & Livestock Australia assists farmers to estimate pasture growth in relation to rainfall, soil moisture and other climatic conditions. Visit www.mla.com.au/growthoutlooktool/

Best Management Practice for Residual Herbicides and Water Quality. For manuals and risk assessment tools to help reduce agricultural chemicals leaving the farm. Visit www.grdc.com.au/growers/res_summ/dnr00002/index.htm

The Connected Water website helps catchment management groups manage surface and groundwater resources. Visit www.connectedwater.gov.au/

