



## Environmental Stewardship

Caring for our Country – Environmental Stewardship is a landmark Australian Government initiative to help private land managers achieve long-term environmental outcomes on their land.

Environmental Stewardship is an element of the Australian Government's Caring for our Country initiative. It is about maintaining and improving the long-term quality and extent of high public value environmental assets on private land or impacted by activities conducted on private land.

Farmers (including hobby farmers), Indigenous and corporate land managers can participate in the program. They may enter into long term contracts (up to 15 years) to conserve targeted environmental assets on their land with support from the Australian Government. Environmental Stewardship will take a market-based approach to environmental management.

The initial focus is on the critically endangered Box Gum Grassy Woodland ecological community which extends from Queensland to Victoria through the wheat-sheep belt. Only five percent of the original woodland remains in good condition and much of it needs urgent work.

### What is Caring for our Country?

Caring for our Country is the Australian Government's commitment for urgent action to better protect Australia's unique natural environment and improve the sustainable management of our natural resources.

### Caring for our Country has one clear goal:

An environment that is healthy, better protected, well managed, resilient and provides essential ecosystem services in a changing climate.

It has six national priorities:

- national reserve system
- biodiversity and natural icons – including weed and feral animal control, threatened species
- coastal environments and critical aquatic habitats
- sustainable farm practices – including Landcare
- natural resource management in remote and northern Australia
- community skills, knowledge and engagement.

National investments and efforts will be targeted towards these six areas of national priority and will include initiatives to protect biodiversity and natural icons, clean water and air, healthy soils, and sustainable food and fibre industries.

Caring for our Country commenced on 1 July 2008. The launch of the Environmental Stewardship element signals the government's commitment to prompt action on important environmental assets and collaboration with stakeholders.



## How does Environmental Stewardship help meet Caring for our Country Priorities?

Environmental Stewardship contributes to the Caring for our Country biodiversity and natural icons national priority. Environmental assets are targeted from the following matters of National Environmental Significance (NES) as listed under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*:

- nationally endangered or vulnerable species and ecological communities
- migratory species and wetlands for which Australia has international responsibilities
- natural values associated with world and national heritage places.

These matters represent the most vulnerable and at risk environmental assets which fall substantially under the Australian Government's responsibility.

## How are the Environmental Stewardship assets being chosen?

The Australian Government decides which assets are chosen for participation in the program. This decision is based on:

- the ecological importance of the asset
- the extent or quality of the asset in the landscape
- the level of threat or risk to the asset and ability to manage these
- whether assets are on private land or impacted by private land management
- likely environmental, social and economic impacts and returns.

## What are the outcomes that Environmental Stewardship seeks to achieve?

Environmental Stewardship is seeking to achieve a measurable improvement in the condition and/or extent of the targeted environmental assets. In doing so it will contribute to:

- improving habitat across the landscape
- increasing the viability, integrity and buffers to high quality remnants for species and ecological communities, internationally important wetlands and World Heritage Areas
- improving the long-term protection of nationally endangered species and ecological communities
- improving the condition and function of ecological communities
- encouraging land managers to adopt sustainable land management practices and conserve the environment for future generations.

For more information please call:

➤ **1800 552 008**, or visit:

➤ [www.nrm.gov.au/stewardship](http://www.nrm.gov.au/stewardship)

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