

Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts

Volume 1 Glossary–Indexes–Credits

ANNUAL REPORT 2007–08

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Australian Government

Department Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts

Glossary

Administered items are expenses, revenues, assets or liabilities managed by agencies on behalf of the Commonwealth. Administered expenses include grants, subsidies and benefits, and may fund the delivery of third party outputs. For example the department administers appropriations for the Australian Government's Natural Heritage Trust to provide grants. This annual report refers to appropriations for administered items as 'administered appropriations'.

Additional estimates is a process where the parliament may appropriate more funds to portfolios if the amounts appropriated at Budget time are insufficient. There can also be supplementary additional estimates.

Appropriations are authorisations by the parliament to spend monies from the Consolidated Revenue Fund. Two appropriation Bills are introduced into parliament in May and comprise the Budget. Further Bills are introduced later in the financial year as part of the additional estimates.

Biodiversity in essence means the variety of life. The term 'biodiversity' is a contraction of, and synonymous with, 'biological diversity'. Biological diversity is defined in Article 2 of the Convention on Biological Diversity to mean 'the variability among living organisms from all sources including, inter

alia, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems' (a similar definition appears in the glossary to the Ramsar Convention on wetlands). This term was first defined around 1980 to include two related concepts, genetic diversity (the amount of genetic variability within species) and ecological diversity (the number of species in a community of organisms). In terms of the diversity between species, estimates of the total number of species range from three to 100 million. The contracted form 'biodiversity' was coined around 1986.

Bioregion in essence means a geographic area characterised by a combination of physical and biological characteristics, for example, terrain, climate and ecological communities. The glossary of terms related to the Convention on Biological Diversity provides the following definition: 'a territory defined by a combination of biological, social, and geographic criteria, rather than geopolitical considerations; generally, a system of related, interconnected ecosystems'. The term 'bioregion' is a contraction of biogeographic region and is usually synonymous with that term. The glossary to the Ramsar Convention on wetlands provides the following definition of 'biogeographic region' in relation to wetland

management: 'a scientifically rigorous determination of regions as established using biological and physical parameters such as climate, soil type, vegetation cover, etc'. Bioregions are a useful way to analyse patterns of biodiversity. The definition of a particular bioregion depends on the scale at which its characteristic features are measured.

Carbon dioxide equivalent is a term used by scientists to express the warming potential of various gases in carbon dioxide equivalent. For example over the next 100 years, compared with one kilogram of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere today, one kilogram of methane will result in about 21 times more warming. Similarly, over the next 100 years, compared with one kilogram of carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere today, one kilogram of chlorofluorocarbon-12 will result in 8,500 times more warming.

Carbon sink is a natural or human activity or mechanism that removes carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, such as the absorption of carbon dioxide by growing trees (see also **forest sink** and **geosequestration**).

Climate change in Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change usage refers to any change in climate over time, whether due to natural variability or human activity. This differs from the Framework Convention on Climate Change, where climate change refers to a change of climate that is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity, that alters the composition of the global atmosphere, and that is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods.

The **Commonwealth Heritage List** under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* 1999 comprises places which are owned or controlled by the Australian Government, and that have natural, Indigenous and/or historic heritage

values. These include places connected to defence, communications, customs and other government activities that also reflect Australia's development as a nation.

Conservation covenants are a voluntarily entered, but permanently legally binding, restriction on the way in which landowners are able to use their land. For example, grazing may be prohibited on a covenanted area and additional weed control may be expected. The restriction is in the form of a conservation covenant that is attached to the land title. Compliance with the conservation covenant is generally via a regular inspection by the body that is a party to the conservation covenant (usually a government department or statutory authority in Australia).

Corporate governance is the process by which agencies are directed, controlled and held to account. It is generally understood to encompass authority, accountability, stewardship, leadership, direction and control.

Departmental items are assets, liabilities, revenues and expenses that are controlled by agencies in providing their outputs. Departmental items would generally include computers, plant and equipment assets used by agencies in providing goods and services, and most employee expenses, supplier costs and other administrative expenses incurred. This annual report refers to appropriations for departmental items as 'departmental appropriations'.

Discretionary grants are payments made to particular applicants, either organisations or individuals, at the discretion of the portfolio minister or the paying agency. The definition of discretionary grants does not include service agreements, which are treated as contracts rather than grants; intra-Australian Government agency funding; payments to states and other government agencies (specific purpose payments) and inter-

government transfers; payments to overseas aid organisations; government income support programs; emergency payment programs; grants under commercial industry development programs (including to increase research and development, and assist exporters); grant programs specifically for educational institutions and medical research institutions; grants approved by Australian Government bodies outside the general government sector; or payments of a specific sum of money or a fixed percentage of shared funding to an organisation or individual that are made according to a Cabinet decision, a letter from the Prime Minister, or a determination of a ministerial council.

Distributed generation systems are small, modular, decentralised, grid-connected energy systems located in or near the place where energy is used. Distributed generation permits consumers who are generating heat or electricity for their own needs to send surplus electrical power back into the power grid.

Ecologically sustainable is used to describe activities that meet present needs without compromising the ability to meet future needs because of damage to the environment. For example, the National Strategy for Ecologically Sustainable Development defines ecologically sustainable development as ‘using, conserving and enhancing the community’s resources so that ecological processes, on which life depends, are maintained, and the total quality of life, now and in the future, can be increased’. The *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* defines ecologically sustainable use of natural resources as ‘use of the natural resources within their capacity to sustain natural processes while maintaining the life-support systems of nature and ensuring that the benefit of the use to the present generation does not diminish the potential to meet the needs and aspirations of future generations’.

Ecological communities are any naturally occurring group of species inhabiting a common environment, interacting with each other especially through food relationships and relatively independent of other groups. Ecological communities may vary in size, and larger ones may contain smaller ones. In the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* they are defined as assemblages of native species that inhabit particular areas in nature.

Environmental flow is water provided for the environment to sustain, and where necessary, restore ecological processes and biodiversity of water dependent ecosystems.

The **Environment Protection and Heritage Council** comprises environment and planning ministers from Australia’s federal, state and territory governments, and from the governments of New Zealand and Papua New Guinea, and a representative of the Australian Local Government Association. The council incorporates the National Environment Protection Council. The Environment Protection and Heritage Council’s responsibilities cover environment protection and natural, historic and Indigenous heritage.

Emissions trading is a mechanism for achieving emissions reductions in a whole economy (either national, regional or global) for the lowest cost. Participants in carbon trading schemes may buy and sell contractual commitments or certificates that represent specified amounts of carbon-related emissions that are allowed to be emitted; and may include reductions in emissions (new technology, energy efficiency, renewable energy); and offsets against emissions, such as carbon sequestration (capture of carbon in biomass or storage in geological structures).

ERISS – Environmental Research Institute of the Supervising Scientist

Evapotranspiration (ET) is a collective term for the transfer of water, as water vapour, to the atmosphere from both vegetated and unvegetated land surfaces. It is affected by climate, availability of water and vegetation.

Expense is the total value of all of the resources consumed in producing goods and services.

Financial results are the results shown in the financial statements of an agency.

A **forest sink** is a forest that stores more carbon than it releases. Forests absorb or take up carbon dioxide from the atmosphere as they grow, and store carbon in the trees and soil. Some carbon is returned to the atmosphere, for example through loss of leaves and branches.

Geosequestration, a contraction of 'geological sequestration', involves storing gases such as carbon dioxide underground in deep saline aquifers, depleted oil and gas reservoirs, coal seams or natural underground pore spaces. Scientists are investigating whether it is feasible to store carbon dioxide in this way instead of emitting it to the atmosphere, where it would add to the greenhouse effect.

One **gigalitre** is equal to 1,000 megalitres and one megalitre is equal to one million litres.

A **geographic information system (GIS)** is an information system for capturing, storing, analyzing, managing and presenting data which are spatially referenced (linked to location). GIS applications are tools that allow users to create interactive queries (user created searches), analyze spatial information, edit data, maps, and present the results of all these operations.

Greenhouse gases are heat-trapping gases that are a natural part of the atmosphere. They maintain higher temperatures at the earth's surface than would otherwise be

possible. This phenomenon is called the greenhouse effect. Water vapour is the most abundant greenhouse gas. Its concentration is highly variable and human activities have little direct impact on its amount in the atmosphere. Humans have most impact on carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide. Various artificial chemicals such as halocarbons also make a small contribution to climate change. The earth's climate is warming. Scientists agree that some of this warming is due to human activities—particularly burning fossil fuels (coal, oil and natural gas) and land clearing—that are enhancing the natural greenhouse effectively increasing the level of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere.

Integrated natural resource management is a way to ensure that uses of natural resources are ecologically sustainable. It is integrated because it attempts to manage all the activities that could affect natural resources, taking natural processes into account as well. It combines managing uses of natural resources with conservation. To do this it cuts across artificial distinctions such as government agency responsibilities, government or property boundaries, industry sectors and scientific disciplines. In defining management areas it gives priority to natural over human boundaries, for example using river catchments or bioregions as the primary basis for planning and management.

The objective of the **ISO14001** standard is to specify requirements for an environmental management system (EMS) to enable an organisation to develop and implement a policy and objectives that take into account legal requirements and other requirements to which the organisation subscribes. The standard also stipulates requirement of information about other significant environmental aspects of the organisations activity.

Karst is terrain with special landforms and drainage characteristics due to greater

solubility of certain rocks in natural waters than is common. The term is derived from the geographical name of part of Slovenia.

Matters of national environmental significance are aspects of the work of protecting the environment (including heritage places) for which the Australian Government is responsible or in which it has an interest. The current list of 30 matters was identified in the 1997 Heads of Agreement on Commonwealth and State Roles and Responsibilities for the Environment signed by the Council of Australian Governments. The agreement allows for other matters to be added in the future. The referral, assessment and approval requirements of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* help to protect seven of the 30 matters. The Australian Government's interests in the other matters are met through other legislation, cooperative approaches with the states and territories, and the delivery of programs and funding.

One **megalitre** is equal to one million litres.

The **Murray-Darling Basin Commission** is the executive arm of the Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council. The Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts administers Australian Government funding to support the work of the commission.

The **Murray-Darling Basin Ministerial Council** comprises government ministers responsible for land, water and environmental resources from New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Queensland and the Australian Government. The Australian Capital Territory participates via a memorandum of understanding. The council is the primary body responsible for providing the policy and direction needed to implement the Murray-Darling Basin Initiative, a partnership between governments and the community to give effect to the 1992 Murray-Darling Basin Agreement. The council oversees management of the basin under the Murray-Darling Basin Agreement between the

Australian, Victorian, New South Wales, South Australian, Queensland and Australian Capital Territory governments. The agreement sets out how to share the basin's water resources.

The **National Environment Protection Council** comprises the environment ministers of each state, territory and the Australian Government. The council has law-making powers under the *National Environment Protection Council Act 1994* and works cooperatively to develop these laws, which are called National Environment Protection Measures. The council is part of the Environment Protection and Heritage Council.

National Environment Protection Measures outline agreed national objectives for protecting or managing particular aspects of the environment. These measures have the force of law under the *National Environment Protection Measures (Implementation) Act 1998* and similar legislation in the states and territories. Measures made to date cover a range of issues including standards for air quality, movements of controlled waste, and used packaging.

The **National Heritage List** under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* comprises places or groups of places which have outstanding heritage value to the nation—whether natural, Indigenous or historic or a combination of these. Places on the National Heritage List are protected to the full extent of Australian Government powers.

The **Natural Heritage Trust** was set up by the Australian Government in 1997 to help restore and conserve Australia's environment and natural resources. Since then, thousands of community groups have received funding for environmental and natural resource management projects.

The **Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council** comprises ministers of the Australian Government and the state

and territory governments. The council is responsible for collective national decisions about the conservation and sustainable use of Australia's natural resources. The council has subsumed part of the work of the former Australian and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council and other former ministerial councils dealing with primary industry matters.

Outcomes are the results, impacts or consequences of actions by the Australian Government on the Australian community. They are listed in agencies' portfolio budget statements and portfolio additional estimates statements.

Outputs are the goods and services produced by agencies on behalf of the Australian Government for external organisations or individuals. Outputs also include goods and services produced for other areas of government external to an agency. In practice, most of the department's outputs are expressed in broad terms linked to major environmental themes.

Ozone depleting substances are substances that deplete the earth's protective ozone layer. They are widely used in refrigerators, air conditioners, fire extinguishers, in dry cleaning, as solvents for cleaning, electronic equipment and as agricultural fumigants. Ozone depleting substances include chlorofluorocarbons, halon, hydrochlorofluorocarbons and methyl bromide. Countries have agreed to phase out ozone depleting substances through the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. Some industries that use ozone depleting substances are replacing those substances with synthetic greenhouse gases.

Persistent organic pollutants are hazardous and environmentally persistent substances which can be transported between countries by the earth's oceans and atmosphere. The substances bioaccumulate and have been traced in the fatty tissues of humans and

other animals. Persistent organic pollutants include dieldrin, polychlorinated byphenyls, DDT, dioxins and furans. Countries have agreed to control the manufacture and trade of persistent organic pollutants through the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants.

Photovoltaic is technology that converts light into electricity. Photo means 'light' and voltaic means 'electric'. It is often referred to as 'PV' for short, but more commonly is referred to as 'solar electric'.

Procurement encompasses the whole process of acquiring property and services. It begins when the department has identified a need and decided on its procurement requirement. Procurement continues through the processes of developing a business case, including risk assessment, identifying and evaluating alternative solutions, approaching the market, assessing tenders or quotes, contract award, delivery of and payment for the property and services and, where relevant, the ongoing management of a contract and consideration of options related to the contract. Procurement also extends to the ultimate disposal of property at the end of its useful life.

Product stewardship means recognising that manufacturers, importers and other people who benefit from making and selling a product share some responsibility for the environmental impacts of that product.

Purchaser-provider arrangements are arrangements under which the outputs of one agency are purchased by another agency to contribute to outcomes. Purchaser-provider arrangements can occur between Australian Government agencies or between Australian Government agencies and state or territory government or private sector bodies.

Revenue is the total value of resources earned or received to cover the production of goods and services.

Riparian vegetation is situated on the banks of watercourses. In central Australia, where watercourses are usually dry, riparian communities often extend across the bed of the creek or river. The major threats to riparian communities are introduced weeds and fire.

Sclerophyll forests are a typically Australian vegetation type having plants with hard, short and often spiky leaves. They occur in a band around Australia from southern Queensland to the south-west of Western Australia. Sclerophyll is a Greek word meaning “hard-leaved” (sclero = hard; phyllon = leaf). The hardness in the leaves comes from lignin and prevents the leaves from wilting in dry conditions. However, Australian sclerophyllous plants evolved in response to low levels of soil phosphorus, not to low levels of moisture.

Special appropriations are monies appropriated by the parliament in an Act separate to an annual Appropriation Act, where the payment is for a specified amount. For example, the department receives special appropriations under laws that require industry to pay a levy on the import of ozone depleting substances. Special appropriations are not subject to annual budget control by the parliament, unlike the annual appropriations.

Synthetic greenhouse gases are greenhouse gases that are either used in industrial applications or emitted as a by-product of industrial activity. They include hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons and sulphur hexafluoride. Some industries that use ozone depleting substances are replacing those substances with synthetic greenhouse gases.

Tank to wheels – is an assessment of a vehicle’s fuel efficiency. For example, an efficient car might be able to travel 100 kilometres on 5 litres of petrol. We call the resulting fuel economy 5 litres/100km. This figure can also be termed the **tank-to-wheel** efficiency: that is, how much of the energy of the fuel in the tank makes it to the wheels as propulsion for the car. Tank to wheels does not include emissions associated with the production of a fuel. In the case of LNG (Liquified Natural Gas) the emissions associated with the production of the fuel vary from source to source.

A **worm farm** has been established to provide live feed for breeding populations of fish used for research purposes by **ERISS** staff

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¹ Refers to the location of the item in the Requirements for Annual Reports. For example, '9.1' refers to subsection 9(1) of the requirements, and 'A.4' refers to the fourth item in Attachment A of the requirements.

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