



Other initiatives

The Australian Government has funded a number of new environment-related initiatives since the 2005–06 Budget. The most significant initiatives are summarised below.

Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement

The Australian and Tasmanian governments will invest over \$250 million through the Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement to enhance the protection of Tasmania's forest environment and growth in the Tasmanian forest industry. The Agreement includes a substantial increase in protection of old growth forests in reserves, a new programme of incentives to protect forest on private land, an end date for clearing of native forest, and improved protection of rare, vulnerable and endangered vegetation communities.

The Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement adds new reserves to the world class reserve system that was secured through the Tasmanian Regional Forest Agreement in 1997. The Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement includes additional protection of forest on public and private land, comprising about 156,100 hectares of forest on public land and the expected voluntary addition of 45,600 hectares of private forest through a new Forest Conservation Fund. Tasmania will now have nearly 2.9 million hectares, or 42 per cent of the state's land area, in reserves.

Protection of old growth forest in Tasmania will increase to more than one million hectares with an additional 120,000 hectares of old growth reservation on public land and the expected voluntary addition of at least 25,000 hectares of old growth forest on private land, through the new Forest Conservation Fund.

More than half of the public land in the Styx Valley will be protected in reserves, with 13,200 hectares in formal reserves. A new Tall Trees Reserve around the tallest and largest trees in Australia, an enlarged Big Tree Reserve, and reserves protecting a substantial area of old growth forest on the adjoining northern slopes of the Styx Valley have been established, increasing the protection of old growth tall wet eucalypt forest. These reserves will protect some of the tallest flowering plants in the world and enable visitors to access these natural wonders.

The Australian Government will deliver in full its election commitments to provide \$2 million to save the Tasmanian Devil, invest \$1 million in river catchment water quality auditing, provide \$1 million to develop a Tarkine bush walk and \$4 million to fast-track development of alternatives to the use of 1080 on private land following the banning of its use on public land from the end of 2005. Tasmania will also be enhanced as a tourist destination with the package providing support of \$2 million for tourism developments to showcase the new reserves.



Great Barrier Reef Structural Adjustment Package — additional funding

On 1 July 2004, rezoning in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park (the Park) increased the area of 'no take' fishing zones in the Park from 4.5 per cent to 33.3 per cent, creating the largest network of protected marine areas in the world. The Australian Government has since been implementing a structural adjustment package to assist businesses impacted by the rezoning. The package has an approved budget of up to \$86.7 million, but the final amount of assistance provided will be determined by the applications meeting eligibility criteria for assistance.

As at 31 March 2006, 1,242 grants totalling \$59.1 million had been approved. This includes 457 Simplified Business Restructuring Assistance grants and 90 Full Business Restructuring Assistance grants. Other elements of the package provide for grants for licence buy-out, business exit assistance, business advice assistance, employee assistance and social and community assistance.

On 13 December 2005, the Minister for the Environment and Heritage extended the deadline for applications under the structural adjustment package from 31 December 2005 to 30 April 2006. On 4 April 2006 the Minister announced a further limited extension for businesses impacted by Cyclone Larry. The Government also removed the \$500,000 cap on Full Business Restructuring Assistance grants.

HMAS *Sydney* II — search

In commemorating the 60th anniversary of the end of World War II, Australia will endeavour to locate the wreck of one of our greatest naval vessels, which was lost off the West Australian coast in 1941 — the HMAS *Sydney* II. The Australian Government will provide \$1.3 million to conduct a sonar search of the seabed to help find the sunken ship. The HMAS *Sydney* II is one of Australia's greatest maritime mysteries and the finding of it would close a significant chapter in Australia's wartime history and allow the proper recognition of the sacrifice made by the 645 crew.

Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate

(Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources)

The Australian Government has committed funding of \$100 million over five years to support Australia's ongoing involvement in the Asia-Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate initiative. Twenty-five percent of this funding has been earmarked for renewable energy initiatives. The partnership brings together the United States, China, India, Japan, South Korea and Australia to address the challenges of climate change, energy security and air pollution, in a way that strives to encourage economic development and reduce poverty. The measure will be jointly implemented by the Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources and the Department of the Environment and Heritage, in consultation with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

The Asia-Pacific Partnership established eight government and business taskforces on cleaner fossil energy; renewable energy and distributed generation; power generation and transmission; steel; aluminium; cement; coal mining; and buildings and appliances. Australia will lead the taskforces on cleaner fossil energy and aluminium and co-chair the renewable energy and distributed generation taskforce.

ACCESS

(CSIRO)

CSIRO will invest \$21.1 million in Climate, Weather and Ocean Prediction: Earth Systems Modelling in 2006–07, including in the development of the Australian Community Climate and Earth System Simulator with the Australian Bureau of Meteorology. **The earth system elements include various environmental considerations such as environmental pollution, environmental impacts and land and marine impacts and interactions. Agreements and science plans in relation to this initiative are currently being finalised.**

Water Resources Observation Network

(CSIRO)

CSIRO, through its Water for a Healthy Country Flagship, will invest \$9 million in 2006–07 to commence the development of a new and visionary Water Resources Observation Network (WRON) that for the first time will allow a national view of how much water we have now and expect to have in the future, and how best to optimise the use of this precious resource. It is anticipated that WRON will contribute to: an improvement in the quality and quantity of information available on water resources in Australia; providing the basis for assessing the effectiveness of new and existing investments in infrastructure development and environmental management; managing real-time decisions, such as water futures markets, through access to better information and options analysis tools; accurately forecasting water availability enhancing agricultural productivity while allowing environmental flow targets to be achieved in our rivers; and, increased automation and cost-effectiveness of government and industry reporting processes, such as State of the Environment reporting, and improved responsiveness to emerging issues.