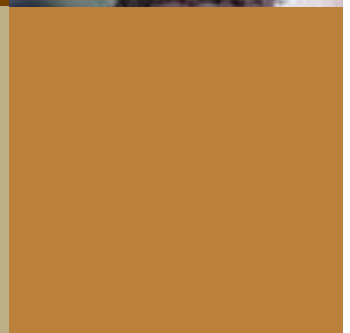
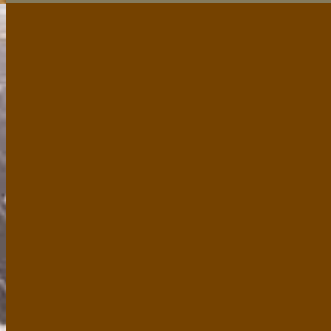
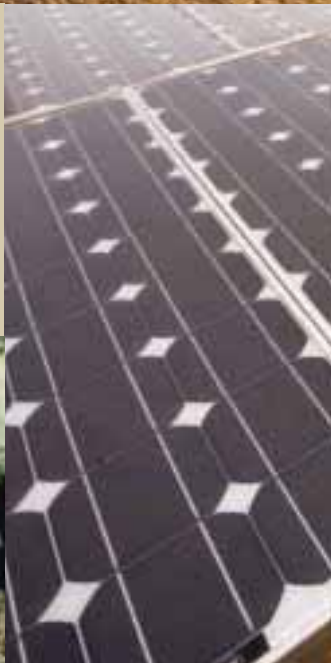
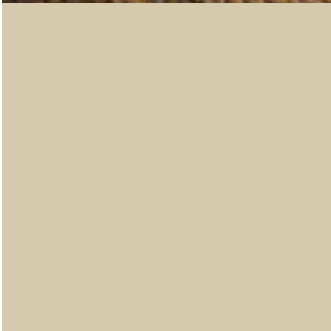
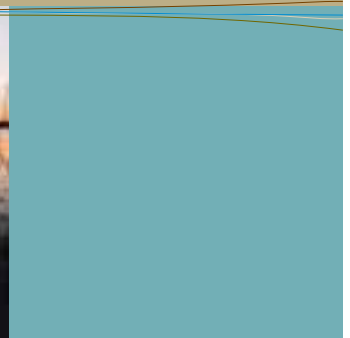
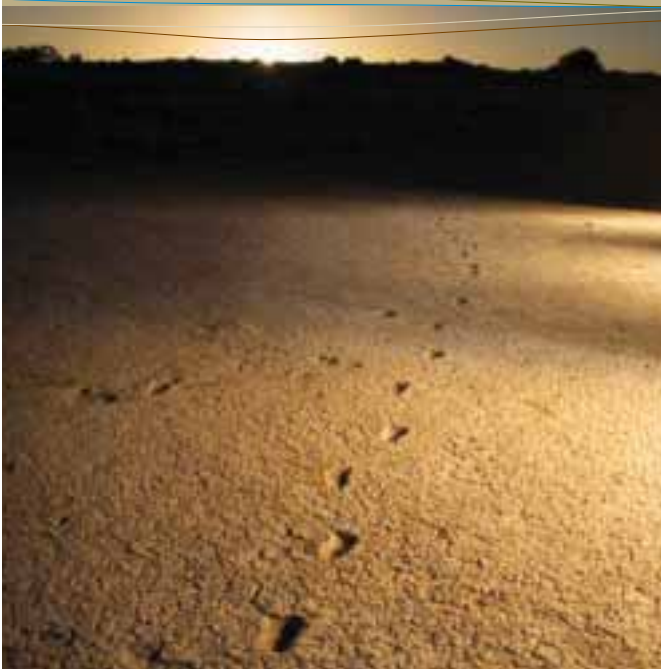


MESSAGE
FROM THE MINISTERS



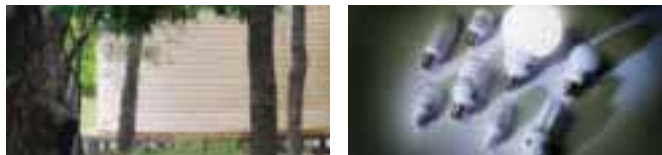
The 2008 budget marks the beginning of a new era in how we care for, manage and value Australia's unique natural environment and the resources it provides.

Through Caring for Our Country the government will spend \$2.2 billion over five years to deliver an environment that is healthy, better protected, well managed and resilient in the face of climate change.

Bringing delivery of four national programs under one banner, Caring for Our Country will focus on six national priorities: the National Reserve System; biodiversity and natural icons; coastal environments and aquatic habitats; sustainable farm practices; natural resource management in remote and northern Australia; and community skills, knowledge and engagement.

Through Caring for Our Country, this budget also delivers on eight key 2007 election commitments, including funding to rescue the Great Barrier Reef (\$200.0 million), repair our fragile coastal ecosystems (\$100.0 million), and save the Tasmanian Devil (\$10.0 million).

Recognising that caring for the environment and living sustainably starts at home, the government has committed \$977.1¹ million in funding since the 2007-08 Budget to help Australians make their homes more energy and water efficient, including the provision of new low interest Green Loans (\$300.0 million). There are also rebates to assist households to install solar and heat pump hot water systems and water saving products, including rainwater tanks and greywater systems, and to assist rental property owners to install insulation, all accessible through the new centralised One Stop Green Shop.



The government is tackling head-on decades of mismanagement of our water resources, with \$12.9 billion over 10 years to deliver against four priorities: adapting to climate change; using water wisely; securing water supplies; and healthy rivers and waterways.

This includes a \$1.0 billion Water for the Future - National Urban Water and Desalination Plan and \$254.8 million Water for the Future - National Water Security Plan for Cities and Towns. These will enable the Australian Government to invest in desalination plants, more efficient water infrastructure, stormwater capture, recycled water and water treatment plants.

To help build sustainable communities across Australia, the government will provide funds to develop Green Precincts showcasing water and energy saving initiatives, and to establish two new Solar Cities. The government has delivered on its election pledge to enable every school in Australia to become a solar school, creating new jobs and investment as well as reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

¹ Including the Solar Hot Water Systems: Rebates for Households measure, which was previously reported in the Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook 2007-08.

Australia is at last stepping up to the challenges of climate change both in the international arena and at home, with ambitious measures across most government portfolios. As outlined in the Climate Change Budget Overview 2008-09, policy in this area is built on three pillars: reducing Australia's greenhouse gas emissions, adapting to climate change we cannot avoid, and helping to shape a global solution.

The government is confronting these challenges head-on, committing to combating climate change across government.

Climate change is a major threat to our natural environment. But it is not the only one. Our biodiversity, our clean air, our fresh water, our oceans, landscapes and special places are also under threat from the long established impacts of land clearing, urban development, pollution and unsustainable use of natural resources.

This document outlines the new measures being implemented since the 2007-08 Budget reflecting the Government's proactive sustainability agenda – an agenda that aims to use all our natural resources wisely and protect our unique environment.

While delivering these reforms, the government will lead by example. We will green government across all our operations, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, waste, energy and water use, and using Commonwealth land more sustainably.

Together we will continue to invest in a healthy, productive and genuinely sustainable Australia.



The Hon Peter Garrett AM MP
Minister for the Environment,
Heritage and the Arts



Senator the Hon Penny Wong
Minister for Climate Change
and Water

