



PORTFOLIO RESPONSIBILITIES AND PROGRAMS

To advance a sustainable Australia: our environment, water, heritage and communities.

Responsibilities

The department is responsible for implementing the Australian Government's policies to protect our environment and heritage, and to promote a sustainable way of life.

The work of the department is critical to shaping Australia's future and directly affects households, communities, businesses and industry.

The department aims to support and implement the Australian Government's policy initiatives for a number of important challenges facing the Australian community, including:

- helping to protect Australia's unique biodiversity
- developing a national sustainable population strategy
- contributing to affordable housing access

- adapting to the impacts and challenges of climate change
- improving how water resources are managed, particularly in the Murray-Darling Basin, and
- contributing to closing the gap on Indigenous disadvantage.

To achieve these objectives the department delivers programs, policy advice and funding for:

- biodiversity and ecosystems
- sustainable population and communities
- Antarctica
- sustainable water, and
- environment protection and heritage conservation.



Biodiversity and ecosystems

Aim: Conserve and protect Australia's terrestrial and marine biodiversity and ecosystems.

Biodiversity

To conserve and protect Australia's unique biodiversity and ecosystems, the department is developing and implementing the Australian Government's commitment to managing native species and natural resources. To do this, the department is supporting the government's response to the independent review of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*; developing the *National Wildlife Corridors Plan* and *Australia's Native Vegetation Framework*; and continuing work on the *National Plan for Environmental Information*.

Australia's Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2010–2030 is a guiding framework for conserving Australia's biodiversity. The long-term vision of the strategy is to ensure Australia's biodiversity is healthy and resilient to threats, and valued both in its own right and for its essential contribution to our existence.

The Australian Government is investing \$10 million over three years in the development of the *National Wildlife Corridors Plan*. The plan aims to build the resilience of our natural environment to climate change by linking national parks and reserves with well managed private land to allow the migration of species between protected areas.

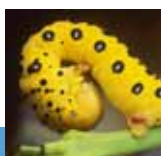
The draft *Australia's Native Vegetation Framework* was released for public consultation in 2010.

The framework provides guidance for the ongoing management of native vegetation across the Australian landscape.

The *National Plan for Environmental Information* is jointly managed by the department and the Bureau of Meteorology. The plan coordinates and prioritises the way the Australian Government collects, manages and uses environmental information. It represents a long-term approach to building and improving our environmental information base. Australian Government Land and Coasts (AGLC) is a cross-departmental team comprising staff from the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities and the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. Together we develop and manage natural resource management policies and programs including the Caring for our Country initiative.

Caring for our Country is delivering more than \$2 billion of funding in its first five years to achieve a series of outcomes including:

- a 25 per cent increase in the National Reserve System
- reducing the impact of invasive species
- maintaining viable Tasmanian Devil populations
- reducing nutrient and chemical discharges to the Great Barrier Reef from agricultural land by 25 per cent
- assisting 30 per cent of farmers to improve their practices, and
- expanding traditional fire regimes across 200 000 square kilometres.



The AGLC team is also responsible for the development of Indigenous, biodiversity conservation and sustainable agriculture policies. Our staff work with state and territory and local governments, regional natural resource management bodies, Landcare and community groups, farmers and environmental groups to enable on-ground action to protect and restore Australia's natural environment.

The Caring for our Country initiative includes funding for Reef Rescue, Community Action Grants, Environmental Stewardship, Working on Country rangers, Landcare and base-level funding for the regional NRM bodies.

For more information, go to:
www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity

Parks Australia

Parks Australia supports the Director of National Parks, a federal statutory authority, to conserve Australia's biodiversity and cultural heritage.

Parks Australia works with the Director to manage Commonwealth parks and reserves, including six national parks (three jointly managed with their traditional owners) and two botanic gardens. National parks range from Christmas Island National Park far out in the Indian Ocean, the iconic World Heritage-listed Kakadu and Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Parks in the Northern Territory, to the award-winning Booderee National Park at Jervis Bay in New South Wales.

At the Australian National Botanic Gardens in Canberra, visitors enjoy the world's largest collection of Australian native plants. The gardens supports the Centre for Australian National Biodiversity Research, a unique partnership between Parks Australia and CSIRO, which manages the Australian National Herbarium and world-class research programs on plant classification, bioinformatics and conservation biology.

Parks Australia also works with all levels of government, non-profit organisations and Indigenous landholders to build the National Reserve System, the nation's most secure way of protecting native plants and animals for future generations. Indigenous Protected Areas now constitute almost a quarter of the National Reserve System.

Among its other departmental responsibilities, Parks Australia administers the Australian Government's policy and regulations on access and benefit-sharing of biological resources and our engagement with the International Convention on Biological Diversity.

For more information, go to:
www.environment.gov.au/parks

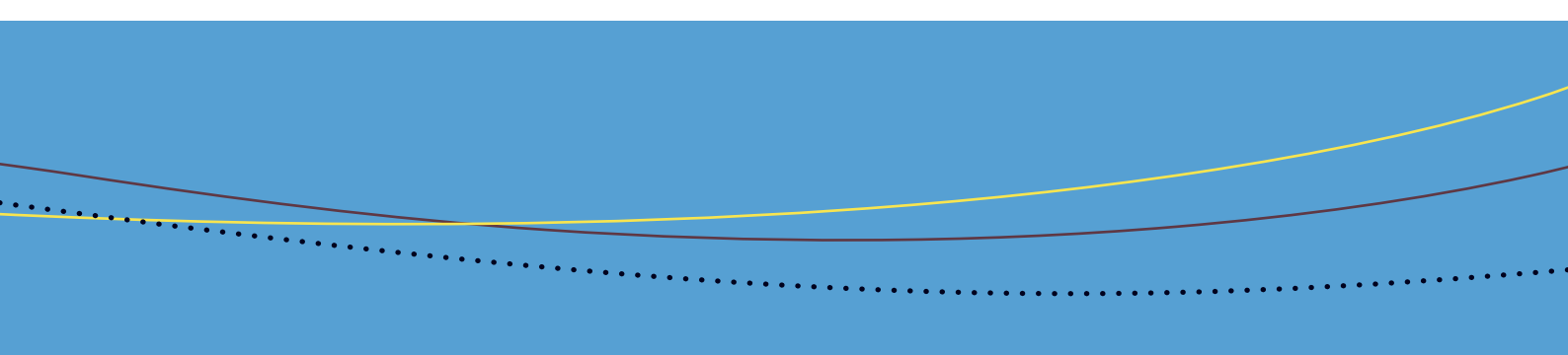
Marine Environment

The department is responsible for leading and contributing to Australia's international engagement on marine conservation issues. The department provides policy advice on marine conservation, administers relevant legislation and implements the Australian Government's marine programs.

The department's work includes the development of marine bioregional plans, the creation and management of marine reserves, marine species conservation, cetacean conservation (including whales and dolphins) and leadership on environmental biosecurity matters.

To ensure it delivers effectively on its responsibilities the department works collaboratively with marine industry and conservation groups, state and territories authorities and other key stakeholders.

For more information, go to:
www.environment.gov.au/coasts



Sustainable population and communities

Aim: To help support sustainable communities.

Sustainable Population Strategy

The overarching objective to improve the sustainability of Australia's population and communities will be addressed through the implementation of the Sustainable Population Strategy. *Sustainable Australia – Sustainable Communities* aims to ensure that future changes in Australia's population are compatible with the sustainability of Australia's economy, environment and communities, with the goal of improving the wellbeing of current and future generations.

The development of the strategy was informed by the reports of three Sustainable Population Advisory Panels and a formal submissions process. The strategy is supported by a package of initiatives announced in the 2011–12 Budget, including:

- \$100 million Suburban Jobs initiative to support local and state governments to plan and provide for increased employment opportunities outside capital city central business districts
- \$29.2 million Sustainable Regional Development initiative to provide capacity for up to seven additional strategic assessments under national environmental law by the Commonwealth of sustainability plans developed by state and local government for priority high growth areas, and

- \$10.1 million for a new Measuring Sustainability program that will develop headline Sustainability Indicators covering economic, social and environmental issues that are relevant to communities.

For more information, go to:
www.environment.gov.au/sustainability/population

Sustainable Housing

The department is responsible for developing, implementing and administering policies and major funding programs aimed at understanding and responding to the increasing housing supply gap and other factors which are impacting housing affordability for many Australians, particularly low and moderate income households.



In addition to supporting the National Housing Supply Council in monitoring, analysing and reporting on housing supply and affordability, the department works with the states, territories, local governments, community organisations and the private sector to:

- address the shortage of affordable rental housing by offering financial incentives through the National Rental Affordability Scheme for the provision of new rental dwellings at rents at least 20 per cent below market rates
- improve the supply of more affordable new housing through grants to local councils to reduce housing-related infrastructure and planning costs through the Housing Affordability Fund, and
- help build thousands of more affordable homes in regional cities by supporting investment in local housing-related infrastructure projects through the Building Better Regional Cities initiative.

The department also has a lead role in developing policy advice to the government on issues affecting housing supply and affordability, and in developing possible responses. In addition, the department provides input to Commonwealth Land Disposal Policy and practices.

For more information, go to:
www.environment.gov.au/sustainability/housing

Sustainable Environment

The department provides policy advice, administers legislation and contributes to international agreements and programs to protect the environment from the impacts of human activities. Its focus is on the Australian urban environment and covers a range of issues including hazardous waste, fuel quality, ozone depleting substances, synthetic greenhouse gases and waste oil, air quality, contaminated sites, used packaging, and controlled wastes.

The department works closely with industry, the community and other levels of government through regulation, education, co-operation and information to ensure a cleaner and healthier environment.

The implementation of the National Waste Policy is also a major priority for the department. This policy sets the direction for Australia over the next 10 years to produce less waste for disposal and to manage waste as a resource delivering economic, environmental and social benefits.

For more information, go to:
www.environment.gov.au/settlements



Antarctica

Aim: Promote Australia's strategic, scientific, environmental and economic interests in the Antarctic.

The department administers the Territory of Heard Island and McDonald Islands and the Australian Antarctic Territory, a claim covering 42 per cent of the Antarctic continent. One hundred years ago, Douglas Mawson laid the foundations for this claim and led the first Australian scientific expedition to Antarctica. Today, as Antarctica grows in national and global importance, the department continues this legacy.

Research in the Southern Ocean, the Antarctic and subantarctic, addresses critical issues such as climate change, the human footprint on Antarctica, and the increasing demands for food, energy and security caused by human population growth. Active participation in the Antarctic Treaty System promotes Australia's interest in the region. Australia is committed to maintaining this unique treaty which is devoted to peace and science in Antarctica.

For more information, go to:
www.antarctica.gov.au

Sustainable water

Aim: Support adaptation to climate change, wise water use, secure water supplies, and healthier rivers, water ways and freshwater ecosystems.

The department leads the development and implementation of national policies and programs to achieve sustainable management of Australia's water resources.

This includes implementation of the Australian Government's *Water for the Future* initiative. This initiative provides a long-term, multi-billion dollar investment to better balance the water needs of communities, farmers and the environment.

The initiative is implemented against four key priorities:

- taking action on climate change

- using water wisely
- securing water supplies, and
- supporting healthy rivers.

Significant funding is provided for programs such as water purchasing, irrigation infrastructure modernisation and water supply infrastructure.

A key component of this work is to deliver a healthy working Murray-Darling Basin by supporting healthy rivers, resilient communities and more efficient and productive industries.

For more information, go to:
www.environment.gov.au/water

Environment protection and heritage conservation

Aim: Increase protection, awareness and appreciation of Australia's environment and heritage.

Environment Protection

The *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (the EPBC Act) is the Australian Government's central piece of environmental legislation. It provides a legal framework to protect and manage matters of national environmental significance. These are:

- world heritage properties
- national heritage places
- wetlands of international importance
- nationally threatened species and ecological communities
- migratory species
- Commonwealth marine areas
- Great Barrier Reef Marine Park, and
- nuclear actions, including uranium mines.

For more information, go to:
www.environment.gov.au/epbc

Heritage

Heritage is about the places and stories that make Australia special. This includes our amazing natural places, our rich Indigenous heritage, and the events and people that reflect our development as a nation.

The Australian Government is committed to protecting these places and stories for current and future generations through legislation and various grant programs. The department also plays an important role in celebrating Australia's heritage and raising awareness of our significant places, and how and why they make up the continuous, connected story of who we are as a people.

For more information, go to:
www.environment.gov.au/heritage



Statutory authorities and executive agencies

The department and the following executive agencies and statutory authorities form the Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities portfolio.

Bureau of Meteorology

The Bureau of Meteorology is Australia's national weather, climate and water agency. Through regular forecasts, monitoring, advice and spanning the Australian region and Antarctic territory, the Bureau assists Australians in dealing with their natural environment including, drought, floods, fires, storms, tsunami and tropical cyclones.

www.bom.gov.au

Director of National Parks

The Director of National Parks helps to conserve Australia's biodiversity and cultural heritage. The Director's key responsibilities are the management of Commonwealth terrestrial national parks and reserves and Australia's network of marine protected areas.

www.environment.gov.au/parks

Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA)

GBRMPA is the principal adviser to the Australian Government on the care and development of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.

www.gbrmpa.gov.au

National Water Commission

The National Water Commission is responsible for driving progress towards the sustainable management and use of Australia's water resources under the blueprint for water reform—the National Water Initiative.

www.nwc.gov.au

Sydney Harbour Federation Trust

The Sydney Harbour Federation Trust conserves, protects and improves public access to former defence and Commonwealth sites around Sydney Harbour.

www.harbourtrust.gov.au

P1 LtoR: 1) Yellow Water Lagoon in Kakadu National Park, NT (John Baker & DSEWPaC) 2) Woakwine Range Wind Farm near Mt Gambier, SA (Dragi Markovic & DSEWPaC) 3) Hospital ruins at the Port Arthur Historic Site, Tas (M. Lindsay & DSEWPaC) 4) Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, NT (Director of National Parks) P2 LtoR: 1) Heathland at sunset near Kalbarri, WA (Allan Fox & DSEWPaC) 2) Whale tail near Byron Bay, NSW (Dave Paton) 3) Four O'Clock Moth Caterpillar in the Wet Tropics of Queensland (Mike Trenery) 4) Selection of rainforest fruits, Qld (Wet Tropics Management Authority - Qld) P4 LtoR: 1) Corryong township, Vic (John Baker & DSEWPaC) 2) Echuca Conservation Area (P. Cheah, DSEWPaC) 3) Sustainable housing and lifestyle in Lyneham, ACT (Studio 2point8 photography & DSEWPaC) P5 LtoR: 1) Solar array near Lajamanu, NT (Dragi Markovic & DSEWPaC) 2) Angaston township, SA (John Baker & DSEWPaC) 3) Electronic waste collection, Symonston, ACT (Dragi Markovic & DSEWPaC) 4) Aerial view of Surfers Paradise, Qld (Dept of Foreign Affairs and Trade - Overseas Information Branch) 5) Woakwine Range Wind Farm near Mt Gambier, SA (Dragi Markovic & DSEWPaC) P7 LtoR: 1) King penguins on Heard Island (Geoffrey Moore & DSEWPaC) 2) Yellow Water Lagoon in Kakadu National Park, NT (Michelle McAulay & DSEWPaC) 3) Seal pup near Casey Station, Antarctica (Chris Wilson, Australian Antarctic Division) 4) Yellow Water Lagoon in Kakadu National Park, NT (John Baker & DSEWPaC)

For more information

Department of Sustainability, Environment,
Water, Population and Communities

www.environment.gov.au

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