



Australian Government

**Department of Sustainability, Environment,
Water, Population and Communities**

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT FUNDING FOR GRANTS 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 more affordable housing
- 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.

The department administers a range of competitive grants across the portfolio.

Funding is available to support projects in environmental research, heritage, water, conservation and management, sustainable communities and housing affordability. The grants are available to community groups, academics, Indigenous landowners and organisations whose work contributes to the protection and enhancement of Australia's significant environmental, cultural and heritage sites.

The department recognises the importance of research in achieving good policy outcomes. Research funding aims to improve our capacity to understand, manage and conserve our unique environment, biodiversity and ecosystems.

This fact sheet highlights the different programs under which funding is available and competitive grants are awarded.

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



Research programs

Our research initiatives support and contribute to the government's expectation of evidence-based policy and decision making.

National Environmental Research Program (NERP)

The National Environmental Research Program (NERP) is a grants program that provides around \$20 million per annum for environmental research to improve our capacity to understand, manage and conserve Australia's unique biodiversity and ecosystems.

For more information, go to:
www.environment.gov.au/about/programs/nerp

Australian Biological Resources Study (ABRS)

The ABRS runs the National Taxonomy Research Grants program, with funding of around \$2 million each year to help research, describe and classify Australian plants and animals and to share taxonomic knowledge. The program helps build Australia's taxonomic capacity through grants to postgraduate students and early career researchers.

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

Sustainable Population

The release of Australia's first sustainable population strategy, *Sustainable Australia – Sustainable Communities*, is supported by measures to meet the future challenges for a sustainable population.

The Suburban Jobs initiative seeks to encourage the creation of more employment opportunities outside capital city central business districts. It will support local and state governments to plan and help deliver employment precincts, manufacturing hubs and multifunction developments close to residential areas in growing outer suburbs. It will also support innovative use of the National Broadband Network to reduce travel times.

To be eligible for government assistance, local and state governments (including in partnership with the private sector) will be required to demonstrate how their initiative will contribute to the enduring improvements in the distribution of employment across metropolitan growth areas in our major cities.

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

Environment

Caring for our Country is the Australian Government program that funds environmental management of our natural resources.

The Australian Government aims to achieve an environment that is healthy, protected, well managed and resilient. Caring for our Country is one of the key initiatives designed to achieve this aim.

To date, over \$1.7 billion has been approved for investment. Grants are offered under the Caring for our Country initiative through a range of investments. Caring for our Country provides opportunities for community groups and business to implement projects that help deliver the Australian Government's environmental and sustainable agricultural outcomes for 2008–13. The six national priority areas are:

- natural resource management in northern and remote Australia
- community skills, knowledge and engagement
- the National Reserve System
- biodiversity and natural icons
- coastal environments and critical aquatic habitats, and
- sustainable farm practices.

Guidelines are available for funding under each of the six priority areas and outline the types of proposals which the Australian Government is seeking to fund. The funding supports regional natural resource management groups, local, state and territory governments, Indigenous groups, industry bodies, land managers, farmers, Landcare groups and communities.

Regional natural resource management organisations have formed a partnership with the Australian Government to deliver integrated Caring for our Country projects at the regional level. They will receive \$711 million over 2008–13 in base-level funding.

The Australian Government has committed to build the National Reserve System (NRS), including Indigenous Protected Areas, over five years by up to 125 million hectares. Australia's NRS is a nation-wide network of reserves specifically set up to protect a comprehensive range of examples within each of Australia's 85 bioregions. Organisations can apply for funding through the annual business plan to assist in buying land for conservation, or they can apply for funding to work with landholders, helping them establish perpetual conservation covenants on parts of their private land.

For more information, go to:
www.nrm.gov.au/business-plan



Community Action Grants

Community Action Grants are the small grants component of Caring for our Country that aim to support community groups take action to conserve and protect their natural environment. To date, grants worth over \$15 million have been approved. The grants of between \$5000 and \$20 000 (GST exclusive) are targeted towards established community-based organisations, which support sustainable farming practices and/or work to protect and enhance the natural environment.

The grants support local activities such as tree planting, revegetation, dune rehabilitation, field days, improving land management practices and recording and use of traditional ecological knowledge.

For more information, go to:
www.nrm.gov.au/cag

Reef Rescue

Reef Rescue is a key component of Caring for our Country, the Australian Government's over \$2 billion initiative to restore the health of Australia's environment and improve land management practices. It represents a new, coordinated approach to environmental management in Australia that is built on transparent and consistent national targets.

Queensland farmers, agricultural, tourism, fishing and aquaculture industries, Indigenous communities, conservation groups, research organisers and most importantly, the Great Barrier Reef, will benefit from Reef Rescue's investment of \$200 million over five years in actions that protect one of the world's great natural wonders.

Reef Rescue's objective is to improve the water quality of the Great Barrier Reef lagoon by increasing the adoption of land management practices that reduce the run-off of nutrients, pesticides and sediments from agricultural land.

For more information, go to:
www.nrm.gov.au/funding/2008/reef-rescue.html

Environmental Stewardship

The Environmental Stewardship initiative aims to maintain and improve the condition and extent of nationally protected matters under national environment law (*Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*) in particular, threatened ecological communities. It uses competitive auctions through which private land managers can bid to provide a range of management activities to protect, rehabilitate and improve particular ecological communities on private land. Eligible land managers include farmers, Indigenous communities and other managers of private freehold and leasehold land. To date, grants worth over \$133 million have been approved.

For more information, go to:
www.nrm.gov.au/stewardship



Water

The *Water for the Future* initiative provides assistance and funding for agricultural, municipal and individual users of water to help prepare Australia for a future with more varied water availability.

Through the *Water for the Future* initiative, the Australian Government is investing in a range of programs over 10 years to address four key priorities:

- taking action on climate change
- using water wisely
- securing water supplies, and
- supporting healthy rivers and wetlands.

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.

Restoring the Balance in the Murray-Darling Basin

This program is a component of the *Water for the Future* initiative through which water entitlements are purchased. The Australian Government has committed to 'bridge the gap' between current diversion limits and new sustainable diversion limits under the Murray-Darling Basin Plan, by water recovery through direct purchase and through infrastructure projects. The principal method for purchasing water is through open market tenders. Tender rounds are conducted periodically and are advertised online and in relevant media. Water entitlements purchased through the buyback are helping to build a portfolio of water entitlements for environmental use. The buyback complements a range of other measures to achieve sustainable water management in the Basin.

Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure Program

This program invests in key rural water initiatives that support sustainable irrigation communities, including projects that save water by upgrading out-dated and leaky irrigation systems. The aim is to improve efficiency and productivity of rural water use and management, deliver a share of water savings to the environment, and to help secure a long-term sustainable future for irrigated agriculture through value for money projects.

Investing in infrastructure upgrades and improving the efficiency and productivity of our irrigation industry will create water savings which benefit the environment and irrigation communities, leading to healthier river systems and supporting food production in the Murray-Darling Basin.

Funding available under the Sustainable Rural Water Use and Infrastructure Program includes funds provided to state governments to carry out agreed projects. There are also initiatives delivered directly from the Australian Government to industry organisations, councils, irrigators and irrigation water providers. Notable elements of the program include:

Strengthening Basin Communities

This program provides funding to help communities understand the implications associated with climate change on water availability, and identify strategies to adjust

to a future with less water. The Strengthening Basin Communities program is implemented through two components:

1. The Planning component is to provide grants for local governments in the Murray-Darling Basin to assist in community-wide planning for a future with less water.
2. The Water Saving Initiatives component is to provide competitive grants to enable local government authorities and urban water service providers to support projects that improve water security by reducing demand on potable water supplies.

Private Irrigation Infrastructure Operators Program in New South Wales

These projects aim to improve the efficiency of water use and management, both off- and on-farm, by funding major renewal and rationalisation works by private irrigation infrastructure operators to secure a sustainable future for irrigation communities. A share of the water savings from projects is transferred to the Commonwealth for environmental use.

On-Farm Irrigation Efficiency Program

The On-Farm Irrigation Efficiency Program is aimed at assisting irrigators in the Lachlan and southern connected system of the Murray-Darling Basin to modernise their on-farm irrigation infrastructure while returning water savings to the environment. The program uses local delivery partners to bring together and manage the roll-out of tranches of individual on-farm water efficiency projects.

Private Irrigation Infrastructure Program for South Australia

This program aims to assist in securing a sustainable future for South Australian irrigation communities by funding efficiency improvements to irrigation infrastructure.

A share of the water savings achieved under this program is returned to the environment.

Supporting More Efficient Irrigation in Tasmania

This project aims to develop and modernise irrigation infrastructure and improve irrigation efficiency in Tasmania. The project commenced with a CSIRO study to estimate state-wide changes to future water yields with regard to climate change and future development. The results of this study are being used to underpin investment decisions for the irrigation infrastructure. A number of irrigation infrastructure sub-projects are already under way.

National Urban Water and Desalination Plan

This plan supports infrastructure projects including stormwater harvesting and reuse, water recycling and desalination, and research through two centres of excellence (desalination and water recycling). Funding opportunities are made available through competitive grants processes.

National Water Security Plan for Cities and Towns

Water resources in our cities and towns are under increasing pressure from growing populations and per capita water consumption, and these factors are being compounded by drought and climate change. The National Water Security Plan for Cities and Towns funds practical projects that support the recycling and re-use of water in domestic and commercial settings, and encourages innovation in urban water supply.

This will save water and reduce water losses in cities and towns nationally with populations of less than 50 000.

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

Housing Supply and Affordability

Three housing affordability programs are part of the Australian Government's long-term commitment to improve the supply of affordable housing in Australia.

National Rental Affordability Scheme

The National Rental Affordability Scheme seeks to encourage affordable rental housing by offering tax-free financial incentives to the business and community sector to build and rent dwellings for low and moderate income households at below-market rates for 10 years. Financial institutions, investors, private developers, not-for-profit organisations and local governments can all participate in this program.

Housing Affordability Fund

The Housing Affordability Fund provides funding of \$450 million over five years to lower the cost of building new homes. To improve the supply of new housing and make housing more affordable for new home buyers, the HAF targets two significant barriers to the

supply of housing: the cost of development and planning, and infrastructure costs. Funding has been allocated to 75 projects which will stimulate the supply of new housing and support more affordable housing.

Building Better Regional Cities

The Building Better Regional Cities Program is a \$100 million commitment to invest in local housing infrastructure projects that will help build thousands of more affordable homes in high growth regional cities. Local Councils will be able to use this funding to invest in local infrastructure projects that support new housing developments, including connecting roads, extensions to drains and sewers, and community infrastructure such as parks and community centres.

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

Antarctica

Australian Antarctic Science research grants scheme.

The department's Australian Antarctic Division (AAD) administers the Australian Antarctic Science research grant scheme. Each year AAD selects research projects in line with the Australian Antarctic Science Strategic Plan 2011–12 to 2020–21.

Research is conducted under four themes:

- Climate Processes and Change

- Terrestrial and Nearshore Ecosystems: Environmental Change and Conservation
- Southern Ocean Ecosystems: Environmental Change and Conservations, and
- Frontier Science.

For more information, go to: www.antarctica.gov.au/science/australiasscience-program/australian-antarcticsscience-research-grants

Heritage

The Australian Government provides funding to protect and conserve our distinct cultural heritage. Funding is available under the following programs.

National Historic Sites

The National Historic Sites program provides assistance to protect and conserve some of Australia's most significant historic places. Funding is available for the maintenance and conservation of the heritage values of nationally significant heritage sites that have had an important role in the development of the nation's history.

Indigenous Heritage Program

The Indigenous Heritage Program is an initiative that supports the identification, conservation, and promotion (where appropriate) of Indigenous heritage.

The program may also help identify places likely to have outstanding Indigenous heritage value to Australia suitable for inclusion on the National Heritage List. Funding is available for organisations and individuals.

Commemorating Eminent Australians

The Commemorating Eminent Australians grants program is designed to provide funding for the recognition of eminent Australians who have made a significant impact on Australia and the world.

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

Grants to Voluntary Environment, Sustainability and Heritage Organisations

Funding is available under the Grants to Voluntary Environment, Sustainability and Heritage Organisations (GVESHO).

The annual Grants to Voluntary Environment, Sustainability and Heritage Organisations (GVESHO) program provides around \$1.5 million per annum to help community-based, not-for-profit organisations to protect and value our unique environment and heritage, and contribute to a sustainable Australia.

Funding aims to assist with such administrative costs as salaries and on-costs for staff; office rents; utilities and communications charges; office supplies and equipment; insurance, staff and volunteer training; photocopying and printing expenses; and travel costs.

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

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