

**AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND ENVIRONMENT
AND CONSERVATION COUNCIL**



COMMONWEALTH WORK PLAN

**NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE
MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING OF
AUSTRALIA'S NATIVE VEGETATION**

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Cover photograph:

Eucalyptus tricarpa/Eucalyptus microcarpa association at Maryborough VIC
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COMMONWEALTH CONTEXT

The 1997 Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Heads of Agreement on Commonwealth/States Roles and Responsibilities for the Environment recognised that conservation of native vegetation and fauna is a matter of national environmental significance. The Agreement notes the Commonwealth interest includes undertaking program and cooperative measures with the States/Territories and other interested parties designed to aid the management of native vegetation for sustainable use and conservation.

Commonwealth involvement in native vegetation management and monitoring is presently focused in the following areas:

National coordination: The Commonwealth government has taken a leading role in coordinating and contributing to the development of many national strategies and approaches of direct relevance to native vegetation.

Capacity building: Identification and development of capacities to address emerging policy imperatives that involve native vegetation management, such as the response to climate change (the National Greenhouse Strategy) which is perhaps the most significant example of an emerging native vegetation issue.

Legislation: Ensuring native vegetation management is incorporated within complementary Commonwealth, State and Territory legislation.

R&D: Undertaking and funding of R&D that develops the basic understanding of the ecology of native vegetation, including the functional role of native vegetation in landscapes and the basic technologies required for successful retention, protection, use and general management including social aspects.

Specific grants: Providing funding for specific vegetation related issues such as acquisition or covenanting of ecologically significant land for addition to the National Reserve System.

Catalytic funding: Providing catalytic funding that builds the capacity of the community to manage native vegetation and secures the institutional and structural changes required for jurisdictions and land managers to achieve self-sufficiency in native vegetation management. The Commonwealth government is of the view that it should not be responsible for the provision of long term assistance for activities more appropriately addressed by land users and are primarily responsible State/Territory jurisdictions.

Monitoring and evaluation: M&E of the cover and condition of native vegetation from a national perspective, to meet both domestic and international policy and reporting requirements. At the national scale, monitoring is difficult. The best and most recent example of nation-wide data has been provided by the Bureau of Rural Sciences Agricultural Land Cover Change (BRS/ALCC) project.

The Commonwealth pursues a role of fostering improved native vegetation management at a national scale because of:

Australia-wide community concern: Community recognition and concern about the state of our natural environment includes a concern for the decline of our native vegetation and recognition of its inherent value. However, native vegetation is also recognised as being an important component of some agricultural production systems and integral to the management of a range of large scale and nationally significant land degradation problems, such as dryland salinity. It is also recognised that native vegetation forms an integral part of the habitat for other aspects of our nation's biodiversity.

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International responsibility: There is a Commonwealth responsibility to respond, on behalf of Australia, to international treaties and obligations, notably the Biodiversity Convention and the Framework Convention on Climate Change that arose from the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro. This extends to the Kyoto Protocol for the Framework Convention on Climate Change developed in 1997.

Scale of national investment: There is a national interest in ensuring natural resources including native vegetation are managed in an environmental sensitive and integrated manner. At present significant investment by Australia is required to address Natural Resource Management (NRM) problems. This has been recognised by the Commonwealth government – in partnership with the States and Territories – initially through the Decade of Landcare and other programs, but most recently through the Natural Heritage Trust (NHT). With regard to native vegetation, the primary current initiative is the \$346.5 million Bushcare program, but there are many other associated initiatives. NHT and Bushcare predecessors have included, at the Commonwealth/national level, programs such as: Save The Bush, One Billion Trees and National Corridors of Green.

Facilitation of institutional and structural change: The Commonwealth has a leadership role in facilitating the institutional and structural change that has been and still is required in various Australian jurisdictions if the nation is to meet the challenges posed by emerging NRM issues.

VISION

The overarching national native vegetation goal is to reverse the long-term decline in the quality and extent of Australia's native vegetation by June 2001.

This national goal is articulated in the National Strategy for the Conservation of Australia's Biological Diversity and in each of the bilateral NHT Partnership Agreements that have been signed between the Commonwealth government and each State/Territory.

The following 'Key Strengths' and 'Key Challenges' for Commonwealth involvement in native vegetation management and monitoring were identified by the consultancy report *Native Vegetation National Overview* (Griffin nrm, August 1999).

KEY STRENGTHS

The Commonwealth Government has worked to put in place strong institutional structures to support native vegetation management. Key achievements include its efforts in clarifying roles and responsibilities between itself and State/Territory governments and the establishment of the NHT to coordinate and fund the delivery of programs relevant to the management of natural resources.

The Commonwealth Government has made a significant and growing contribution to the management and monitoring of native vegetation over the last 10–15 years. Community awareness and capacity to address native vegetation management issues has been significantly boosted through the Commonwealth support of the Landcare and Bushcare networks.

The Commonwealth has coordinated the development and implementation of a nationally agreed framework for the creation of a National Reserve System that is intended to be comprehensive, adequate and representative.

The Commonwealth either funds or directly undertakes a wide range of research on native vegetation management. There is an impressive knowledge base, although this needs to be maintained and enhanced.

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Looking beyond grants, there has been strong Commonwealth support for the development and promotion of incentives and the creation of new markets. Notable examples include conservation covenants, revolving funds, Bush for Greenhouse and Farm Forestry programs.

There is strong Commonwealth commitment to the development of efficient and useful national monitoring and evaluation systems to provide timely information about the extent and status of native vegetation.

KEY CHALLENGES

National coordination: Continuing to take a leading role in coordinating and contributing to the development of many national strategies and approaches of direct relevance to native vegetation.

Capacity building: Continuing to identify needs and support the development of national capacity to address emerging policy imperatives that involve native vegetation management, such as the response to climate change (the National Greenhouse Strategy) and dry land salinity.

Securing long-term institutional arrangements for NRM: Perhaps the most important national challenge is to establish secure – but innovative and evolving – institutional arrangements for NRM, that extend beyond political and budgetary cycles. There is also a need to clarify the criteria through which responsibilities for program management are allocated, shared or devolved between Commonwealth, State, Territory and Local governments, regional or catchment based organisations, and the community. The Commonwealth Government has established a high level Ministerial Group to develop appropriate Commonwealth policy goals for natural resource management in Australia. Through this process the Government aims to build on the achievements of the Natural Heritage Trust and the Decade of Landcare, and to continue to promote more sustainable and more integrated management of our soils, water, vegetation and biodiversity.

Funding: Closely related to institutional arrangements is the issue of funding – both public and private. A challenge for all Governments and the community is to recognise the long-term nature of the investment that will be required, given the magnitude of NRM problems facing Australia. New formulae for revenue sharing as a part of the Goods and Services Tax system could significantly alter the present balance for public NRM funding. In relation to native vegetation this could be seen as either an opportunity or a ‘threat’ depending on perceptions of the Commonwealth’s funding role in achieving the leverage required to change attitudes at a State/Territory level for the protection and management of native vegetation. Other important challenges include:

- encouraging more private investment in vegetation initiatives – both commercial and philanthropic; and
- defining the respective roles and responsibilities of Governments and landholders for vegetation management - recognising that landholders have a responsibility to meet the ongoing costs associated with sustainable land management (ie. a ‘duty of care’), - and that Governments have a role to act in the public interest when conservation actions are required that extend beyond the landowners duty.

R&D: Continuing to support the funding of R&D that develops the basic understanding of the ecology of native vegetation, including the functional role of native vegetation in landscapes and the basic technologies required for successful retention, protection, use and general management. However, also of great importance is the challenge for continued national support of R&D examining the social, economic, legal, policy and institutional aspects of Australian behaviour which impacts on native vegetation and NRM.

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Coordinating native vegetation programs: To avoid inefficiencies and confused messages, continued effort is required to coordinate, across the full spectrum of programs relevant to the management of native vegetation – ranging from commercial forestry, agroforestry, to management for biodiversity conservation and environmental objectives.

Scale of program approaches: Future delivery of native vegetation programs will have to achieve an appropriate balance between funding individual, community-based initiatives and targeting funding toward larger scale strategic investments that build community capacity and facilitate structural change, as required.

Legislation: A key challenge is to ensure that Commonwealth regulatory instruments are efficient and effective in promoting sustainable vegetation management. Encouraging the adoption and use of ‘best practice’ regulatory approaches in other jurisdictions is also important. With the passage of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (‘the EPBC Act’), for example, it will be crucial to ensure that adequate resources are devoted to the development of bilateral agreements and supporting policies and programs for the effective implementation of the Act. Another challenge is to continue to improve the Commonwealth’s approaches to implementation - for example, by placing greater emphasis on endangered ecological communities, rather than individual species in the case of endangered species provisions.

Data: Ensuring that the newly established processes for drawing together and establishing baseline data on the extent and status of native vegetation are adequately supported to deliver against their objectives. This challenge particularly relates to the National Land and Water Resources Audit (NLWRA), a key part of which is the National Vegetation Information System (NVIS). This will require ongoing leadership and support to ensure we continue to fill the glaring gaps in our knowledge base. It should be possible to draw together – or at least allow easy access to – existing information to enable clarification of the baseline status of native vegetation. Agreeing, resourcing and putting in place a small number of national scale indicators for the assessment of performance in relation to both the extent (cover) and quality (condition) of native vegetation would be another significant step forward.

Policy learning: Given the breadth of activity and learning, a real challenge at the national level (and within individual jurisdictions) is to ensure that lessons from experience are captured and fed back into the policy development process.

The following Commonwealth Work Plan commits to actions that will address many of these challenges, and advance the Commonwealth’s involvement in native vegetation management towards the best practice described in the *National Framework for the Management and Monitoring of Australia’s Native Vegetation*. These actions will contribute to the national goal of reversing the decline in the quality and extent of Australia’s Native Vegetation.

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Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Success Measure
1. Roles & Responsibilities of Governments			
Develop Commonwealth policy goals for NRM in Australia, drawing on key reports including, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Mid-Term Review of the NHT; • the Productivity Commission Inquiry into Ecologically Sustainable Land Management; and • public comments received on the Discussion Paper “<i>Managing Natural Resources in Australia for a Sustainable Future</i>”. Pursue a national NRM approach, particularly in relation to key issues such as dry land salinity and declining water quality.	Commonwealth, in consultation with State and Territory Governments, industry and the community.	2000/2001	Development of Commonwealth policy goals and agreement with States/Territories on a process for developing a national approach to NRM.
Develop a <i>National Framework for the Management and Monitoring of Australia’s Native Vegetation</i> that articulates the roles and responsibilities of government with regard to native vegetation management, includes a set of work plans for each jurisdiction, and is integrated with the national NRM approach.	Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments (through ANZECC).	Framework adopted 1999. Work plans finalised March 2000. Review of implementation by Dec 2000.	Adopted <i>National Framework</i> . Degree to which Framework and work plans are implemented in all jurisdictions.
Through the NHT Partnership Agreements the Commonwealth will provide funding assistance to jurisdictions to conserve, protect and improve native vegetation and associated habitat.	Commonwealth in consultation with State and Territories	2002	Substantial improvement in the quality and extent of Australia’s native vegetation
The National Strategy for the Conservation of Australia’s Biological Diversity is a whole of government approach to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. The document contains a series of <u>priority actions</u> that set goals for Australia and these are currently being refined and will complement the National Vegetation Framework.	All Australian governments, industry and the community.	2000 - 2005	Adoption and implementation of Strategy’s goals by governments.

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Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Success Measure
<p>The National Greenhouse Strategy (NGS) outlines responsibilities for governments in pursuing greenhouse measures. Native vegetation issues are covered by Module 6 of the Strategy and relevant aspects are addressed elsewhere in this Work Plan.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Related program that encourage sustainable vegetation management and forestry include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bush for Greenhouse; - Plantations 2020 Vision; - National Forest Policy Statement including Regional Forest Agreements; - Plantations 2020 Vision; and - relevant programs under the Natural Heritage Trust. 	<p>All Australian governments, industry and the community.</p>	<p>Ongoing: NGS to be evaluated in 2002.</p>	<p>Extent to which sustainable native vegetation management objectives are incorporated within Australia's response to greenhouse matters.</p>
<p>Develop a nationally coordinated education campaign on the impacts of firewood collection on biodiversity. Promote adoption of codes of practice for commercial firewood harvesters in all jurisdictions.</p>	<p>EA, ANZECC</p>	<p>2000-2002</p>	<p>An increased understanding in the community of the impact of firewood collection has on biodiversity and native vegetation. The Development of and then adoption of codes of practice for commercial firewood harvesting in jurisdictions</p>
<p>Commonwealth agencies to report annually in relation to implementation of Ecologically Sustainable Development (ESD) and environmental performance, under Section 516A of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999.</p>	<p>All Commonwealth bodies.</p>	<p>annually</p>	<p>Improved performance against ESD principles by Commonwealth bodies, particularly in relation to vegetation management.</p>

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Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Success Measure
<p>Assist State/Territories & local governments to achieve objectives of this Framework relevant to the role of local government by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conducting and widely disseminating research into the role of government (State/Territory & Local) in native vegetation management, including opportunities and impediments, bringing about institutional change; • supporting natural resource management projects under the NHT; • publishing a guide on how local governments can develop and implement incentives schemes encouraging private landholders to protect / enhance native vegetation; • supporting local government to promote and implement the National Local Government Biodiversity Strategy; • supporting State/Territory and regional workshops to assist local governments to identify opportunities and partnerships to implement sustainable native vegetation management; • rewarding governments for improved native vegetation management through sponsorship of appropriate awards and promoting good examples; and • encouraging State/Territory and Local government participation in actions identified under the Plantations 2020 Vision. 	<p>Commonwealth (EA, AFFA), EROs, Environs Australia, NLGBF), ALGA in conjunction with State, Territories and respective local government associations and local government.</p>	<p>Dec 2000 until June 2002 July 2000. Oct 2000. Feb 2001 Ongoing.</p>	<p>Governments participate in institutional reform that will improve local government capacity to manage native vegetation management, including through incentive mechanisms, planning schemes and enhanced protection of managed lands consistent with the best practice principles elaborated in the National Vegetation Framework.</p> <p>Increase in number of councils receiving funding through NHT.</p> <p>Guide completed, circulated and promoted.</p> <p>High level meetings coordinated by EROs in each State to agree on State/Local government opportunities. Support provided to States to run regional workshops.</p> <p>Prime Ministers Award (June) and NSW Local Government Environment Award (Oct)</p>
<p><i>AN EXAMPLE:</i> The Bush for Greenhouse program is promoting revegetation for environmental purposes thereby enhancing Australia’s greenhouse gas sinks and helping to deal with the global problem of climate change.</p>			

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Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Success Measure
2. Planning & Assessment			
<i>2.1 Vegetation Inventory, Data Collection and Mapping</i>			
<p>Develop the National Vegetation Information System (NVIS) as a nationally agreed framework for vegetation information collection and storage. Stage One of NVIS will incorporate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • agreed core attributes, classification system, data standards and method for translation of existing data; • a preliminary database that incorporates existing vegetation data; • identification of information gaps. <p>Stage Two of NVIS will incorporate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • vegetation change (condition and extent) attributes; • gap filling; • assessment of methods for evaluation of vegetation change; and • agreed methods for assessment of vegetation change. 	<p>Commonwealth is coordinating efforts in collaboration with States and Territories.</p>	<p>Stage One NVIS, July, 2000.</p> <p>Stage Two NVIS, December 2000 – onwards.</p>	<p>Existing vegetation information translated and available in a national vegetation database.</p>
<p>Collect and describe land use /vegetation data and information in partnership with State and Territory agencies</p>	<p>AFFA (BRS) and the NLWRA</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Land use/vegetation information available and accessible upon request.</p> <p>Land use/vegetation data linked to NVIS</p>
<p>Maintain a distributed national database of Australia’s forests in partnership with State and Territory agencies.</p> <p>Collect and communicate information about Australia’s forests including native species plantations.</p>	<p>AFFA (BRS-NFI)</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Vegetation data in the NFI linked to NVIS</p> <p>Aggregated information about Australia’s private native forests available and accessible upon request.</p>

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Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Success Measure
Mapping losses and gains in tree cover in the intensive landuse zone to determine gross change post 1990	AGO & AFFA (BRS)	Ongoing	Tree cover masks available for the intensive landuse zone for 1970 – 2000.
<p>Note that the Framework complements the National Forest Policy Statement in considering all vegetation as well as forest. Forests mapped by the National Forest Inventory includes trees over two metres in height with crowns that cover more than 20% of the ground when viewed from above. The Framework will complement the management processes that are already in place for forest (page3). This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and application of simplified spatially models for native forest and native plantation species (BRS responsibility); • Development of tools to assess and analyse management options for increasing carbon stocks in native forest and plantation species (BRS, CRC & Greenhouse Accounting responsibility); • Use of SAR/LIDAR/ aerial photos for assessment and monitoring of native forests and plantations AFFA (BRS), UNSW, QDNR, CRC Greenhouse Accounting responsibility); • Measurement and monitoring of sustainable forest management for conservation and production and • Evaluate private native forests resources and assess their potential to supplement resources from public native forests and native plantations AFFA (Montreal Implementation group & BRS-NFI responsibility). 			
Provide on-line access to information on threatened species distribution, habitat and threats for use by regional and catchment groups involved in developing and implementing integrated regional catchment management strategies.	EA.	July 2000.	Information available on-line.
Develop the threatened species component of an on-line development approval system.	EA.	July 2000.	Information available on-line.
National Forest Inventory data collection, collation and reporting (regional, national and international) activities for all public and private forests and plantations (including National Farm Forest Inventory).	BRS, AFFA.	Ongoing.	Up to date database describing Australia’s 156 million hectares of forest. Forest information accessible to users.

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Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Success Measure
Improved data collection on vegetation and related outputs in grant application and reporting forms.	EA, AFFA and stakeholders.	June 2002. NHT application forms reviewed annually.	Site validations for mid-term review and on-going program monitoring confirm that data is accurate. Vegetation output and outcome information can be aggregated and analysed at State and national levels.
Continue development of <i>A Directory of Important Wetlands in Australia</i> , including access over the internet.	EA.	internet access by mid-2000.	Key ecological data on nationally significant wetlands widely available.
Assess and document the natural and cultural values of naturally vegetated regions for possible listing on the Register of the National Estate.	Australian Heritage Commission.	Ongoing.	Comprehensive identification and documentation of places of national estate significance.
Release <i>Basin-in-a-Box</i> CD-ROM including following information on the Murray-Darling Basin: woody vegetation soil/landforms and geology, climate data, wetlands GIS, hydrogeology and socio-economic data.	MDBC (Natural Resources Evaluation/ Communication Division).	<i>Basin-in-a-Box</i> March 2000.	Availability of products, and uptake by all levels of government, industry & community.
<i>2.3 Biodiversity Status Assessment</i>			
Conduct comprehensive regional assessments covering economic, environmental and social information to be used in the establishment of CAR reserve systems (including RFA process).	AFFA, EA, State Govts.	Ongoing.	Information sufficient to recommend establishment of CAR reserve system.

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Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Success Measure
<i>2.4 Regional Vegetation Management Planning</i>			
Encourage the integration of native vegetation and biodiversity management issues within wider regional / catchment management strategies through the expansion of devolved grants and other targeted on-ground works projects.	Commonwealth and State/Territory Governments, including MDBC, regional / catchment bodies.	Ongoing.	Sustainable native vegetation management and biodiversity conservation viewed as ‘mainstream’ resource management questions – not optional extras.
Develop new/alternative approaches for threatened species recovery that maximise the on-ground impact of Commonwealth and other investment, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • greater emphasis on the preparation of recovery plans for ecological communities, multi-species and regions; • target setting for the adoption of recovery plans covering listed species; • targeting actions for reducing the impacts of threatening processes in particular regions; • reviewing/ revising guidelines on the recovery planning process; and • investigate biodiversity ‘hotspots’ as a priority for management. 	EA/CSIRO.	Ongoing.	Existence of regional and multi-species recovery plans.
<i>AN EXAMPLE:</i> Under the National Vegetation Information System (NVIS), existing information on vegetation will be stored on a database, thereby improving natural resource management between the Commonwealth, States and Territories.			

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Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Success Measure
3. Reserve System			
<p>Establish new protected areas within Australia's terrestrial National Reserve System.</p> <p>Encourage management of protected areas in accordance with relevant IUCN criteria and ANZECC best practice management guidelines.</p> <p>Establish Indigenous Protected Areas in priority regions following appropriate consultation.</p>	<p>Commonwealth, State/Territory partners, indigenous communities and other private landholders, indigenous communities.</p>	<p>until June 2002.</p>	<p>Establishment of a CAR system of reserves (also refer NHT Partnership Agreements).</p> <p>Establishment of a CAR system of reserves (also refer NHT Partnership Agreements).</p>
<p>Continue and enhance management of Commonwealth reserves, including national parks under joint management with traditional owners.</p>	<p>EA, Boards of Management.</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p>	<p>National parks managed or jointly managed by C'wealth is consistent with the Framework.</p>
<p>Establish a native forest CAR reserve system through the Regional Forest Agreement process.</p>	<p>AFFA, EA, States & Territories.</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p>	<p>Establishment of CAR reserve system in forest ecosystems.</p>
<p><i>AN EXAMPLE:</i> In a bid to protect the habitat for many bird species, including the endangered Swift Parrot, the Australian Bush Heritage Fund purchased a property near Tarcutta containing one of the last large areas of Grassy White Box Woodland and Ironbark Woodland. The property will now be managed as a reserve.</p>			
4. Communication & Capacity Building			
<p>Implement coordinated community-based awareness-raising, education and capacity building sub-programs as part of the following vegetation-related Trust programs: Bushcare, Landcare, Rivercare, Murray-Darling 2001 (as part of broader MDBC Communications Strategy), Farm Forestry, NFI, Endangered Species Program.</p> <p>Ensure that such sub-programs communicate to landholders and the wider community, the need for, and advantages of, sustainable native vegetation management and the role of farm forestry</p>	<p>AFFA, EA, MDBC with State and Territory partners, Farm Forestry Roundtable.</p>	<p>until June 2002.</p>	<p>High level of awareness nationally of the need for and advantages of sustainable native vegetation management.</p> <p>Individuals and group members have access to training, information and technical support.</p>

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Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Success Measure
<i>4.1 Community Education</i>			
Develop/distribute information about native vegetation management through a wide range of media including the Internet to target audiences.	EA, AFFA, BRS, Bushcare & Landcare networks including Greening Australia, Regional Plantation Committees.	until June 2002.	Improved understanding of native vegetation management. Native vegetation websites appropriately linked and accessible. High usages (hit rate) of native vegetation websites.
Develop and implement the Biodiversity Communication Strategy which aims to raise awareness on biodiversity and related vegetation issues through a range of mediums –publications, promotion activities, community service announcements and the Internet.	EA, BDAC, Community Biodiversity Network.	2000 – ongoing.	Increase public awareness of the concept of biodiversity and related issues including the importance of vegetation management.
<i>4.2 Research & Development and Extension</i>			
<p>Improve coordination of Commonwealth R&D policy for native vegetation and natural resource management, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • development of priorities for research into natural resource management, and communication of research activities and results. • Coordinate responses to forest pests through the Forest Generic Incursion Management Strategy, and National Weeds Strategy 	<p>AFFA, EA, CSIRO, R&D Corporations, MDBC, Cwlth NRM Coordination Group.</p> <p>National Offices of Animal and Plant Health., AFFA</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p> <p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Cwlth priorities for R&D into native vegetation are strategic and reflect advice of relevant experts and advisory groups. Products should be well communicated.</p> <p>Effective coordination of response and technical expertise to minimise pest impact</p>

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Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Success Measure
<p>Support research and development to facilitate improved native vegetation management techniques and large scale revegetation, particularly on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - remnant vegetation management techniques; - regeneration and revegetation design, establishment, management and silvicultural techniques to meet a range of objectives (eg. fuelwood, biodiversity conservation, water-table control and farm forestry); - socio-economic factors, for example those affecting decision making, and impediments to cultural change; - management regimes appropriate for on and off-reserve situations (especially use of grazing, fire regimes, tourism impacts and feral pests and weeds); and - new tree crop products and industries with an emphasis on native species, particularly for use in low rainfall areas. 	<p>EA, AFFA, LWRDC, CSIRO, RIRDC (JVAP).</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p>	<p>Development and adoption of new technologies to improve vegetation management (Regular program reviews).</p>
<p>Transfer of improved techniques and technologies for large scale vegetation management, through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • making research results available to extension networks including the Property Management Planning network, Regional Plantation Committees, Greening Australia and training organisations. • distribution of a <i>Bushcare Extension Kit</i> and technical materials to the Bushcare network and other extension networks. • Bushcare website as a tool to transfer technical information. <p>Surveys of farmers, landholders & extension officers should be undertaken 2-5 years after initiatives to assess the transfer of improved techniques and technologies.</p>	<p>EA, AFFA, Bushcare and Landcare networks, CSIRO.</p>	<p>Ongoing: Extension kit by end 1999 & Technical materials by end 2000. 2002 – 2005.</p>	<p>Vegetation management techniques and technologies transferred to the relevant audiences through appropriate mechanisms.</p>
<p>Development of best-practice management of sustainable agricultural systems, risk management for environmental variability, precision planning for agriculture and landscapes.</p>	<p>BRS</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Advice and discussion papers that indicate the impact of agricultural management practices and certification systems on biodiversity in agricultural lands.</p>

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Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Success Measure
<p>Establish competency standards for coordinators, facilitators and group leaders working on Natural Heritage Trust programs. These establish a standard for education and training to be provided to individuals working in natural resource management.</p> <p>Certificate II to IV, Diploma and Advanced Diploma in Natural Resource Management (Community Programs).</p>	EA and AFFA.	<p>Printing of material, & marketing by December 1999.</p> <p>Approval of Registered Training Organisations ongoing.</p>	Delivery of training based on national competency standards.
<p>Implement NHT training initiative for extension officers and community leaders in natural resource management, consistent with the competency standards above.</p>	AFFA, EA and State/Territory Partners and community organisations.	Pilot stage completed June 2000.	Extension network has access to training relevant to regional circumstances and individual needs.
<p>Enhance natural resource management capacity at the farm-level and beyond, through the Property Management Planning and FarmBis programs.</p>	AFFA.	Ongoing.	On-farm decisions more consistent with sustainable natural resource management
<p>Encourage further involvement of urban communities in native vegetation management.</p>	EA and Bushcare Network.	until June 2002.	Increased levels of participation in Bushcare by urban communities
<i>4.3 Vegetation Management Infrastructure</i>			
<p>Implement the Bushcare Support contract as a means of providing basic national infrastructure for native vegetation management within regions.</p>	EA, Greening Australia and their contract partners.	current contract until June 2001.	Communities have access to a base-level of vegetation management infrastructure.
<p>Implement the Farm Forestry Support contract to provide advice and information to landholders on farm forestry and related vegetation issues.</p>	AFFA, Greening Australia.	2 ½ year contract beginning Sept 1999.	Landholders have access to a range of advice on farm forestry matters.

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Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Success Measure
Provision of advice on sustainable agriculture, its certification and auditing. Development of best practice management of sustainable agricultural systems, risk management for environmental variability, precision planning for agriculture and landscapes	BRS	ongoing	Advice and discussion papers that indicate the impact of agricultural management practices and certification systems on biodiversity in agriculture lands.
Implement the national Florabank project to provide technical support and information for community-based native seedbanks.	EA and the Florabank consortium.	current contract until December 2000.	Community groups and other organisations have access to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● best practice information on establishing and maintaining native seedbanks; and ● collecting seed of local native species.
Maintain suitable infrastructure within Commonwealth managed National Parks to ensure native vegetation is sustainably managed and protected.	Commonwealth, Traditional owners.	Ongoing.	Equipment and Services are appropriate and maintained accordingly and don't impact upon the vegetation values of the area.
<i>AN EXAMPLE:</i> By visiting the national FloraBank website at www.florabank.gov.au , landholders and native plant enthusiasts can gain valuable information regarding seed collection, storage and handling as well as a directory of seedbanks.			
5. Incentives			
Develop improved market signals to facilitate land use change and associated structural adjustment (as part of a national framework for natural resource management – refer section 1).	AFFA, EA and State/Territory Partners.	Ongoing.	Market signals result in improved native vegetation management.

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Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Success Measure
<i>5.1 Grant Programs</i>			
Provide funding to meet a range of sustainable native vegetation management objectives, especially through the following NHT programs: Bushcare, Murray-Darling 2001 (consistent with the Basin Sustainability Program), Landcare, Farm Forestry, NFI, Rivercare, National Reserve System, Endangered Species Program.	AFFA, EA, BRS and State/Territory Partners	until June 2002.	Substantial on-ground improvement in the condition and management of native vegetation.
Develop and promote, across State and Territory jurisdictions, a best practice standard for 'management agreements'.	EA (in consultation with relevant State/Territory/local government and community)	2000-2001	A better standard of management agreement adopted through incentive schemes.
Improve targeting of investment in native vegetation management on identified high priority regions and issues, including through expanded use of devolved grants under the Natural Heritage Trust and promotion of adequate management agreements to secure outcomes.	AFFA, EA, State , Territory Partners, regional bodies / local government.	until June 2002.	Extent to which new projects address priority issues and regions.
Mid-term review of NHT programs. Review of MDBC Basin Sustainability Program.	EA, AFFA. MDBC.	December 1999. by end 1999	Extent to which Review recommendations are incorporated within improved delivery of the Trust and Basin Sustainability Program
Report performance information against NHT program indicators. Refine performance indicators for NHT programs, taking account of recommendations in mid-term review.	AFFA,EA and State/Territory Partners.	NHT Annual Reports Review by mid 2000.	Objective, accurate performance information on Trust programs. Agreed performance indicators.
Coordinate the Bush for Wildlife National Coordination initiative , including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve access to information about wildlife and habitat conservation throughout rural Australia; • highlight examples of best practice; and • support the state-based Land for Wildlife schemes. 	EA and other ANZECC agencies, with local government and community organisations.	until June 2002.	National mechanism in place for information transfer on wildlife and habitat conservation issues, consistent with ANZECC policy.

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Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Success Measure
<i>5.2 Property Right and Market-based Measures</i>			
Work with the States/Territories, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • support for innovative approaches; • introduction of ‘right to harvest’ legislation for commercial plantations; and • encouraging codes of practice for firewood to minimise impacts on biodiversity. 	EA, AFFA.	Ongoing.	Extent to which innovative measures to support sustainable native vegetation management trialed and adopted. Legislation in all States.
Implement the Bush for Greenhouse program to increase corporate investment in revegetation for environmental purposes. A carbon broker/investment facilitator will be appointed to encourage corporate investment into revegetation activities and to manage the delivery of revegetation activities.	AGO	5 years from July '99.	Level of corporate investment in revegetation for environmental purposes (Program will be evaluated in 2001).
Encourage development of new markets for farm forestry products, including in low rainfall zones.	AFFA.	beyond June 2002.	Expanded range of marketing options to growers and greater uptake of farm forestry in low-mid rainfall zones.
Investigate feasibility of linking greenhouse incentives (carbon offsets or credits) with vegetation policies, programs and projects that address broader environmental objectives, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • control of dryland salinity; and • biodiversity conservation through the maintenance of existing sinks and revegetation of over-cleared habitat of threatened species. 	AGO, EA, AFFA.	Ongoing.	Measures in place that facilitate links between greenhouse and vegetation, leading to incentives in place that decrease clearing and increase revegetation in a strategic manner.
<i>5.3 Revolving Funds</i>			
Implement revolving funds with national coverage, modelled on the Victorian Trust for Nature revolving fund.	EA in partnership with State agencies, local government and community organisations.	1999-2002.	Revolving funds in place in most jurisdictions -three jurisdictions by 2000-2001.

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Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Success Measure
Develop and promote, across State and Territory jurisdictions, a best practice standards for conservation covenanting.	EA (in consultation with relevant State/Territory/local government and community)	2000-2001	The best practice standards are incorporated into contracts with revolving fund service providers.
Help to catalyse institutional and structural change needed to achieve best practice standards, where applicable, across jurisdictions.	EA (in consultation with relevant State/Territory/local government and community)	2000-2001	All jurisdictions have conservation agreement mechanisms that meet the Cwlth best practice standard.
<i>5.4 Differential Rating & Taxation Measures</i>			
Investigate amendments to, and additional taxation measures including in the areas of conservation land management and philanthropy supporting conservation.	EA, AFFA and Treasury.	1999-2000 to 2000-2001.	Govt decisions on whether to seek amendments to Tax Act to encourage conservation and philanthropy.
Clarify tax measures applying to forestry operations and to investment.	AFFA, ATO, Treasury.	1999-2000.	Preparation of guidelines and information to raise awareness.
Contribute to implementation of National Competition Policy as it is intended to apply to the forestry industry.	AFFA, Treasury.	1999-2000.	Privatisation of State forests, wider range of options for marketing wood from private forests.
<i>AN EXAMPLE::</i> The World Wide Fund for Nature, through Natural Heritage Trust grants, is protecting our native grasslands by offering incentives for landholders and community groups across southern Qld, NSW, VIC, SA and Tas to understand, protect and manage these areas for long term sustainability.			

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Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Success Measure
6. Regulatory Arrangements			
<p>The EPBC Act sets the Commonwealth framework for protection of the environment, especially those aspects that are matters of national environment significance.</p> <p>In the context of native vegetation, it is significant that such matters include nationally threatened species and ecological communities, and specific areas including Ramsar-listed wetlands and World Heritage properties.</p> <p>The Act provides for a cooperative approach between the Commonwealth and the States and Territories and provides a wide range of opportunities for public comment and consultation.</p> <p>The Commonwealth is currently consulting with the States in relation to the development of bilateral agreements under which State assessment processes can be accredited under the EPBC Act. The Commonwealth will also consider developing, in appropriate cases, bilateral agreements accrediting State approval processes.</p> <p>The Commonwealth is committed to a transparent process for developing regulations, guidelines and bilateral agreements under the Act.</p>	<p>Bilateral agreements accrediting assessment process to be negotiated between Commonwealth and States & Territories.</p>	<p>Bilateral Agreements in place accrediting assessment process in the second half of 2000.</p> <p>Act implementation ongoing.</p>	<p>Matters of national environment significance afforded suitable protection.</p> <p>Bilateral agreements operating successfully.</p>
<i>6.1 Threatened Species/Ecological Communities Protection</i>			
<p>The following are immediate priorities to assist with implementation of the EPBC Act:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • produce a user friendly guide to threatened species issues; • monitor the inventory of threatened species on Commonwealth areas; • develop/distribute new Recovery Plan Guidelines; • develop a set of thresholds for determining “significant impact” as defined in the Act. 	<p>EA.</p>	<p>Guide: Feb 2000.</p> <p>Thresholds: July 2000.</p> <p>RP Guidelines: Feb 2000.</p> <p>Others: ongoing.</p>	<p>User friendly guide developed and distributed.</p> <p>Additional Commonwealth areas inventoried.</p> <p>RP Guidelines distributed.</p>

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Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Success Measure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • develop and implement quarantine protocols based on appropriate assessment procedure to minimise the risk of entry of exotic species. • develop and implement response strategies including assessment, interstate quarantine protocols, and management measures to eradicate or contain exotic pest 	<p>AQIS, AFFA</p> <p>National Offices of Animal and Plant Health, AFFA</p>	<p>ongoing</p>	<p>Reduction in exotic pests</p> <p>Effective management and minimisation if impact of pest incursions</p>
<p><i>6.2 Land Clearing Regulation</i></p>			
<p>While the Commonwealth recognises the State and Territories responsibilities related to land clearing it has a clear policy position to reduce land clearing to achieve the goal of reversing the long-term decline in quality and extent of Australia's native vegetation by 2001. The Commonwealth will work with the States and Territories, including using funding from the Natural Heritage Trust as an incentive, to ensure that, amongst best practice, is the introduction and/or maintenance of adequate and effective regulatory regimes for native vegetation management.</p>	<p>All Australian governments, industry and the community.</p>	<p>Best practice regulatory regimes in all jurisdictions by end 2000, to achieve the national target by 2001.</p>	<p>All jurisdictions adopt and/or maintain comprehensive best-practice regulatory regimes for native vegetation management.</p>
<p><i>6.3 Industry / land use Codes of Practice</i></p>			
<p>Develop a nationally coordinated education campaign on the impacts of firewood collection on biodiversity.</p> <p>Promote adoption of codes of practice for commercial firewood harvesters in all jurisdictions.</p>	<p>EA/AFFA, ANZECC</p>	<p>2000-2002</p>	<p>An increased understanding in the community of the impact of firewood collection has on biodiversity and native vegetation.</p> <p>The Development of and then adoption of codes of practice for commercial firewood harvesting in jurisdictions</p>

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Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Success Measure
Investigate scope for improved performance by the agricultural sector in the area of environmental management (including biodiversity, protection and management of native vegetation), through adoption of appropriate standards in environmental management systems and consideration/development of appropriate standards for assessment and monitoring.	EA/AFFA	2000-2001.	Adoption of EMS in agriculture and development of Standards for assessment/monitoring
<i>AN EXAMPLE:</i> The Commonwealth's Bushcare program has been helping local governments improve their local environments by promoting rate rebates as a means of encouraging the conservation of native vegetation on privately owned land.			

7. Monitoring & Evaluation

National monitoring and evaluation activities should be consistent with the wide range of existing reporting mechanisms and indicators such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State of Environment Reporting; • State of Threatened Species Report (under development); • NHT Program Evaluation; • ARMCANZ Sustainability Indicators; • National Greenhouse Gas Inventory; • State of the Forest Reporting; • Montreal Category A regional reporting; and • FAO Forest Resource Assessment reporting. 	EA, AFFA, BRS, ANAO in conjunction with State / Territory Agencies.	Ongoing.	National monitoring and evaluation activities consistent with existing reporting mechanisms and indicators.
<i>7.1 Cover & Condition Monitoring</i>			
Refer also to the National Vegetation Information System (NVIS) in section 2.1.			
National Forest Inventory – collection and reporting on national forest cover and condition (using Montreal Indicators).	BRS.	Ongoing.	Comprehensive national scale information on forest cover and condition.

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Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Success Measure
Conduct land use mapping to provide information on gross vegetation change and non-native vegetation (excluding plantations). This will complement information collected by NVIS and ALCC to provide information covering all vegetation.	National Land & Water Resources Audit, BRS.	until June 2002.	Comprehensive set of national vegetation data.

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Action	Responsibility	Timeframe	Success Measure
Collection of national data on fencing for grazing management, native vegetation establishment, and native seed use (disaggregated into locally indigenous native vegetation and other) on farming properties through ABS Agricultural Commodity Surveys.	EA, Australian Bureau of Statistics.	1998-99 Survey -Final results available 2000. Survey-dispatched June 2000 & results 2001	Data useful for analysis against both program output data and environmental condition data.
Collection of national data on natural resource management practices and farm forestry through ABARE Resource Management Survey.	AFFA, ABARE.	Preliminary results Jan 2000. Final results Sept 2000.	National scale data to inform NRM policy development.
Develop a model for the production of a regular <i>State of Threatened Species Report</i> .	EA.	First report due September 2000 (annually thereafter).	Production and distribution of Report.
<i>7.2 Monitoring Pest Incursions</i>			
Implement pest surveillance programs including targeted and general surveillance programs to detect exotic pests and minimise impact on vegetation and increase success of pest management, eg: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Asian gypsy moth/moth trapping programs • National Forest Pest Awareness Guide 	National Offices of Animal, Plant Health/AFFA, all States	Ongoing	Early detection of pests <i>To be completed</i>
<i>AN EXAMPLE:</i> Recommendations contained in the Natural Heritage Trust mid-term review will guide the future implementation of the Commonwealth's programs relating to natural resource management, including vegetation management.			

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GLOSSARY

Acronym	Description	Acronym	Description
AFFA	Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry – Australia	JVAP	Joint Venture Agroforestry Program
AFG	Australian Forest Growers	LWRRDC	Land & Water Resources Research and Development Corporation
AGO	Australian Greenhouse Office	MCFFA	Ministerial Council on Forestry, Fisheries and Aquaculture
ANZECC	Australia and New Zealand Environment and Conservation Council	NFI	National Forest Inventory
ATO	Australian Tax Office	NFPS	National Forest Policy Statement
BDAC	Biological Diversity Advisory Council	NGS	National Greenhouse Strategy
BRS	Bureau of Rural Sciences	NHT	Natural Heritage Trust
CAR	Comprehensive, adequate, representative (reference to reserve system establishment)	NOLG	National Office of Local Government
Cwlth	The Commonwealth	NRM	Natural Resource Management
EA	Environment Australia	NVIS	National Vegetation Information System
EPBC Act	<i>Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999</i>	R&D	Research and Development
ERIN	Environment Resources and Information Network, Environment Australia	RIRDC	Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation
ERO	Environment Resource Officers (funded by EA, based in Local Government peak state bodies)	SoE	State of the Environment Report
ESD	Ecological Sustainable Development		