



# MEDIA RELEASE

**The Hon Peter Garrett MP**

*Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts*

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## **\$180 MILLION TO BUILD THE NATIONAL RESERVE SYSTEM**

Visiting the Namadgi National Park near Canberra, Federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett today announced a \$180 million boost to Australia's National Reserve System, as part of the Government's \$2.25 billion *Caring for our Country* initiative.

Mr Garrett said this new investment in the network of parks and reserves around the country was a significant increase on previous Government funding and was essential in the fight against climate change.

"Today's announcement will help protect key habitats at a time when native species such as the mountain pygmy possum, tree kangaroos and hare wallabies need them most - as they struggle to adapt to the impacts of climate change," Mr Garrett said.

"The network of protected areas that forms the National Reserve System is Australia's safety net against climate change, helping to conserve our rich biodiversity.

"This \$180 million investment follows a decade of neglect of the National Reserve System by the previous government. Extending the National Reserve System - first championed by the Keating Government - will help ensure the future of Australia's \$81 billion tourism industry, safeguarding our distinctive landscapes and fascinating plants and animals, which attract visitors from all over the world."

Mr Garrett said \$180 million would be rolled out over the next five years, to help partners such as conservation groups, farmers, Indigenous communities and all levels of government to create new reserves and protected areas.

"Today's funding will work alongside the \$50 million we've already committed through *Caring for our Country* for Indigenous Protected Areas, to accelerate the protection of key habitats," Mr Garrett said.

"It will also leverage millions more in cash and in-kind support from partners who will provide at least \$1 for every \$2 invested by the Australian Government to buy land for new reserves.

"*Caring for our Country* is about restoring the health of Australia's environment, helping to make it better-protected, better-managed and more resilient as we deal with the impacts of climate change.

"Through *Caring for our Country* we have improved the transparency and accountability of the National Reserve System program, requiring better monitoring and reporting so taxpayers know exactly what their money is delivering.

"This new program has clear priorities, including targeting bioregions with low levels of protection. These include the sub-tropical savannah from Cape York to the Kimberley, the Mitchell grass country of north-west Queensland, and arid central Australia."

Mr Garrett said the program would also work towards building stronger partnerships with local government, particularly in protecting remnant bushland in peri-urban areas such as western Sydney and south-east Queensland.

For more on *Caring for our Country* visit [www.nrm.gov.au/funding/future.html](http://www.nrm.gov.au/funding/future.html)

For more on the National Reserve System visit [www.environment.gov.au/parks/nrs](http://www.environment.gov.au/parks/nrs)