



JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

The Hon Peter Garrett MP

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and
the Arts

The Hon Tony Burke MP

Minister for Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry

30 September 2008

AMBITIOUS TARGETS SET FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAM

One million additional hectares of native habitat will be protected and farmers will be better supported to continue improving land management under ambitious environmental targets set by the Rudd Government for the \$2.25 billion *Caring for our Country* program.

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts Peter Garrett and Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Tony Burke announced the targets, saying it would provide unprecedented transparency for natural resource management funding.

Minister Garrett formally launched the *Caring for our Country – Outcomes 2008-2013* with the Member for Newcastle, Sharon Grierson, at Kooragang Island, near Newcastle.

Specific five-year outcomes have been identified across the six national priority areas for the program including:

- increase the size of the protected-area estate under the National Reserve System to 125 million hectares – a 25% increase;
- increase the area of native habitat and vegetation managed to reduce critical threats to biodiversity by at least one million hectares;
- reduce the impact of invasive species including rabbits and rodents on Macquarie Island, Tasmania and cane toads; and maintain viable Tasmanian Devil populations;
- assist at least 30% of Australian farmers to adopt sustainable land management practices; and
- contribute to at least 30 partnerships with Indigenous groups and at least five major regional partnerships.

Minister Garrett said public funds had been invested in the past without clear national investment priorities or public statements about the objectives of that investment.

“*Caring for our Country* ensures greater transparency and focus in Government investment as we work towards an environment that is healthier, better protected, well managed and more resilient,” Mr Garrett said.

“These ambitious but achievable objectives will ensure funding is invested strategically across the highest national priorities to ensure the best return in the management of Australia’s natural resources.

“Since the commencement of the *Caring for our Country* program in July the Rudd Labor Government has begun committing funds into the programs’ six national priority areas including the Great Barrier Reef, sustainable farm and land management practices, World Heritage Areas and Ramsar wetlands.”

Minister Burke said farmers were already leading the way in sustainable land management and the Government would provide further support.

“A more sustainable environment benefits the whole nation – whether it is our rivers and oceans, forests or farming land,” Mr Burke said.

“Farmers are already leading the way on land management, working to minimise salinity, increase water use efficiency and fight weeds, including through the Landcare program. We will continue working with our farmers to help them adopt new technology and maintain our reputation as one of the most innovative and efficient farming sectors in the world.

“*Caring for our Country* will also have a strong emphasis on larger projects that bring together primary producers, regional natural resource management organisations, agri-businesses, researchers and scientists, community groups and all levels of government.”

Member for Newcastle, Sharon Grierson, welcomed the launch of Outcomes plan at the Kooragang wetlands, near Newcastle.

“I am delighted to join Peter Garrett in announcing the targets for the first five years of the *Caring for our Country* program to which local projects right around the country, like these wetlands, will make a real contribution and provide a real environmental benefit.”

The next key step in the delivery of *Caring for our Country* will be the release of the Business Plan later this year, outlining short-term targets for each outcome and inviting proposals for funding against the strategic objectives set out in these outcome statements.

Caring for our Country aims to achieve an environment that is healthy, better protected, well-managed, resilient and protects essential ecosystems in a changing climate.

It will focus on achieving results through investment in six priority areas:

- A National Reserve System
- Biodiversity and natural icons
- Coastal environments and critical aquatic habitats
- Sustainable farm practices
- Natural resource management in remote and northern Australia, and
- Community skills, knowledge and engagement.

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