



JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

The Hon Peter Garrett MP

Australian Minister for the Environment,
Heritage and the Arts

The Hon Tony Burke MP

Australian Minister for Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry

\$403 MILLION INVESTMENT FOR THE AUSTRALIAN ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE

The Rudd Government today accelerated work across Australia on environmental and sustainable farming projects, with \$403 million committed under Caring for our Country.

It will be the single biggest investment over the next four years under the landmark \$2 billion program.

Caring for our Country reformed the way environmental and sustainable farming projects were funded, by creating a transparent system and cutting red tape.

It coordinates projects across the country around consistent national targets which are backed by an annual business plan to focus investment and deliver maximum results.

Announcing the funding today, Environment Minister Peter Garrett and Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Tony Burke, said it would support local community projects through to major national initiatives, including:

- \$293 million for 56 regional organisations, more than 1,200 community groups and more than 12,000 landholders to protect and conserve Australia's natural resources – our farming land, water, coasts, plants and animals
- \$51.8 million to help deliver on the Government's election commitment to protect the Great Barrier Reef;
- \$57.5 million to support 57 significant projects across Australia, including targeting weeds such as blackberry and lantana; pests such as rabbits and protecting Ramsar wetlands.

These significant projects also include a landmark four-year, \$19 million initiative to tackle the estimated one million feral camels that devastate Australia's arid and semi-arid environments.

It is the most significant commitments to tackle feral camels since they were introduced in 1840 to provide transport in arid regions of Australia.

Feral camels cover an estimated 3.3 million square kilometres and cause an estimated \$14 million in damage, including to fences, water troughs, bores, buildings and vegetation.

The project will cover the Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia and involve natural resource management groups, conservation bodies, the pastoral industry, research organisations and state and territory governments.

It is estimated the feral camel population is doubling every nine years. This project aims to lower the population density in priority areas to less than one camel per ten square kilometres.

The \$403 million will also fund:

- More than 600 community volunteer days of cane toad control;
- Rodent eradication programs on eight of Australia's small islands;
- Feral animal suppression programs covering more than 178 million hectares to allow regeneration and recovery of critically endangered and threatened species and communities;
- Biological control of weeds of national significance across Victoria, Tasmania, South Australia and NSW;
- Around 3,000 additional primary producers using improved soil management methods on their properties; and
- More than 1,000 community organisations to be involved in coastal conservation projects.

Minister for the Environment Peter Garrett said the investment represented a major step forward for Caring for our Country.

"We have set ambitious targets for investment over the next four years through this program and given applicants a clear indication of the priorities which would guide funding decisions," Mr Garrett said.

"This business planning process has revolutionised the way the Australian Government invests in natural resource management and has resulted in a set of very high quality, well-targeted projects being selected for funding.

"They will also see local volunteer groups; natural resource management bodies; scientists and other experts; state, territory and the Commonwealth governments working together on some of the nations biggest environmental challenges, from cane toads to feral camels."

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Tony Burke said the funding recognised the leading role of Australia's farmers in managing the land.

"Farmers are a big part of the solution to achieve a healthy, sustainable and productive environment across Australia," Mr Burke said.

"Our primary producers are world leaders in using innovation to boost productivity and ensure they continue to feed, clothe and house families around the world.

"Not only will this funding help farmers continue their great work, it will support regional economies and jobs at the same time, which is so important during a global recession."

Further information about these Caring for our Country investments and a full listing of all funded projects is available at <http://www.nrm.gov.au/business-plan/funded/index.html>

STATE BY STATE BREAKDOWNS

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

\$40 million for projects including:

- Rabbit control programs (using existing methods) to cover more than 420,000 hectares of land particularly in the Eyre Peninsula, SA Murray Darling Basin and Alinytjara Wilurara regions (\$1.1 million)
- Over 167,000 hectares managed to reduce threats to native plants and animals and to enhance their habitats (\$8.9 million)
- 2,480 more landholders adopting healthy soil management practices (most regions)
- Coordinated weed control programs across more than 30,000 hectares targeting bridal creeper, athel pine, Chilean needle grass, boneseed and other weeds that are a major threat to agriculture and the environment (\$1.9 million)
- Over \$35 million for eight regional natural resource management groups
- More than \$1.5 million for the Invasive Animal Cooperative Research Centre to develop improved rabbit control measures

VICTORIA

\$47.3 million for projects including:

- Control programs targeting weeds of national significance and covering 11,390 hectares
- Reducing critical threats to biodiversity by improving 295,219 hectares of habitats and landscapes
- Feral animal suppression programs on more than 12,475 hectares
- Over \$37 million for ten regional natural resource management

NEW SOUTH WALES

\$109 million for projects including:

- 260 community volunteer days of cane toad control (Border Rivers/Gwydir and Northern Rivers CMAs);
- Reduce introduced rodent population on Muttonbird Island over the next three years (Northern Rivers CMA)
- Feral animal suppression programs across more than 45,656 hectares to allow regeneration and recovery of critically endangered and threatened species and communities (Central West CMA)
- Control programs targeting weeds of national significance covering more than 240,443 hectares and (Central West CMA)
- Protection of Ramsar wetlands (Border Rivers /Gwydir, Central West, Hunter-Central Rivers, Murrumbidgee and Northern Rivers CMAs)
- 55 CMA/Indigenous community partnerships (most CMAs)
- Nearly 3,000 more landholders adopting healthy soil management practices (most CMAs)
- 1,500 farmers conserving and protecting biodiversity (most CMAs)
- Over 500 community organisations will be involved in coastal rehabilitation, restoration and conservation projects

QUEENSLAND

\$95.6 million for projects including:

- Almost \$39.5 million for 14 natural resource management regions
- \$51.8 million for Reef Rescue to improve water quality in the Great Barrier Reef
- 683,190 hectares to be managed to reduce critical threats to, and improve, biodiversity (Cape York Peninsula, QLD Murray-Darling, Reef Catchments and Terrain Wet Tropics regions)

- Reducing soil erosion with 200 land managers (responsible for two million hectares) in the Cooper and Diamantina River Catchments (Desert Channels Region)
- Control programs targeting weeds of national significance covering 133,345 hectares (Burnett Mary, Northern Gulf, Reef Catchments, Southern Gulf Catchments regions)
- Activities to address threats to Ramsar-listed wetlands posed by invasive plant and animal species on 244,207 hectares (Burnett Mary, QLD Murray-Darling, Reef Catchments, Southern Gulf Catchments, South-West NRM regions)
- 113 community organisations engaged in coastal rehabilitation, restoration and conservation (North Queensland Dry Tropics, Reef Catchments, Terrain Wet Tropics regions)
- 329 community groups involved in programs to increase community knowledge and skills of natural resource best practice
- 71 partnerships between regional bodies and Indigenous communities engaged in delivering Caring for our Country programs (North Queensland Dry Tropics, Fitzroy Basin, QLD Murray- Darling, Burnett Mary regions)
- 4,295 more landholders adopting healthy soil management practices (most regions)

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

\$60 million for projects including:

- Conserving Australia's only international biodiversity hotspot (\$1.5 million)
- Helping more than half the farmers and land managers in the Avon Catchment to increase their knowledge and skills for improved land management (\$10.8 million)
- Helping 500 farmers to protect 15,000 hectares by reducing the risk of wind erosion in the Northern Agricultural Catchments Council (\$6.5 million)
- Improving water quality in the Swan-Canning coastal catchment to reduce nutrient and industrial pollutant run-off (\$2.1 million)
- Combating weeds of national significance and protecting highly significant wetlands through the Rangelands Coordinating Group, which manages natural resources on over 90% of Western Australia's lands (\$7.92 million)
- Helping threatened ecological communities and endangered species such as Gilbert's Potoroo and Carnaby's Cockatoo in the South Coast region of the state (\$7.51 million)
- Improving sustainable farming practices and engaging communities in looking after their threatened and endangered species and internationally acclaimed wildlife assets on five million hectares in the state's south west corner (\$10.5 million)

ACT

\$2.7 million for projects including:

- \$60,000 to conduct five training sessions for landholders to help them identify weeds of national significance
- \$152,000 to increase landscape scale conservation by engaging 125 land managers to conduct cross- farm planning and collaborative pest animal and plant control
- \$138,000 to use and share Indigenous ecological knowledge
- \$100,750 to increase participation by volunteers, particularly schoolchildren, in natural resource management

TASMANIA

\$13.6 million for projects including:

- \$800 000 for a range of additional projects across Tasmania
- Protecting threatened native plant and animal species, including Tasmania's Giant Freshwater Crayfish, by improving natural habitat and reducing threats posed by invasive weeds and animal pests (\$244,400)
- Improving water quality, addressing habitat loss and increasing biodiversity in the Derwent Estuary, an important coastal hotspot (\$335,320)

- Decreasing threats posed by invasive plant and animal species in eight Ramsar-listed wetlands (\$120 000)
- Improving critical breeding habitat for Little Penguins which is under threat from introduced pests and weeds (\$50 000)
- Engaging public and private land managers in best practice land management to protect the Pitt-Water Orielton Lagoon Ramsar wetland and coastal hotspot (\$196,350)

NORTHERN TERRITORY

\$13.1 million for projects including:

- More than \$6.2 million for the regional natural resource management boards to deliver biodiversity, sustainable farm practices and water projects to their communities
- Reducing the impact of feral pests and weeds (\$1.08 million)
- Helping coastal communities to protect wetlands and improve coastal environments (\$780,000)
- Improving sustainable farming practices (\$672,000)
- Improving natural resource management throughout Northern Territory communities (\$4.1 million)