



The National Reserve System Fact Sheet 1

Building the National Reserve System

The National Reserve System—Australia’s network of parks, reserves and protected areas—is a vital part of our national effort to conserve biodiversity.

It protects examples of Australia’s distinctive landscapes, plants and animals for future generations and is often referred to as nature’s safety net in the face of climate change.

The Australian Government is investing \$180 million over five years to accelerate development of the National Reserve System. This is one of the six national priorities of the Government’s Caring for our Country environmental initiative.

- **Helping to buy land for new reserves**

Under Caring for our Country, partners can apply for help from the Australian Government to buy land for new reserves.

The Government will provide up to two-thirds of the cost of purchasing an approved property, which will then be owned and managed as part of the National Reserve System by the partner organisation.

- **Supporting conservation covenants**

Often landowners, such as farmers, have stretches of habitat on their properties that they would like to see protected for future generations. Covenanting organisations can apply for support to help these landholders voluntarily establish perpetual conservation covenants on privately owned land if this land is a priority for addition to the National Reserve System

The landowner needs to sign a perpetual conservation covenant—like an environmental contract—in which they agree to protect that part of their property. They



are free to continue earning a living from the rest of their land, and can receive help from the covenanting organisation to manage their protected area.

The help available to landowners can include advice, professional services, materials and funding for activities like fencing and immediate weed control. Because the covenants are ‘perpetual’, the covenanted area will be protected even if the land is sold—a fundamental requirement for addition to the National Reserve System.

Improvements

The \$180 million investment through Caring for our Country significantly increases Australian Government funding for the National Reserve System.

It also improves the way funding is delivered.

- Administrative processes have been streamlined to maximise the money hitting the ground as new parks and reserves.
- Funding is prioritised so that the major gaps in the current reserve system are targeted, alongside those areas that greatly improve the resilience of key biodiversity values in current protected areas.



- The Government is enhancing the existing partnerships, working harder to involve Indigenous communities, farmers and local government in building the National Reserve System.
- The Government is implementing strategic approaches to protecting key remnants of bushland in peri-urban areas.
- The Government will provide up to a maximum of two-thirds of the purchase price for land for new reserves. This improves transparency and accountability, and guarantees that every dollar the Government invests will leverage at least an extra 50 cents.

Responding to change

These improvements have been driven by new challenges and opportunities.

- Demographic changes and drought in rural Australia mean many properties of high conservation value are available for purchase, whilst development pressures around major cities and in coastal areas highlight the need for urgent action to protect key areas.
- State processes have highlighted urgent priorities, as have crown land lease renewal processes and increased land acquisition budgets.
- The growth of the private conservation sector means more opportunities and options to fund, establish and manage new protected areas.
- There is an urgent need for accelerated action to respond to the threat that climate change poses for our biodiversity.

The goal remains the same

The Commonwealth will continue to work with the states and territories, conservation groups, the private sector and other partners to develop a comprehensive, adequate and representative National Reserve System.

The existing bioregional framework will remain the Commonwealth's strategic roadmap for developing the reserve system. This 'IBRA' framework was developed and adopted by the Commonwealth, states and territories in the early 1990s, and has been used to monitor progress and identify priorities for new reserves ever since.

It is built on robust science and is regularly reviewed and updated in collaboration with the states and territories.

Priority areas

In delivering the funding there will be a particular focus on the remaining bioregions with very low levels of protection—places such as the arid lands of Central Australia and the Mitchell grass country of north-western Queensland.

The Commonwealth is also targeting areas of conservation significance on a global scale, such as the world's largest relatively-intact sub-tropical savannah, which stretches across Australia's north from Cape York to the Kimberley.

Find out more

For more information on the National Reserve System, visit www.environment.gov.au/parks/nrs

For more information on Caring for our Country as a whole visit www.nrm.gov.au

Photo credits:

Front—left to right: *River red gums at Ned's Corner, Vic.* Paul Sinclair, courtesy of Trust for Nature. *Pitt Water Nature Reserve, Barilla Bay, Tas.* Nick Rains. *Pygmy possum at Gluepot, SA.* Nick Rains. *Sand dune at Cravens Peak, Qld.* Nick Rains. *Mornington, WA.* Nick Rains. Page 2—left to right: *Narloo, WA.* Nick Rains. *Monitoring purple crowned fairy wren at Mornington Sanctuary, WA.* Nick Rains