

# Australian Bush Heritage Fund

## Frequently asked questions



### **What is the Australian Bush Heritage Fund?**

The Australian Bush Heritage Fund is a national, independent, non-profit organisation committed to the protection of Australian biodiversity. It specifically aims to identify and acquire private land and water of outstanding natural significance and high biodiversity value, and to manage that land and water for the benefit of all. It is Australia's most widely supported organisation of this type with over 14,000 supporters.

Bush Heritage currently protects over 670,000 ha of land in twenty-four reserves throughout Australia.

Bush Heritage aims to provide a non-confrontational and practical solution to conservation needs. Conservation advocacy organisations are essential to raise public, government and corporate awareness, and change policies. Bush Heritage does not try to duplicate the good work of these organisations.

### **How did Bush Heritage start?**

Bush Heritage was formed in 1990 at the instigation of Bob Brown, who is now a Senator for Tasmania. In 1990 Bob Brown learned of the upcoming sale of two blocks of forested land that adjoined the northern edge of the Great Western Tiers World Heritage Area. These blocks were expected to be clear-felled for timber. He raised money from friends and supporters to buy the land. These two blocks became the first Bush Heritage properties and are now the Liffey and Drys Bluff reserves.

### **What does Bush Heritage protect?**

Bush Heritage currently owns and manages over 670,000 ha of land in twenty-three reserves throughout Australia. On these properties more than 154 vegetation communities are protected, of which at least 63 are of high conservation significance. So far, Bush Heritage knows of 102 plant species of conservation significance and 56 bird and animal species of conservation significance that are secure on these reserves.

Prior to being purchased by Bush Heritage these areas of land had been threatened by logging, intensified pastoral use, land clearing for intensive cropping, inappropriate tourist and 'rural residential' developments or a lack of any conservation management of wildfire, weeds or feral animals.

Regeneration of vegetation is not a large part of Bush Heritage activities because Bush Heritage

selects relatively undisturbed properties for acquisition. However, on most reserves small-scale regeneration work fixes problems such as past over-grazing, clearing for crops, or small scale quarrying. Over 60 ha of land has been revegetated at Chereninup Creek Reserve, WA.

Bush Heritage believes that preserving large areas of undisturbed habitat is the most important contribution that we can make to protect threatened animals and plants. Thus, Bush Heritage is not involved in intensive native animal breeding programs or erecting predator-proof fencing around its reserves.

### **How can I be sure that the land is protected forever?**

The Bush Heritage Constitution explicitly states that Bush Heritage reserves must be acquired and managed for conservation. In its history, Bush Heritage has never sold any of its reserves.

Where possible, Bush Heritage places legally binding conservation covenants on its reserves to guarantee that conservation management will be permanently applied. These covenants place legally enforceable prohibitions on activities like tree clearing or the construction of new buildings or roads. Such covenants act as an additional form of protection.

### **How does Bush Heritage decide what land to acquire?**

Bush Heritage has a national land acquisition strategy that targets regions and ecosystems that are of high priority for conservation. Bush Heritage actively searches for land according to this strategy and also assesses land that is proposed for acquisition by the general public. Acquisition may be by purchase, gift or bequest.

### **How does Bush Heritage look after the reserves?**

As a first priority a Fire Management Plan is prepared. This plan covers both the protection of people and property (both on the reserve and for our neighbours) and the reserves ecological needs. The fire plan will prescribe actions that maintain or modify the impacts of fire depending on the needs of different plants and animals.

Bush Heritage staff and volunteers then undertake land, vegetation and wildlife surveys to build on the information accumulated during the initial land assessment process. This information is compiled into separate reserve management plans that detail the specific management actions

needed to protect and enhance the reserves and their wildlife for the next five years.

Many reserves have voluntary helpers. These helpers may be Bush Heritage supporters, interested neighbours, local nature enthusiasts and staff from government agencies. These people and organisations assist in management tasks such as vegetation, animal and bird surveys, weeding, fencing and the ecological monitoring of the reserves.

### **Can I visit or work on Bush Heritage reserves?**

Bush Heritage aims to have at least one 'open day' per year at each reserve. These events enable staff to explain the conservation values and management work on the reserve. Some reserves are open for self-guided visits, with interpretation notes and sometimes walkways and signage. Some remote reserves are available for pre-booked camping visits. In a few cases ecological sensitivity or fire risk may prohibit any access.

Bush Heritage will help to arrange access for people who can assist us to meet our reserve management goals. This may be for scientific research, community education or access for local neighbours, volunteers and donors. Volunteer work opportunities arise several times each year in most reserves and usually require a commitment of several days' work.

Carnarvon Station Reserve (Qld) Charles Darwin Reserve (WA), Ethabuka Reserve (Qld), Tarcutta Hills Reserve (NSW) Eurardy Reserve (WA) and Goonderoo Reserve (Qld) have a Volunteer Ranger program, with placements of about one month or more. Volunteer Rangers can also assist at the Mareeba Tropical Savannah and Wetland Reserve in north Queensland. People with botanical, zoological, trades or other land management skills can apply. See our web site.

### **Is Bush Heritage government funded?**

Bush Heritage is primarily funded by tax-deductible donations from the general public. Philanthropic trusts and foundations have also provided funding support.

Bush Heritage has received government assistance but is not funded on an annual basis, nor does it receive funding for most of its ongoing land management costs.

Tarcutta Hills Reserve (NSW), Carnarvon Station Reserve (Qld), Ethabuka Reserve (Qld) Charles Darwin Reserve (WA) and Cravens Peak Reserve (Qld) were purchased with generous financial assistance from the Australian Government's National Reserve System program, a part of the Natural Heritage Trust.

### **How is Bush Heritage structured?**

Bush Heritage is a company limited by guarantee. It is governed by a voluntary national Board of ten directors, appointed for three-year terms at Annual General Meetings. Staff are based in the Melbourne national office, Sydney, Brisbane, and on reserves at Carnarvon Station Reserve (Qld), Ethabuka Reserve (Qld), Cravens Peak (Qld), Reedy Creek Reserve (Qld), Charles Darwin Reserve (WA) and Eurardy Reserve (WA). Contractors assist at reserves in north and central Queensland, New South Wales, and Western Australia, and also with specialist tasks such as feral animal control.

### **How much money is used for administration and fundraising overall?**

The best overall measure of our financial efficiency is the ratio of combined fundraising and non-conservation administration costs compared to total income. This ratio represents the efficiency of gaining income from all sources and controlling non-conservation administration costs.

Overall, Bush Heritage has achieved a ratio of 29 per cent - that is 71 per cent of all spending has been on purchasing and managing conservation land and establishing long-term investments. This amount varies each year, depending on large gifts and bequests and on large land purchases. In the past six years, the lowest ratio achieved was 10 per cent of total spending.

### **Is Bush Heritage a charity?**

Bush Heritage is a Deductible Gift Recipient (ABN 78 053 639 115) for the purposes of tax deductibility of donations made to it. It is also a prescribed organisation on the Commonwealth Government Register of Environmental Organisations, a Charitable Institution and an Income Tax Exempt Charity, with consequent taxation exemption benefits.

### **How is my privacy and choice guaranteed?**

Bush Heritage does not sell, rent or exchange personal information, such as donors' names and addresses, with any other organisation. Donors can choose what level of communication they wish to receive at any time.

### **How can I contact the Australian Bush Heritage Fund?**

Phone: 1300 NATURE (1300 628 873)  
Email: [info@bushheritage.asn.au](mailto:info@bushheritage.asn.au)  
Web: [www.bushheritage.org](http://www.bushheritage.org)  
Postal Address: PO Box 329 Flinders Lane  
VIC 8009

March 2006