

Goals, funding levels and design features of the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality, the Natural Heritage Trust and the National Landcare programs

National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality

The goals of the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality (NAP)

The goal of the National Action Plan for Salinity and Water Quality is:

- to motivate and engage regional communities to use coordinated and targeted action;
- to prevent, stabilize and reverse trends in dryland salinity affecting the sustainability of production, the conservation of biological diversity and viability of our infrastructure;
- to improve water quality and secure reliable allocations for human uses, industry and the environment.

NAP Funding

The Australian Government and state governments have jointly committed a total of \$1.4 billion for the NAP over eight years to 2007-08.

NAP Key Program Design Features

- Targets and standards for natural resource management;
- Integrated catchment / regional management plans developed by the community and accredited jointly by the relevant governments;
- Capacity building for communities and landholders to assist them to develop and implement integrated catchment / regional plans, together with the provision of technical and scientific support and engineering innovations;
- An improved governance framework to secure the Commonwealth-State/Territory investments and community action in the long term, including property rights, pricing and regulatory reforms for water and land use;
- Clearly articulated roles for the Australian, State/Territory and local governments and the community to provide an effective, integrated and coherent framework to deliver and monitor implementation; and

- A public communication program to support widespread understanding to promote behavioural change and community support.

Natural Heritage Trust (the Trust)

The objectives of the Trust are:

- Biodiversity Conservation – the conservation of Australia’s biodiversity through the protection and restoration of terrestrial, freshwater, estuarine and marine ecosystems and habitat for native plants and animals.
- Sustainable Use of Natural Resources – the sustainable use and management of Australia’s land, water and marine resources to maintain and improve the productivity and profitability of resource based industries.
- Community Capacity Building and Institutional Change – support for individuals, landholders, industry and communities with skills, knowledge, information and institutional frameworks to promote biodiversity conservation and sustainable resource use and management

Trust Funding

The Australian Government established the Trust in May 1997 to fund environmental protection, sustainable agriculture and natural resource management. Trust funding totalling \$1.4 billion supported some 12,000 projects and related programs over the six years to 2001-02. In the May 2001 budget, the Trust was extended with the allocation of an additional \$1 billion for a further 5 years to 2006-07. Trust funds are delivered at three levels: national investments, regional investments and a local component to directly fund some community groups. Under the Trust *Extension*, states and territories have agreed to provide matching funding for investments at the regional level. Funding for projects is delivered under four Trust programs. The 2004 Budget provided an additional \$300 million for the Trust to 2007-08, bringing total investment in the Trust to \$3 billion.

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The Trust – Key Program Design Features

Building on lessons learned from the NAP, the Trust extension was designed to include three major funding components:

- National/state investment in activities that have a broadscale, rather than a regional or local outcome, addressing activities occurring at a state-wide and national level;
- Regional delivery based on the model adopted for the NAP;and

- Local level investment through the Australian Government Envirofund, which invests in small-scale community group based activities under \$30,000.

Like the NAP, the regional component of the Trust allows for the provision of foundation funding to establish regional processes and priority action funding for high priority projects. Unlike the NAP, the Trust regional component includes a regional competitive component, which is nationally administered and requires no matching funding.

National Landcare Program (NLP)

The objects of the Natural Landcare program are detailed in the *Natural Resources Managements (Financial Assistance) Act 1992*. They are:

- to promote community, industry and governmental partnership in the management of natural resources in Australia;
- to assist in establishing institutional arrangements to develop and implement policies, programs and practices that will encourage sustainable use of natural resources in Australia;
- to assist in enhancing the long term productivity of natural resources in Australia; and
- to assist in developing approaches to held resolve conflicts over access to natural resources in Australia.

NLP Funding

Since the 1993-94 financial year the Australian Government has to date appropriated \$830 million to the National Landcare Program. In the 2004-05 budget the Australian Government appropriated an additional \$110 million to this program over the three financial years 2005-06 to 2007-2008.

NLP Key Program Design Features

The components of NLP are an NLP community support component and a national component.

Landcare is effective in engaging primary producers in NRM and at accessing rural communities. The component will be directed towards community and primary industry landcare activities including those on-farm activities that address offsite NRM issues, those activities that are delivered primarily through the regional NRM process, and those with investments consistent with priorities identified in accredited regional plans and investment strategies. As such the NLP complements the NHT and the NAP.

The following major conditions will apply to NLP Community Support initiatives:

- Australian Government contributions are to be matched either in cash or in-kind by the States and Territories;
- Funding is to be directed to community and industry projects (including, where appropriate, local government).
- While payments are required to be made to the states, no project funding will be provided directly to State agencies.
- Where State agencies are involved in providing technical or other support, this will be determined by project proponents.
- Funding is to be provided for a portfolio of one-, two- or three-year projects with ongoing funding subject to progress and budget availability.

The NLP National component will include the following elements:

- *Landcare Support*: This includes funding for the National Landcare Facilitator, Landcare Awards, capacity building projects and support for major workshops and conferences.
- *Natural Resource Innovation*: This includes grants to groups or individuals to investigate or test innovations that will contribute to improved NRM in primary production or processing.
- *State Landcare Coordinators*: This element provides national support for a network of state landcare co-ordinators to provide strategic direction and support for landcare and primary industry volunteer movements to participate in sustainable resource use and management.
- *Sustainable Industry Initiatives*: This includes investments in projects which assist industry to identify the NRM issues facing them nationally and provide the necessary frameworks and tools to assist addressing these issues, including information, training and best practice approaches to NRM
- *Priority National Projects*: This includes funding for projects in areas of high priority identified by the Australian Government. This includes investments in targeted research to address gaps in sustainable farming systems and encouraging closer links between landholders and scientific organisations.
- *Monitoring and Evaluation*: This element provides funding for program evaluations and assessments in accordance with an established framework.

