



Mt. Roland Rivercare Catchment Inc.

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The Secretary
Senate Standing Committee on Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

7th October 2008

Dear sir,

Re: Caring For Our Country grant programme

I am writing on behalf of the Mt Roland Rivercare Catchment committee to express some concern over the new funding program that is replacing Envirofund. While the new Caring For Our Country program offers opportunities for worthy large scale environmental projects, it is unclear whether some of the projects that would have been funded through Envirofund would now fit the criteria for Caring For Our Country.

The Mt Roland Rivercare group in conjunction with local landowners have made a huge difference to the rivers in Kentish, Tasmania. Much of this has been done as a result of grants received through the Envirofund program for a range of riparian protection projects. Over the last 10 years the group's efforts have rehabilitated 3 rivers and brought about a shift in attitudes amongst farmers and landowners towards better natural resource management. The Envirofund program has been an ongoing assistance by funding small scale projects for the fencing and revegetation of river sections, typically between \$10,000 and \$50,000.

The group's approach is a long term one - rivers that had taken decades to decline as a result of poor resource management in the past, are unlikely to be fixed at one fell swoop. With no legislation to ensure landowners do the right thing for rivers running through their property, it is incumbent upon volunteer groups such as Mt Roland Rivercare to encourage and assist landowners to take a better approach towards caring for our country. The group makes steady progress in this, by enlisting a number of landowners and organising grant funding for fencing, stock troughs, native plants for the riparian zone and rock work for stabilising banks.

These on-ground projects have been the backbone of Mt Roland Rivercare's rehabilitation work and coupled with numerous other projects, field days and events that they have organised, plus ongoing capacity building in the local community, have resulted in the group becoming finalists in the National Landcare Awards.

I fully appreciate that coastcare is a priority under the new program, but it is also important to consider that coastal environments cannot be considered in isolation. No matter what restoration projects may be attempted on the coast, any discharge from degraded rivers and creeks could detrimentally affect and reduce the value of that work.

I am sure I echo other regional landcare and rivercare groups' concerns about the apparent gaps in the Caring For Our Country program and would urge you to act to ensure that funding will still be available for small scale environmental projects in regional areas. Bearing in mind that most environmental work is done by volunteer groups, who often do not have the capacity to manage and facilitate major projects, if there is no longer funding for manageable sized projects, then a great deal of environmental work will most likely cease.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and I hope that Caring For Our Country will continue to fuel the work where Envirofund left off.

Yours sincerely,

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