



## Protecting, repairing and better managing the environment

**The environment is a priority for the Australian Government. We are investing in an ambitious nature positive agenda that's better for the environment and the economy.**

The Australian Government is determined to protect more of what is precious, repair more of what is damaged, and manage nature better for the future.

Australia is home to some of the most stunning natural environments in the world. But after a decade of neglect, many of these places are now in a state of unacceptable disrepair.

This budget, we are investing in programs that stop environmental destruction, begin the process of repairing nature and start restoring damaged ecosystems.

We are doing this by delivering initiatives that enable robust, transparent and credible environmental protection by:

- establishing the new independent Environment Protection Australia
- establishing Environment Information Australia
- implementing other Nature Positive Plan initiatives.

To promote meaningful investment at scale in nature positive projects, this budget we are also funding the establishment of a nature repair market.

We are also investing in key environmental programs as well as sites and institutions that have suffered chronic underinvestment over many years by:

- rolling out a second round of the Urban Rivers and Catchments Program
- investing in the National Heritage Trust
- investing in our Commonwealth national parks
- providing funding towards critical infrastructure for Mutitjulu
- remediating the national flood warning infrastructure network in Australia's highest-risk areas

- securing the future of Australia’s marine science
- funding for critical repair and maintenance for the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust sites.

Since the last budget, the Australian Government has:

- introduced legislation to establish a world-first Nature Repair Market
- released its Nature Positive Plan, in response to the once-in-a-generation Samuel Review of our national environment law, the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act)
- committed to designing standalone cultural heritage protection legislation in partnership with the First Nations Heritage Protection Alliance, in response to the inquiry into the destruction of Juukan Gorge
- pushed successfully for a global agreement to protect 30% of the world’s land and 30% of the world’s oceans by 2030 at the UN Biodiversity Conference
- announced that Australia will host a global Nature Positive Summit in 2024 to supercharge private investment in protecting and repairing our environment

## Why is this important and who will benefit?

### Establishing Environment Protection Australia

The Government is rewriting Australia’s environment laws to better protect our environment and make clearer, faster decisions. At the heart of this plan is \$121 million to establish Environment Protection Australia.

The Australian Government is committed to robust environmental regulation by establish an independent and transparent environmental regulator, Environment Protection Australia. It will restore trust to a system that badly needs it.

As committed in the Nature Positive Plan, Environment Protection Australia will transform our system of environmental approvals and ensure effective compliance and enforcement against breaches of environmental laws. It will make environmental assessments, decide project approvals and the conditions attached to them, and it will make sure that those conditions are being followed on the ground.

Its faster and better decisions will also help to reduce costs, improve certainty for project proponents and support sustainable economic growth.

### Establishing Environment Information Australia

As part of the Australian Government’s commitment to transparent and credible environmental regulation, we are also investing \$51.5 million towards up-to-date and reliable environmental data to support the Nature Positive Plan.

Environment Information Australia will be established to identify and address critical environmental data gaps.

As the custodian for national environmental information, it will ensure consistent, reliable and broad access to environmental data across governments, project proponents and scientists.

Robust environmental data will support faster regulatory decisions, which are key to economic development and private investment in nature restoration. It will also help us assess the effectiveness of environmental protection investments.

### **Implementing other Nature Positive Plan initiatives**

The Australian Government is also providing \$34.0 million to implement other Nature Positive Plan initiatives.

The Nature Positive Plan delivers on the government's commitment to strengthen and streamline Australia's environmental laws in response to the Samuel Review of the EPBC Act.

This investment will legislate the government's commitments set out in the Nature Positive Plan.

It will also support the development of National Environmental Standards and updated strategic advice on protection and recovery action for over 2,000 listed threatened species and ecosystems, helping to turn them away from extinction.

### **Introducing a Nature Repair Market**

The Australian Government is investing \$7.7 million to set up a world-leading nature repair market.

A well-functioning market will drive an estimated \$137 billion of private sector investment into restoring and protecting nature.

The Nature Repair Market Bill was introduced in autumn 2023. The market will commence full operation within 12 months of the passage of the bill.

The Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water will be responsible for the ongoing policy and biodiversity method development to enable market operation. The Clean Energy Regulator will administer the market once operational.

### **Grants for our Rivers and Catchments Program**

We are committed to restoring natural habitats for native species, improving water quality and providing access to green space for urban communities.

The Australian Government is allocating \$118.5 million of existing funding to deliver around 100 competitive grants under round two of the Urban Rivers and Catchments Program.

This will help community groups, NGOs, councils, and First Nations groups carry out projects to clean up and restore local urban rivers and waterways. These include activities like planting native species along creeks and building small-scale wetlands to filter pollution and improve water quality.

This initiative will improve habitat for plants and animals, consistent with Australia's Strategy for Nature 2019-2030, and support progress on the Threatened Species Strategy and Action Plan. It will complement and build on the government's Saving Native Species Program and the Natural Heritage Trust.

### **Boosting the Natural Heritage Trust**

The Australian Government is allocating \$439.2 million from the Natural Heritage Trust to deliver integrated on-ground biodiversity and natural resource management activities.

For 25 years, the Australian Government has worked with a network of regional natural resource management (NRM) delivery partners that are the backbone of the NHT. They collectively employ hundreds of people and engage thousands of volunteers across Australia.

The trust is Australia's flagship environment, sustainable agriculture and natural resource management program.

The funding will be allocated to maintain capability of regional partners, deliver benefits to Australia's threatened species, and protect World Heritage properties and Ramsar wetlands. It will also continue investment in Bush Blitz, Australia's largest nature discovery program that leverages private sector funding and is delivered in partnership with BHP and Earthwatch Australia.

The funding will support new partnerships – such as with state and territory governments, environmental non-government organisations, private sector and philanthropic organisations, and First Nations groups – to help achieve the target to protect and conserve 30% of our landmass by 2030.

It will also secure and create thousands of jobs and local volunteering opportunities.

These investments will deliver tangible on-ground benefits for our threatened species and their habitats right across the nation.

### **Sustaining our Commonwealth national parks**

This budget, the Australian Government is investing in key environmental assets that have suffered chronic underinvestment.

We will inject \$262.3 million to protect the natural and cultural values and economic potential of some of our Commonwealth national parks.

This investment will help protect the World Heritage-listed Kakadu and Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Parks. It will also support threatened species protection and recovery, and improve staff and visitor safety across all the Commonwealth parks and gardens.

It will also support the Commonwealth's obligations to Traditional Owners, as well as increase opportunities for First Nations employment and businesses, which are critical to contributing to Closing the Gap outcomes.

### **Funding critical infrastructure for Muṯitjulu**

The Australian Government is committed to providing critical essential services and infrastructure to the First Nations community of Muṯitjulu within the Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park.

We are investing \$92.8 million towards essential water, sewerage and electrical services to Muṯitjulu, to support community development, health and safety.

This funding will be delivered by the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water in partnership with the National Indigenous Australians Agency.

### **Improving the flood warning infrastructure network**

The Australian Government is providing \$236.0 million to the Bureau of Meteorology to address the reliability and quality of Australia's flood gauge network in the highest-risk areas.

This investment will purchase and remediate gauges to establish a truly national and reliable flood warning system.

It will also help to improve disaster readiness and community resilience in flood-prone areas.

## Stabilising funding for the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust

The Australian Government is also providing \$45.2 million for the Sydney Harbour Federation Trust to address a critical backlog of maintenance and repair works.

This investment will maintain public safety and accessibility to the trust's 9 sites, including North Head Sanctuary and the World Heritage-listed Cockatoo Island.

With over 1.9 million visitors per year to the Sydney Harbour Trust's sites, this investment will address deteriorating wharves and docks, seawall destabilisation, safety concerns like rock falls from cliffs, and other maintenance needed to ensure public safety and avoid permanent loss of heritage value.

## Securing the future of Australia's marine science

The Australian Government is providing \$163.4 million to safeguard the financial sustainability for Australia's key marine science agency so it can continue to provide world-leading scientific marine research and protect our oceans, including the Great Barrier Reef.

The Australian Institute of Marine Science is a world-leading marine science agency. It is critical to delivering on the Australian Government's net zero and nature positive commitments.

This investment will maintain the functional capability and ensure the financial stability of the institute. It will also ensure the institute can continue to undertake research that delivers significant social, economic and environmental value, as well as reinforces Australia's position as a world leader in marine science.

### Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Australia and their continuing connection to land and sea, waters, environment and community. We pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands we live and work on, their culture, and their Elders past and present.

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