



for a living planet



Mornington Wildlife Sanctuary WA © Australian Wildlife Conservancy

Conservancies, rural landholders and indigenous communities

Partners in the National Reserve System

Climate change is the single greatest threat facing Australia's biodiversity.

The National Reserve System is Australia's flagship for conserving biodiversity and preventing further losses.

Traditionally, almost all protected areas in the National Reserve System were owned and run by governments.

Non-government partners are now playing a vital and growing role in building the National Reserve System through:

- Reserves run by private conservancies
- Private rural lands with conservation covenants
- Indigenous Protected Areas

The combined efforts of all sectors is urgently needed to build a well-connected system of strategically-located reserves and protected areas, one that will be strong enough to buffer our native animals and plants against the upheavals of climate change.



Rural landholders

A groundswell of support is growing among rural landholders for formal protection of special natural areas on their properties through conservation covenants. In Queensland a Nature Refuge Landholders Association has been established.

The National Reserve System now includes rural properties with covenants on the title to protect high conservation value areas.

The main covenanting projects funded by the National Reserve System Programme are the Grassy White Box Woodland and Southern Mallee projects in NSW (96,970 ha) and the Protected Areas on Private Land project in Tasmania (1,250 ha). Other covenanting programs may also qualify for the National Reserve System if covenants are perpetual and long-term management for conservation can be assured.

Landholders may also get tax incentives for conservation covenants. Limited livestock grazing may even be permitted on some covenanted areas provided it does not detract from conservation objectives.

Mick Davis with WWF-Australia's Woodland Watch project and wheatbelt farmer David Graham have been working together to protect remnant wildlife habitat on private land
© Darren Jew

“There is a huge number of species there and the environment really hasn't changed much at all. So as I was going to do pretty well nothing with it, except for limited grazing, I thought it best to try to put into the State system or the national system.”

RODERICK O'CONNOR, grazier from Cressy, Tasmania owner of 340 ha covenanted protected area interviewed by ABC Landline 25 Sept 2005.

“The beauty of the nature refuge agreement we have is that we both can use it, but that we must undertake to fence off some specific areas of significance, but still have access to the wider area.”

NIGEL ALEXANDER, CEO, Northern Australia Pastoral Company, the owner of the largest Nature Refuge in Queensland, Mulligan River in the channel country, ABC Landline 28 Aug 2005.

“I think it'll definitely lift the value of the place rather than down value.”

RAY FINGER, grazier with Nature Refuge over Rainmore Station, Queensland, ABC Landline 12 May 2001.





Australian Bush Heritage Fund's Craven's Peak Reserve
© Wayne Lawler

Conservancies

The Australian private conservancy sector has undergone rapid growth due in large part to the stimulus of Australian Government grants provided under the National Reserve System Programme. Additional grants are available under the 2004-2007 Biodiversity Hotspots Programme.

Over the decade 1996-2006, 1.2 million hectares were added to the private reserve system - over five times the area of the ACT - at a cost to the federal treasury of only \$10.70 per hectare acquired. Despite the potential for National Reserve System Programme grants covering up to two thirds of acquisition costs, conservancies invested on average \$1.28 for every Australian Government dollar in purchasing new private reserves, and then invested many-fold again for ongoing management.

Due to National Reserve System Programme grants, conservancies have been able to attract large pools of private philanthropy from home and abroad that are not available to governments.

For example, The Nature Conservancy Australia established the David Thomas Challenge in Nov 2006 starting with \$10M seed money from a single donor. The donor will make grants if matched by other private donors, pushing the potential private pool to \$20M. If National Reserve System Programme funds were made available up to two-thirds of acquisition costs, the pool could be tripled to \$60M.

Private reserves contribute to local economies by attracting eco-tourism and research projects from all over the world to areas previously little visited. According to Tourism Australia reports, domestic and international tourists to terrestrial protected areas spend almost \$5 billion a year in local and regional economies.

“You have no idea how that helps when you sit down with someone in Sydney or Melbourne or New York and say, ‘Would you help us acquire a property for conservation? If you put in a certain amount we know the government is going to put in a certain amount.’ Continuing and expanding that program is important.”

ATTICUS FLEMING, CEO, Australian Wildlife Conservancy, testimony to the Senate Inquiry into National Parks October 2006.

“Within 20 years we want to own and manage at least one percent of Australia for the protection of native habitat and species.”

DOUG HUMANN, CEO, Australian Bush Heritage Fund in Sydney Morning Herald *Good Weekend* magazine 13 Jan 2007.



Habitat of the Gouldian finch, a nationally threatened species, is protected in Mornington Wildlife Sanctuary. © M Fidler



Anindilyakwa IPA rangers and trainee rangers cleaning up ghost nets on Malkayubirra Beach on Groote Eylandt © Simon Hartley

Indigenous communities

Many national parks are now owned by indigenous Traditional Owners and leased to Australian or State governments under joint management arrangements.

However the fastest growing tenure is in Indigenous Protected Areas (IPAs) entirely owned and managed for conservation by Aboriginal and Islander community councils or land trusts, and established through management agreements with the Department of Environment and Heritage. Two thirds of the growth in the National Reserve System since 1996 has been in new IPAs.

Investment in Indigenous Protected Areas helps save threatened wildlife and achieve National Reserve System goals, but it also provides livelihoods and helps indigenous communities maintain their cultural identity and social integrity, addressing multiple policy objectives for the Australian Government. More importantly, IPAs link economic development for indigenous communities to conservation. IPAs are very popular in the indigenous communities that have established them.

Communities and conservation NGOs including WWF-Australia, invest \$1.50 on average for every Australian Government dollar invested. The availability of stable long term government funding to sustain IPAs is a significant concern for indigenous communities.

“The Nantawarrina IPA is the biggest thing for us. It turned everything around. The IPA is particularly valuable in helping the community elders deal with young people between school and work.”

Submission to the 2006 Evaluation of the IPA Programme by the Nepabunna community, owners and managers of the Nantawarrina IPA, the first under the Australian Government's IPA programme.



Green sea turtle © WWF-Canon/Jürgen FREUND

For more information, download *Building Nature's Safety Net: A Review of Australia's Protected Areas System, 1991-2004* at wwf.org.au