

## Background

- 2.1 This Chapter will provide background information on the Caring for Our Country initiative and the Landcare program which falls in its remit. The joint and individual roles of the portfolio agencies involved will also be discussed.

### Caring for Our Country

- 2.2 Caring for Our Country (CfOC) is the Australian Government's natural resource initiative, aiming to make 'a real and measurable difference to Australia's environment'.<sup>1</sup>
- 2.3 The initiative, administered jointly by the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry (DAFF) and the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities (SEWPaC), funds projects aimed at enhancing the state of the natural environment. It does so by supporting communities, farmers and land managers to protect Australia's natural environment and sustainability. According to its website:

Caring for our Country aims to achieve an environment that is healthy, better protected, well-managed, resilient and provides essential ecosystem services in a changing climate [and funds] projects that improve biodiversity and sustainable farm practices.<sup>2</sup>

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1 Caring for Our Country, *Caring for Our Country 2008 - 13* (13 March 2013) <<http://www.nrm.gov.au/about/caring/index.html>>

2 Caring for Our Country, *Caring for Our Country 2008 - 13* (13 March 2013) <<http://www.nrm.gov.au/about/caring/index.html>>

- 2.4 CfOC funds are used to provide grants to projects that improve biodiversity and sustainable farm projects.<sup>3</sup> At present, CfOC is nearing the end of its first phase between 2008 and 2013. This period saw Australian Government investment of \$2 billion to support a range of National Priority Areas:
- National Reserve System;
  - Biodiversity and natural icons;
  - Coastal environments and critical aquatic habitats;
  - Sustainable farm practices;
  - Community skills, knowledge and engagement; and
  - Natural resource management in northern and remote Australia.<sup>4</sup>
- 2.5 From July 2013, the second phase of CfOC will commence, characterised by administration devolved into two streams – sustainable agriculture (administered by DAFF) and sustainable environment (administered by SEWPaC). This will see the Australian Government commit over \$2 billion to continue the program.<sup>5</sup>
- 2.6 To guide project funding for the 2013-14 year, the Australian Government has released the document *One Land – Many Stories: Prospectus of Investment*. This document:
- ...provides an overarching framework of the Australian Government's priorities for funding conservation and improving natural resource management in 2013-14. This Prospectus articulates the places (target areas), national priorities (investment themes) and the available grant funding to guide the development of project proposals in the 2013-14 round of biodiversity conservation and natural resource management investment across the Australian Government environment portfolio.<sup>6</sup>
- 2.7 The Sustainable Agriculture Stream will focus on:
- Sustainable production of food;
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3 Caring for Our Country, *2008 – 13 Programs* (13 March 2013)  
<<http://www.nrm.gov.au/funding/previous/index.html>>

4 Caring for Our Country, *2008 – 13 Programs* (13 March 2013)  
<<http://www.nrm.gov.au/funding/previous/index.html>>

5 Caring for Our Country, *2008 – 13 Programs* (13 March 2013)  
<<http://www.nrm.gov.au/funding/previous/index.html>>

6 Caring for Our Country, *One Land – Many Stories, Prospectus of Investment* (13 March 2013)  
<<http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/publications/prospectus/index.html>>

- Innovation in Australian agriculture and fisheries practices;
- Reduced impact of weeds and pests on agriculture;
- Improved management of agriculture and fisheries and the natural resource base; and
- A skilled and capable Landcare community.<sup>7</sup>

2.8 The Sustainable Environment stream will focus on:

... a broader range of Commonwealth priorities such as Commonwealth waters and marine biodiversity. It will support work that contributes to the Government's broader objectives for improved outcomes at land, seascape and ecosystem scales, while continuing to meet legislated responsibilities.<sup>8</sup>

2.9 Funding in the environment stream, will be available for the following project types:

- **Community Environment Grants** for local groups to take action to conserve and protect their natural environment
- **Environmental Stewardship Program** using a market-based approach to protect threatened ecological communities on private land
- **Reef Rescue** providing assistance to farmers and land managers in the Great Barrier Reef catchments to reduce nutrient runoff, pesticides and sediment from agricultural lands (delivered with the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry)
- **Regional Delivery** for the identified regional natural resource management organisations (delivered with the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry)
- **Target Area Grants** for medium to large-scale projects to deliver against the three strategic objectives of the Sustainable Environment stream of the second phase of Caring for our Country, including funding opportunities for protecting urban waterways and coastal environments
- **Working on Country** supporting local Indigenous communities to manage their land and seas and providing opportunities for Indigenous employment

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7 Caring for Our Country, Caring for Our Country 2013 – 2018 (13 March 2013)  
<<http://www.nrm.gov.au/about/caring/overview.html>>

8 Caring for Our Country, Caring for Our Country 2013 – 2018 (13 March 2013)  
<<http://www.nrm.gov.au/about/caring/overview.html>>

- **Indigenous Protected Areas** program provides support for Indigenous communities to increase and manage Indigenous Protected Areas.<sup>9</sup>

## Landcare

2.10 Landcare is a major grass roots movement which obtains some of its funding through CfOC, with some \$36.8 million provided by DAFF in 2011-12. Landcare is described as:

a community-based approach that has played a major role in raising awareness, influencing farming and land management practices and delivering environmental outcomes across Australian landscapes.

Caring for the land captures a range of activities such as soil conservation, management of erosion and salinity, sustainable farm practices, restoration of native habitats, revegetation, control of weeds and pests and the development of local natural resource management skills and knowledge.

While a key element of Landcare is the voluntary network of more than 6,000 groups across Australia, there are many farmers and landholders that undertake this important work but are not affiliated with any particular Landcare group.<sup>10</sup>

2.11 Under the second phase, Landcare will largely fall under the auspices of DAFF (in the overall CfOC framework). In guiding the progress of Landcare, an Australian Framework for Landcare has been developed by the community of those involved. It provides that the approach to Landcare involves:

- a philosophy, influencing the way people live in the landscape while caring for the land – the Landcare ethic
- local community action putting the philosophy into practice – the Landcare movement founded on stewardship and volunteerism
- a range of knowledge generation, sharing and support mechanisms including groups, networks (from local to national), facilitators and

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9 Caring for Our Country, *One Land – Many Stories, Prospectus of Investment* (13 March 2013) <<http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/publications/prospectus/index.html>>

10 Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, *Landcare* (18 March 2013) <<http://www.daff.gov.au/natural-resources/landcare>>

coordinators, government and non-government partnerships – the Landcare model.<sup>11</sup>

2.12 The Landcare movement involves significant contribution from the community itself as it is:

...based on the concept and practice of community members providing their time and energy to identify, plan and implement on-ground works.<sup>12</sup>

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11 Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, *Australian Framework for Landcare* (18 March 2013) <[http://www.daff.gov.au/natural-resources/landcare/the\\_australian\\_landcare\\_framework](http://www.daff.gov.au/natural-resources/landcare/the_australian_landcare_framework) >

12 Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, *Australian Framework for Landcare* (18 March 2013) <[http://www.daff.gov.au/natural-resources/landcare/the\\_australian\\_landcare\\_framework](http://www.daff.gov.au/natural-resources/landcare/the_australian_landcare_framework) >

