

# The Bilateral Agreement



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The Commonwealth and Northern Territory Governments signed a Bilateral Agreement on 5 June 2003, to become investment partners working with the community and other stakeholders, in an arrangement to address natural resource management needs. The agreement conditions stipulate that an Integrated Natural Resource Management Plan will be developed for the Northern Territory, and will fully reflect the broad range of issues set out in the Agreement.

## The National Context

The partners will work to three overarching objectives, which should provide the context for our plan. These are:

- Biodiversity Conservation
- Sustainable Use of Natural Resources
- Community Capacity Building and Institutional Change

## Activity Areas

Natural Heritage Trust investments will focus on 10 activity areas, which should also provide a context for our plan. These include:

- Protecting and restoring the habitat of threatened species, threatened ecological communities and migratory birds
- Reversing the long-term decline in the extent and quality of Australia's native vegetation
- Protecting and restoring significant freshwater, marine and estuarine ecosystems
- Preventing or controlling the introduction and spread of feral animals, aquatic pests, weeds and other biological threats to biodiversity
- Establishing and effectively managing a comprehensive, adequate and representative system of protected areas
- Improving the condition of natural resources that underpins the sustainability and productivity of resource based industries
- Securing access to natural resources for sustainable productive use
- Encouraging the development of sustainable and profitable management systems for application by land holders and other natural resource managers and users
- Providing land holders, community groups and other natural resource managers with understanding and skills to contribute to biodiversity conservation and sustainable natural resource management
- Establishing institutional and organisational frameworks that promote conservation and ecologically sustainable use and management of natural resources.

## Regional Targets

All Regions will undertake an initial assessment of all matters identified in the Bilateral Agreement, even though some are not relevant to the Northern Territory. Those matters include:

- Land salinity
- Soil condition
- Native vegetation communities integrity
- Inland aquatic ecosystems integrity (rivers and other wetlands)
- Estuarine, coastal and marine habitats integrity
- Nutrients in aquatic environments
- Turbidity / suspended particulate matter in aquatic environments
- Surface water salinity in freshwater aquatic environments
- Significant native species and ecological communities
- Ecologically significant invasive species

## Accreditation Criteria

When preparing our plan, we must remember to consider the full range of natural resource management issues, as well as other issues including

- Scientific analysis of natural resource conditions, problems and priorities
- Effective involvement of all key stakeholders in plan development and implementation
- Addressing the causes rather than the symptoms of problems
- Strategies to implement agreed Natural Resource Management (NRM) policies to protect natural resource base
- Consistency with other planning processes and legislative requirements
- Setting targets at the Regional scale, consistent with the National Framework for NRM standards and targets
- Strategic, prioritised and achievable actions necessary to address the range of NRM issues and achieve the Regional targets
- Continuous development, monitoring, review and enhancement of the plan

## In Summary

All Plans must focus on causes rather than symptoms, and must reflect a range of national policies in relation to natural resource management.