

action 4: healthy and productive land

Although significant progress has been made to improve the health of our land, significant challenges remain. A more integrated approach will provide greater opportunities to coordinate and target action for the achievement of the full range of ecosystem services.

What we will do

4.1 Market solutions

We will invest \$14 million over the next four years on market-based schemes that for the first time will put a value on the services our ecosystems provides.

To place the proper value on our ecosystems we are designing and testing efficient markets for ecosystem services that private land offers, by using innovative economic approaches such as specialised auctions (similar to the successful BushTender program), tradeable permits and offset markets that help counteract environmentally harmful activities such as carbon or water intensive production.

To do this we need to build up our scientific and economic capabilities so that we better understand the way our ecosystems provide clean water, healthy soil and a range of other ecosystem services. Then we can determine the immense value of these services and the economic costs of environmental weeds, pests and drylands salinity.

A large pilot will be conducted with a Catchment Management Authority to test these market-based instruments in solving a range of environmental problems specific to that catchment.

4.2 Extending BushTender

We will expand the successful BushTender program – which pays farmers and land managers to protect native vegetation on private land – with an injection of \$2.7 million to roll it out statewide.

BushTender is an auction-based approach where landholders competitively tender for contracts to improve their native vegetation. Successful bids are those that offer the best value for money in protecting the most valuable environments. It gives landowners an opportunity to generate a regular and reliable income stream from their native vegetation.

Managing invasive plants and animals

We will better focus investment in pest management through enhanced prevention and early intervention measures, improved knowledge of the extent and impact of pests, and establishing transparent decision-making and cost-sharing arrangements and new systems to better monitor pest risks and evaluate programs.

Sustainable land and production management approaches will be developed for the management of pests including innovations through industry partnerships and environmental management systems.

Partnerships established under recent initiatives will continue to be strengthened to prevent the introduction and spread of pests and to better protect assets from the threat of pests on public lands including roadsides, crown land, parks and forests.

The Good Neighbour Program focussed on pest and weed control. It will be expanded to deal with a range of issues such as pests, wildfire prevention, fencing, vehicle access, erosion control and water quality, in collaboration with the community. A market-based approach will be investigated.



4.3 Environmental accounting

We will work with the Australian Bureau of Statistics to show how much water, energy and materials are used to produce our goods and services modelled on the same principles as National Accounts.

This is the first attempt in Australia to document the supply and use of materials and resources in the economy, such as measuring how much water and energy are used to produce a good or service. This will lead to better decisions about how to invest our environment efforts in the future.

4.4 Landcare

We will invest \$8 million to continue support for the successful work of Landcare volunteers with a State Landcare Coordinator and 10 Regional Landcare Coordinators for implementation of the Victorian Action Plan for Second Generation Landcare.

Created in the 1980s, Victoria's Landcare movement has been one of the most successful environmental programs ever, drawing together thousands of volunteers, including farmers, environment groups and school children, to protect and improve their local environment. A significant achievement has been the development of Regional Landcare Support Strategies for each CMA region. These are community-owned strategies providing direction and support for on-ground natural resource management activities and coordination with other regional initiatives. This funding will go towards strengthening capacity building initiatives and helping to recruit more Victorians to the Landcare movement.

4.5 Healthy soil

We will provide \$4 million over four years to help farmers and landholders better manage their soil so it is more productive for their farms and better for the environment.

Healthy soil is a key natural resource asset in Victorian rural landscapes. When soil is in good condition, it provides a range of environmental services that includes water filtration, habitat and profitable and sustainable agriculture. The Government will develop a soil health framework to guide work with farmers and landholders, focussing initially on direct industry and community engagement in the grains and dairy sectors.

This *Soil Health Initiative* will help primary producers responsibly manage their soil assets to help achieve production and environmental benefits. This will include putting them in touch with the best available information sources, diagnosing the condition and health of their soil, comparing their soil management against other local producers and pursuing improved soil productivity and environmental services.