



Invest in NRM to save money, says national peak body for natural resource management organisations



Minister for Environment and Water Tanya Plibersek, Shadow Minister for Environment, Fisheries and Forestry Senator Jonathan Duniam and other parliamentarians met with regional natural resource management Chairs last year to discuss the sector's needs.

Investing in natural resource management (NRM) will save money according to the national peak body, NRM Regions Australia.

CEO Dr Kate Andrews is calling on the incoming government to increase core funding for regional NRM organisations.

“Regional NRM organisations provide an ongoing essential service for all Australians. Our people live and work in the regions, undertaking projects and helping others to protect and restore nature, improve our water quality and soils, and to support healthy agriculture for the food and fibre we need.

“But our job is getting harder. Climate change and weather-related disasters, pest and disease outbreaks, biodiversity loss, and the growing need to protect our environment combine to threaten the natural resources we all rely on. We can see this harming regional communities,” she said.

Despite this increasing threat, core funding for the ongoing essential work of natural resource management organisations has been decreasing – by around 45% since the early 2000s.

Regional NRM organisations are calling for an incoming government to commit to providing secure and enduring annual funding of \$280 million for regional NRM core services over the next 10 years.

Dr Andrews said decreasing funding to regional NRM organisations makes no sense in the short or long term.

“People are very concerned about the cost-of-living. Rightly so. Yet failure to adequately fund integrated natural resource management adds to cost-of-living pressures.

“Every pest, weed or disease that enters Australia and spreads, costs individuals and taxpayers money. Every landholder that loses livestock or crops because they can't get the right support to plan for Australia's increasingly extreme conditions due to climate change, impacts the regional and national economy. Greater impacts from natural disasters increases the insurance costs for individuals and businesses,” Dr Andrews said.

“Investing to manage our natural resources better can help build resilience and reduce these costs.”

Dr Andrews said integrated management of natural resources is the most cost-effective way to restore the environment and improve the sustainability of agriculture-dependent communities and the resilience of our landscapes.

“You only need to watch how flooding after Cyclone Alfred has enabled fire ants to rapidly spread - wreaking havoc on people and animals as they go - to see how connected these issues are,” she said.

“Regional NRM organisations work strategically. Planting trees in the right part of a landscape can reduce soil erosion, improve water quality, provide habitat for wildlife and increase farm income through improved productivity, or carbon or nature payments. Planting the same trees elsewhere might achieve nothing at all.”

This year marks 25 years of implementation of Australia's unique regional NRM model - the only country-wide integrated natural resource management model in the world.

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NRM Regions Australia is the national peak body of Australia's 54 regional NRM organisations that cover the continent. Our members work with land managers, Indigenous organisations, communities, governments and industries to manage our land, water, coast, plants and animals. With partners we work to restore and sustain Australia's biodiversity and productive landscapes.

See how regional NRM organisations across Australia are providing an essential service by:

- **Managing feral animals to protect an endangered species** [Turtle project wins national biosecurity award](#) *Cape York NRM supporting Indigenous Ranger groups.*
- **Increasing resilience through better planning for natural disasters** [Natural disaster response plans enhance resilience](#), *Cradle Coast NRM, NRM South and NRM North*
- **Supporting agricultural efficiency to save money and time** [Irrigation incentives save money and labour](#), *West Gippsland CMA*