



Southern Gulf  
NRM

## MEDIA RELEASE

### Natural Resource Management Funding on the Edge

18 April 2017  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The future of Australian Natural Resource Management (NRM) arrangements will be determined in the upcoming Commonwealth budget.

The Australian Government's \$1 Billion National Landcare Program that has supported NRM projects throughout Australia comes to an end after four years in mid-2018.

In the 21.6 million hectare Southern Gulf region, the national program's current funded projects delivered by Southern Gulf NRM with partners include:

- Pasture Partners – supports producers in systematic monitoring and management of the condition of their rangelands pastures that underpin the regional beef industry; increasing their individual property economic viability and improving the overall industry's economic and environmental contribution to the region
- Critical habitat management – addressing the conservation of the Carpentarian Grasswren, nationally significant wetlands, and the Julia Creek Dunnart
- Community capacity development – assisting communities in the design and delivery of local conservation and environmental education projects
- Regional Landcare Facilitator – building knowledge and skills within the producer community

The Program also supports the great work done by Indigenous ranger teams and supports local community-based Landcare groups.

The National Landcare Program helps drive agricultural profitability and community resilience in the region.

The recently released national State of the Environment report makes clear that much work remains to be done to ensure our landscapes and resources are managed in a sustainable way.

The National Landcare Program is at a turning point says Southern Gulf NRM Chairperson Megan Munchenberg.

"We need two major decisions from the Australian Government in the next few months," she said.

"Firstly, we need the Government to recommit to a substantial national NRM program as a successor to the existing National Landcare Program.

"Secondly, and very importantly, we need the Australian Government to recognise the central role regional NRM organisations like Southern Gulf NRM play in program delivery", said Mrs Munchenberg.

Not-for-profit NRM organisations help to ensure NRM investment is focussed on regional community needs.

"Southern Gulf NRM listens to its community and designs and delivers projects that are relevant to regional community needs," said Mrs Munchenberg.

"Like all NRM organisations, we also aim to build partnerships and coordinate and leverage investments from multiple sources to get best value for money – both for the government and the community", she said.

NRM organisations often facilitate program coordination between levels of government and departments to benefit communities.

Mrs Munchenberg is very concerned about the future of the National Landcare Program, and the continuing role of regional NRM organisations. She is particularly concerned about the possibility of a fully competitive approach to funding. This approach would pit region against region and community against community.

“It creates competition where we need collaboration”, said Mrs Munchenberg.

“In remote regions like ours, we know that collaboration is vital to ensure scarce funds are put to best use.

“Under a competitive regime, we would likely see a continuation of the drift of resources to the major centres and the coastal regions, despite the desperate need for increased investment in remote inland regions like ours,” she said.

Mrs Munchenberg is calling on the Australian Government to continue to recognise regional NRM organisations as having a unique and pivotal role in the delivery of NRM programs.

“There is certainly scope for a national or targeted funding pool within the program to address priorities like the Great Barrier Reef, but regional NRM bodies are best placed to plan, develop and implement projects relevant at the regional scale, bringing together Commonwealth priorities with local needs for best results”, she said.

“We are more than happy to propose and negotiate projects that marry national priorities with regional community needs, but we don’t believe that entering a national scramble for funding would be good for our region or good for taxpayers”, said Mrs Munchenberg.

## **ENDS**

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Mrs Megan Munchenberg, Chair of Board will be available for interviews on request.