

27 January 2016

Submission to the Department of the Treasury

Priorities for the Federal Budget 2016-17

Every Federal Budget is important because it reveals the Government's agenda and priorities for the next year. This budget is arguably more important than most because it will detail this for a new Prime Minister, Treasurer and a reshuffled Cabinet.

The Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) hopes this change in Australia's leadership will lead to greater recognition of the importance a healthy environment plays in the health and prosperity of the nation.

One of the major themes emerging from the Government under Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull is about the need to encourage innovation in Australia. On the night he won the leadership ballot Prime Minister Turnbull said

The Australia of the future has to be a nation that is agile, that is innovative, that is creative.¹

Rhetoric such as the quote above is important in contributing to the atmosphere of national debates. However rhetoric only drives the agenda so far. Prime Minister Turnbull and Environment Minister Hunt are responsible for the Government's climate policy agenda. Under this agenda Australia's greenhouse gas emissions have begun to rise again. The Environment Department's own reports state that Australia produced more pollution in the 2014-15 year than in 2013-14.² Unfortunately in this case the Prime Minister's positive innovation rhetoric does not yet match the government's policy reality. This is also evident in the Government's refusal to be part of the global pact to phase out fossil fuel subsidies that was presented at the Paris Climate talks.³

¹ Transcript: Vote on the Liberal Party Leadership, <http://www.malcolmturnbull.com.au/media/transcript-vote-on-the-liberal-party-leadership>, 15 September 2015.

² Australian Government, Department of Environment, *Quarterly Update of Australia's National Greenhouse Gas Inventory: June 2015*, p.4, December 2015.

³ <http://www.smh.com.au/environment/un-climate-conference/paris-un-climate-conference-2015-australia-rejects-fossil-fuel-pledge-20151130-glbw4s.html>

Budget priorities

1. Restructure the fuel tax credits program and repeal the tax breaks for oil and gas assets and other subsidies that promote the use of fossil fuels.
2. Increase the number of Indigenous Rangers and provide long term funding certainty for Indigenous Rangers and the management of Indigenous Protected Areas.
3. Commit appropriate funding to the Green Climate Fund without taking from the Foreign Aid Budget.
4. Appoint and fund an advisory group to develop an energy transition plan for Australia.
5. Increase the National Reserve System to better protect water catchments, threatened species and places of cultural and social importance.
6. Establish a threatened species recovery fund.
7. Support the plan for broad scale biological control of European carp.
8. Fund the implementation of the System of Environmental–Economic Accounting across Government.

Fossil fuel subsidies

The Government continues to subsidise fuel, through the notorious Fuel Tax Credit scheme, and provides tax breaks for fossil fuel exploration, production and consumption. The Fuel Tax Credit scheme subsidises the cost of fuel and therefore subsidises pollution. This continuing budget support for the use of diesel fuel constitutes a barrier to innovation, established and maintained by Government. It costs the Federal Budget almost \$30 billion dollars over the forward estimates. This submission will outline possible options for reducing the subsidy on fossil fuel subsidies through reform of the Fuel Tax Credit scheme while ensuring farmers and small business are not negatively impacted. It also suggests removing the diesel subsidy by imposing fuel tax thereby removing an incentive to pollute. This revenue could be redirected to invest in the innovation Australia's Prime Minister rightly views as important to the nation's future. Savings from the Fuel Tax Credit scheme could be invested into research and development to reduce fuel use, lower environmental impacts and find new ways to use clean technology to make all businesses more energy efficient.

Northern Australia

A strong, diverse and sustainable economy for northern Australia is necessary to underpin the wellbeing of its communities and the long term management of its natural resources. The growth of the cultural and conservation economy is crucial in Northern Australia as it will create secure jobs and livelihoods and help protect the region's superb environmental and cultural values.

The Budget can further these goals with secure long term funding for Indigenous Protected Areas and Indigenous Rangers through the Working on Country program. ACF calls for the Government to provide long term funding certainty to existing Indigenous Rangers and to double the number of Indigenous rangers over the next four years. The Government should also increase the number of Indigenous land managers to 5,000 within 10 years. A report released in November 2015, found that despite the relatively low level of spending on Indigenous Protected Areas and Indigenous Rangers, there are almost 800 full time and a total of 1,423 people employed through the initiative. Retention rates are over 80 per cent and there are positive economic flow-on effects in communities where Indigenous Rangers live and work.⁴

This submission also calls on the Government to make sure the guidelines and criteria for the proposed Northern Australian Infrastructure Facility genuinely benefit the people and environment of Northern Australia. The Government can do this by ensuring supported projects are environmentally sustainable, fair and economically resilient. ACF calls for clear public benefit goals or tests to be part of the overall aim of the facility. The facility, as outlined in the discussion paper released last year, appears to be unable to support smaller and medium scale infrastructure, such as tourism ventures or small scale enterprises in remote, especially Indigenous, communities. Smaller projects that enhance communications,

⁴ The Pew Charitable Trusts and Synergies Economic Consulting, *Working for Our Country: A review of the economic and social benefits of Indigenous Land and Sea Management*, 1 November 2015, p. 3-4

tourism, renewable energy and water efficiency infrastructure, amongst other priorities, are extremely important to Northern Australia. The Government should consider transferring some of the \$5 billion loan facility to a grant program to help build smaller scale infrastructure.

Climate change

ACF welcomes the Government's new commitment to the Green Climate Fund. However ACF is disappointed by the amount pledged and that this funding is to be reallocated from Australia's aid budget. ACF and other groups are calling for a greater contribution of at least US\$1.2 billion per year by 2020, in line with the shared US\$100 billion per year goal set for developed nations. Funding to help developing nations reduce climate pollution and adapt to the unavoidable impacts of climate change is critical to the success of the Paris Climate Agreement. As a Party to the Agreement, Australia has an important role in helping our neighbours and other developing countries by providing our fair share of climate finance. For next year's budget this means a contribution of at least US\$400 million (AU\$550 million) in public finance in 2016-17.

The Government's interest in promoting innovation should see it withdraw from plans to abolish the Clean Energy Finance Corporation and the Australian Renewable Energy Agency. Both agencies are at the forefront of promoting, financing and funding renewable energy technology in Australia. The Government should also extend funding for the National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility (NCCARF). This facility's funding has only been guaranteed by the Government until the end of the 2016-17 budget year. Its importance as an institution is growing as the unavoidable impacts of global warming become increasingly apparent and have growing impacts. The NCCARF has an important role in helping decision makers in Australia prepare for projected impacts such as more frequent and intense heatwaves, an increased risk of flooding from rivers and the sea, and increased coastal erosion. This work requires multi-year efforts and is hampered by short-term or uncertain funding. The Government should pledge long term funding to this important public facility.

Successful innovation requires planning and anticipation. The shutdown of Australia's coal fired electricity generation is an inevitable consequence of technological and market disruption that is already occurring. State and federal governments have a responsibility to be at the forefront of managing and seizing the opportunities this change brings. ACF calls on the Government to set aside funding to develop a transition plan through an Energy Transition Advisory Group made up of representatives from state and federal governments, the energy sector, investors, unions, environment groups and other community organisations. Funding will also be needed to implement the transition plan.

Environmental protection

Protecting, restoring and connecting natural ecosystems is an important element of any serious national plan to tackle climate change. For the first time since 1993 there is now no Australian Government program that supports the establishment of new protected areas across Australia. Yet there are many gaps in the National Reserve System that need to be

filled, including critical corridors and climate refuges that will be essential for supporting healthy ecosystems vitally important to human well-being. There are also still many threatened species, including in higher threat areas like the Great Dividing Range, that have no or inadequate habitat coverage within the reserve system

Climate change will be one of the most significant drivers of species loss over coming decades, exacerbating the already devastating effects of land clearing, invasive predators, fire and pollution. Protecting key climate refuge habitat is vital to the survival of our threatened species. A dedicated fund to help establish new national parks, such as the proposed Great Forest National Park in Victoria, would ensure Australia's significant landscapes and natural areas – and the species that call them home – are properly protected.

Habitat loss, feral pests and competition from invasive species continue to take a devastating toll on our native wildlife and plants. The Government has committed to stopping all mammal extinctions by 2020 but has provided limited additional funding to achieve this aim. ACF calls on the Government to establish a threatened species recovery fund of \$200 million a year to invest directly in strategic priority recovery actions for Australia's most threatened species.

South-eastern Australia's waterways, particularly those in the Murray Darling Basin, are infested with European Carp. ACF has united with groups such as the Australian Recreational Fishing Foundation, the Invasive Species Council, the National Farmers' Federation and the National Irrigators' Council to call for the introduction of a biological control for carp. In this submission ACF calls on the Federal Government to contribute to the cost of this Carp Management Program.

Making sure nature is properly valued in Government decision-making

Our rivers, oceans, forests and land should be valued for what they are, not merely for what can be extracted from them. Because the true value of Australia's amazing natural places and wildlife has not been incorporated into decision-making, we risk the loss of these very places and ecosystems that underpins our lives. Australia must do better at valuing what matters and making what matters valuable.

The official framework of the Federal Budget excludes the consideration of ecological issues. The Australian Bureau of Statistics recognises that "economic prosperity is dependent on the ability of the environment to supply natural resources and to absorb pollution, and that environmental policies impact on economic activity."⁵

This is why they and others have been working on implementing a System of Environmental–Economic Accounting (SEEA) and developing a National Balance Sheet which includes Australia natural assets. This work is extremely important to integrate the environment into economic indicators. This submission calls for modest funding to assist the further development and use of these indicators throughout the machinery of Government.

⁵ Australian Bureau of Statistics, Completing the Picture – Environmental Accounting in Practice, May 2012.

Reform of Fuel Tax Credits scheme

The opportunity

The Fuel Tax Credits scheme exempts certain business from paying the fuel excise tax levied on liquid, gaseous and blended fuels. In practice it means while most Australians currently pay around 39 cents per litre in tax every time they fill up at the bowser, mining companies get their fuel tax-free. Fuel tax credits are available to eligible businesses based on business activities. As such, they are effectively a subsidy, providing an advantage to certain activities over others.

In the 2015-16 Budget, the Fuel Tax Credits scheme cost taxpayers more than \$6 billion. This cost was estimated to rise to more than \$7.5 billion over the forward estimates. The Fuel Tax Credits scheme is consistently listed in the Federal Budget in the top 20 most expensive programs. Subsidising fuel provides a disincentive for businesses to innovate and adapt. Diesel fuel contributes to climate pollution. The Government should encourage businesses to look for clean alternatives by pricing diesel fuel in a way that acknowledges the damage it does to the climate we all share. It should not facilitate the burning of more by subsidising its use.

Around 40 per cent of the value of fuel tax credits goes to the mining sector. For some large mining companies this subsidy is worth tens of millions of dollars. ACF has long argued for the restructuring of this scheme. With the Government focussed on innovation and new technology, the time has never been better to reform this subsidy which entrenches old technology and encourages pollution.

How it is addressed

ACF suggests three ways the Government could restructure the Fuel Tax Credits scheme.

1. **Cap Fuel Tax Credit claims at \$20,000 per claimant.** A large number of industries take advantage of fuel tax credits. It is not ACF's intention to disadvantage users of the scheme that make small claims, such as farmers. Therefore ACF proposes a \$20,000 cap per claimant, so those making small claims would not be adversely affected. The cap would be phased in over a few years, starting at an \$80,000 cap and stepping down by \$20,000 a year until a final cap of \$20,000 is reached. This cap would ensure the vast majority of industries - including most claimants from the agriculture and tourism industries - are able to continue to receive credits as they do now. This proposal is fleshed out in more detail in ACF's report, [Subsidising Big Coal: Handouts to Australia's biggest coal mining companies through the Fuel Tax Credits Scheme](#).
2. **Scrap the scheme and reinvest the money in research and development.** Removing the diesel subsidy would free up \$6 billion a year that could be reinvested in research and development into reduced fuel use, clean technology, energy efficiency and lower environmental impact processes.

3. **Make claimants show they are making their operations more efficient.** If the Government is adamant it wants to continue giving out \$6 billion a year in Fuel Tax Credits, it should put some conditions on the handouts. Claimants should be required to show how they are making their operations more fuel efficient, how they are using the credits to invest in new clean technology and how they are innovating and preparing for a future that is consistent with the Government's commitment to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees, and to pursue a 1.5 degree limit. The Fuel Tax Credits scheme should not continue to be a drain on Australian progress to tackle climate change.

The savings

Using figures from the 2015-16 Budget, the \$20,000 cap proposal, would save an estimated \$15.4 billion over the forward estimates.

Savings (\$million) – forward estimates

ITEM	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	Total over four years
<i>Fuel Tax Credits Scheme Budget Forecast</i>	6,461	6,679	7,044	7,355 ⁶	27,539
<i>Phase out of Fuel Tax Credits Scheme - savings⁷</i>	3,251	3,459	4,023	4,671	15,405

NB: this is a gross saving estimate. Industries having to pay fuel tax, combined with the potential for lower corporate tax liabilities resulting from higher operating costs, mean the net saving may be less than \$14.9 billion.

⁶ Estimate, based on average annual growth rate of the scheme between 2015-16 and 2017-18 using figures in the 2015 - 16 budget.

⁷ Based on the latest fuel taxation statistics which are from the 2013-14 year. <https://data.gov.au/dataset/taxation-statistics-2012-13/resource/55aae12d-5c19-43d0-a445-4077a20865ba>

Abolishing aviation fuel excise concessions

The opportunity

Aviation gasoline and aviation turbine fuel are subject to a lower rate of excise than other fuels. This represents a subsidy for the use of aviation gasoline and fuel vis-à-vis other forms of transport and reduces potential revenue from fuel excise.

How it is addressed

The aviation fuel tax concession and the aircraft tariff exemption are costly and distortionary, promoting a more polluting mode of transport while inhibiting the development of alternatives. These concessions should be removed.

The savings

An immediate abolition of the concession from the 2016-17 Budget would save over \$6 billion over the forward estimates

Savings (\$million) – forward estimates

ITEM	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
<i>Concessional rate of excise on aviation gasoline and aviation turbine fuel</i>	1,400	1,500	1,580	1,677 ⁸

NB: Aviation responses to having to pay fuel tax excise and resulting high costs, and so lower corporate tax liabilities, mean the net savings may be less than \$6 billion.

⁸ Estimate, based on average annual growth rate of the scheme between 2015-16 and 2017-18 using figures in the 2015 - 16 budget. http://budget.gov.au/2015-16/content/bp1/html/bp1_bs4-05.htm

Indigenous Rangers

The opportunity

Protecting country and Closing the gap

Since it was initiated by Greg Hunt in 2007 the Working on Country or Indigenous Ranger program has proven to be successful for conservation and Indigenous training and employment. There is ongoing high demand for places.

A report released in November 2015 found despite the relatively low level of spending on Indigenous Protected Areas and Indigenous Rangers there are almost 800 full time and a total of 1,423 people employed through the initiative. Retention rates are high at over 80 per cent and there are positive economic flow-on effects in communities where Indigenous Rangers live and work.⁹

This has been achieved with benefits to the taxpayer. The cost of the program is 23 per cent lower than the expenditure specifically allocated for Indigenous Rangers because of reduced welfare costs and increased taxation revenue. An additional benefit is that more than \$12 million has flowed to local communities serviced by the program, many in remote areas where there are very few other employment opportunities.¹⁰

How this is addressed

1. Double the funding for Indigenous Rangers and Indigenous Protected Areas by 2020 to enable the number of Indigenous rangers to double.
2. Commit to longer term (10 to 15-year contract cycles) for Indigenous Rangers and Indigenous Protected Areas
3. Commit to a target of 5,000 Indigenous land and sea management jobs by 2030.

The investment

Total of \$100 million over four years.

Investments \$million – forward estimates

ITEM	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
<i>Double funding for Indigenous Rangers and IPAs</i>	25	25	25	25

⁹The Pew Charitable Trusts and Synergies Economic Consulting, Working for Our Country: A review of the economic and social benefits of Indigenous Land and Sea Management, 1 November 2015, p. 3-4

¹⁰The Allen Consulting Group, Assessment of the economic and employment outcomes of the Working on Country Program, October 2011.

Contributing our fair share to the Green Climate Fund

The opportunity

As a wealthy country and one of the largest per-capita polluters in the world Australia has a responsibility to help developing countries build resilience to climate change. Many of Australia's closest neighbours have a great deal to lose from the impacts of climate change, yet they have contributed virtually nothing to the problem. Australia can help developing nations reduce their climate pollution and build greater resilience to the impacts of climate change through technology, skills and collaboration. However, climate finance remains indispensable. Developed countries, including Australia, have committed to mobilise \$100 billion in climate finance by 2020 and to provide a clear roadmap for how this will be achieved. Australia's commitment currently falls well short of making a fair contribution to this joint international commitment.

Late last year Australia became co-Chair of the Green Climate Fund, making it even more important that we commit an appropriate level of funding to this initiative.

How it is addressed

Australia should continue to engage on the monitoring, reporting and verification of finance contributions, ensuring only appropriate investments in the fund are counted. Australia should actively support proposals for innovative sources of finance, such as levies on international transport emissions.

Australia's climate finance should continue to build on existing support for climate resilience projects in developing countries and on the current contribution of \$200 million per year. Australia must make a fair contribution to the global effort. This will require a clear roadmap to 2020 and beyond.

The investment

Australia should contribute well above its current contribution level of \$200 million per year. The amount should increase year by year so Australia contributes \$1.6 billion dollars by 2020, with a commitment of US\$400 million (AU\$570 million) in 2016-17. This money should be additional to the national aid budget.

Investments \$million – forward estimates

ITEM	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
<i>Australia's contribution to the Green Climate Fund</i>	570	800	1200	1600

Energy transition plan for Australia

The opportunity

Australia's climate pollution comes mostly from the burning of coal for electricity. If we are to reduce carbon emissions and get to zero net pollution by 2050 then we must transform our energy sector. That means the phased closure of coal-fired power plants and programs to help affected communities and regions. The rehabilitation of power stations and mine sites also needs to be considered and funded.

Energy companies, superannuation funds, financial services companies and investors have all acknowledged that the early closure of Australian coal-fired power stations is inevitable and have called for a federal government plan to manage this transition. (See [Leadership required: the case for an Australian coal transition plan](#), ACF, November 2015.)

How it is addressed

The Government should establish an advisory group of stakeholders and other relevant parties to consider these issues in detail. They should be charged with developing a national energy transition plan to present to state and federal governments by the end of the 2016-17 financial year. They should be provided an allocated budget and a degree of autonomy to commission research and consult widely. Their research work and consultation should be widely promoted and their findings made public. Following the release of this work the Federal and all State and Territory Governments should commit to funding the implementation of this transition plan and this should be reflected in future budgets.

The investment

\$2 million for activities of the group, commissioning of research and other consultation activities.

Investments \$million – forward estimates

ITEM	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
<i>Establishment and resourcing for Energy Transition Advisory Group</i>	2	-	-	-

Investing in the National Reserve System

The opportunity

Australia's network of protected areas, the National Reserve System, is incomplete. While there have been gains in establishing protected areas over the past decade, Australia is still a long way from having a comprehensive, representative and adequate reserve system. Protected areas, on public, private and Indigenous lands, provide a vast array of social benefits. They protect natural systems essential to human survival, such as water catchments, provide critical protections for our most threatened species and safeguard places of significant cultural and social importance.

For the first time since 1993 there is no Commonwealth program to support the establishment of new protected areas in Australia. This is despite the fact that there are many gaps in the National Reserve System that should be filled. Presently 62 per cent of the bioregions in Australia remain under-represented (below 17 per cent) in the National Reserve System.¹¹

There are also significant proportions of threatened species, particularly in higher threat categories, that have no or inadequate habitat coverage within the reserve system. Research has shown that 166 (12.6 per cent) threatened species were not present in the protected-area network, and 1061 (80.4 per cent) species were not adequately protected in the National Reserve System. These results are cause for alarm and urgent action.¹² Climate change will be one of the most significant drivers of species loss over coming decades, exacerbating the already devastating effects of land clearing, invasive predators, fire and pollution. Protecting key climate refuge habitat is vital to the survival of our threatened species.

How it is addressed

Strategic and well thought out reserve establishment and planning is critical to safeguarding our future. Conservation corridors, made up of formal protected areas on public and private lands, can help, as can land stewardship activities. Conservation corridors, such as the Great Eastern Ranges Initiative, will become increasingly important as Australia's climate continues to change, enabling species and ecosystems to adapt across latitudinal and topographic gradients and across various land tenures. In addition to these public/private conservation corridors there is a compelling case for more National Parks, such as the Great Forest National Park proposed for Victoria's central highlands.

The investment

The 2016-17 budget should provide a targeted investment program for public, private and Indigenous protected areas and stewardship investment on private lands. Investment should

¹¹ Taylor MFJ, Fitzsimons JA, Sattler PS, 2014. Building Nature's Safety Net 2014: A decade of protected area achievements in Australia. WWF-Australia, Sydney (www.wwf.org.au/buildingnaresafetynet2014).

¹² Watson, James EM, et al. "The Capacity of Australia's Protected-Area System to Represent Threatened Species." *Conservation Biology* 25.2 (2011): 324-332.

be guided by regional corridor strategies to improve representativeness in the reserve system and protect and connect key climate refuge habitat for threatened species and ecosystems.

Investments \$million – forward estimates

ITEM	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
<i>Connecting and expanding the National Reserve System</i>	<i>170</i>	<i>170</i>	<i>170</i>	<i>170</i>

Threatened species recovery fund

The opportunity

There are more than 1800 species and ecological communities listed as threatened under Australia's national environment law. Species continue to decline due to loss of habitat, predation and competition by invasive species, inappropriate fire regimes, diseases, unsustainable use and other factors.

Significant effort has been devoted to studying these species and ecological communities, to understanding their ecology and planning for their recovery. This planning effort has not historically been matched by equivalent investment. For example, analysis of the recovery requirements for Australia's threatened macropods shows a 10-year investment of \$290 million is required before the status of these species can be considered for 'downgrading'.¹³

Similar research shows a \$10 million annual investment would significantly limit the likelihood of extinction for Australia's threatened bird species.¹⁴

The Australian Government has developed a national Threatened Species Strategy and made a commitment to stop all mammalian extinctions by 2020, but it has provided limited additional funding to achieve this aim. Existing programs, such as Landcare or the Green Army, are not suited to addressing many of the challenges facing our threatened species. The solutions to these problems will need to be tackled at different scales. In certain cases funding needs to be delivered to resource captive breeding programs or fund the protection of critical habitats. This does not occur under existing funding guidelines.

How it is addressed

The Australian Government's first Threatened Species Strategy provides an important foundation on which to build. The strategy requires a dedicated funding pool to meaningfully address the challenges our threatened species face.

ACF urges the Government to establish a stand-alone threatened species recovery fund to invest directly in priority recovery actions for Australia's most threatened species across taxa. The fund should be governed by a transparent, scientifically robust investment protocol with an independent advisory body to guide investment. Funding should be directly invested into recovery plan actions and support on-ground outcomes.

The investment

An allocation of \$800 million over the forward estimates should be delivered through species and ecological community recovery teams based on a transparent prioritisation system. Such a program must work alongside existing community programs, such as Landcare and the

¹³ Action Plan for Australia's Threatened Macropods 2011-2021 – WWF

¹⁴ McCarthy, M. A., Thompson, C. J. and Garnett, S. T. (2008), Optimal investment in conservation of species. *Journal of Applied Ecology*, 45: 1428–1435. doi: 10.1111/j.1365-2664.2008.01521.x

Green Army program, to facilitate community participation in threatened species recovery and habitat management.

Investments \$million – forward estimates

ITEM	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
<i>Threatened Species Recovery Fund</i>	<i>200</i>	<i>200</i>	<i>200</i>	<i>200</i>

Removing carp from the waterways of the Murray-Darling Basin

The opportunity

European carp make up more than 80 per cent of fish biomass in the waterways of the Murray-Darling Basin. They churn up mud at the bottom of rivers, jeopardising the survival of native fish and insects. More than half the native fish species in this river system are listed as vulnerable or threatened with extinction as a result of invasive pests, including carp.

How it is addressed

For the past seven years the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) has been investigating the viability of introducing a European carp virus that would dramatically reduce their numbers in Australian rivers. CSIRO is coming to the conclusion of its research and is confident the introduction of this biological control will not affect other fish, other animals, or humans.

An alliance comprising the Australian Conservation Foundation, Australian Recreational Fishing Foundation, Invasive Species Council, National Farmers' Federation and the National Irrigators' Council has come together to support the introduction of the CSIRO-authorized biological control. We urge the Government to commit funding to a comprehensive carp eradication program, so it can be introduced as soon as possible.

The investment

The estimated cost of the introduction of the biological control and the subsequent clean-up and monitoring is \$50 million. This submission calls on the Federal Government to commit to funding at least half this amount, with the balance to be provided by the state governments that have jurisdiction in the Murray-Darling Basin.

Investments \$million – forward estimates

ITEM	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
<i>Carp Eradication Program</i>	5	15	5	-

Implement the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) across Government

The opportunity

Federal Government balance sheets play a central role in decision making and ongoing planning to ensure sustainable budget positions. The official framework of the Federal Budget excludes the consideration of ecological issues.

Our rivers, oceans, forests and land should be valued for what they are, not merely for what can be extracted from them. Because the true value of Australia's amazing natural places and wildlife has not been incorporated into decision-making, we risk the loss of these very places and ecosystems that underpins our lives. Australia must do better at valuing what matters and making what matters valuable.

The Australia Bureau of Statistics have been working on implementing a System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) and developing a National Balance Sheet which includes Australia natural assets. This work is extremely important to integrate the environment into economic indicators.

How it is addressed

Australia played an important role in the development of the UN System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) – a globally agreed statistical standard equivalent to the process for standard measurement across countries of GDP. This internationally recognised System of Environmental-Economic Accounting should be properly resourced across the Federal Government including the building of a set of regional scale environment accounts based on the Accounting for Nature model.

The investment

For a relatively modest allocation of \$20 million per year, publication of a full SEEA account and ongoing data collection for Australia is feasible. It would provide decision-makers at all levels of government and in the private sector with vital information about our natural assets.

Investment (\$million) – forward estimates

ITEM	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
<i>Implement the System of Environmental – Economic Accounting across Government</i>	20	20	20	20