

CHAPTER 10: CONCLUSION

This is the Commonwealth's second Environment Budget Statement to bring together environmental spending on programmes and policies across all Commonwealth portfolios, identified by the particular aspect of the environment to which they relate.

The Budget Statement is an indication of the Government's concern to see greater transparency in Commonwealth operations, in this case those relating to the environment.

As in the first Statement, the structure of the chapters reflects that in the report *State of the Environment Australia 1996*.

The cross-portfolio approach taken in the Statement reflects an essential aspect of ecologically sustainable development: the integration of the economic, the social and the environmental to achieve better outcomes in all three areas.

It also reflects the growing importance of environmental issues, at both the national and the international scale, with environmental considerations permeating more and more areas of government activity.

The Statement shows how the Government is comprehensively addressing the most pressing environmental issues facing Australia.

The Statement shows how Natural Heritage Trust funding will be directed in the second year of its operation. Expenditure under the Trust covers a wide range of programmes across portfolios, but principally to address Australia's most pressing environmental problem, that of land and water degradation and its attendant biodiversity loss.

Another example of this cross-portfolio spending is the enhanced spending on the package of measures addressing the greenhouse problem, which will be carried out in several portfolios, and will be used to fund a diverse range of activities to lessen greenhouse emissions, such as sink enhancement through planting, reducing methane from livestock, reduced emissions from industry, energy market reform, appliance and automotive energy standards, and actions by cities.

The Oceans Policy also will demonstrate the breadth of the Government's programmes to protect a major aspect of the Australian environment.

Production of this second Environment Budget Statement has allowed an improvement and refinement of its information, based on the experience of the first, and as its purpose has become clearer to those providing information.

As these Budget Statements on the Commonwealth's environmental expenditure accumulate, so too will trend information on spending, providing better quality information, as well as a better basis for decisions and improved outcomes.