

JOINT MEDIA RELEASE



The Hon Peter Garrett MP
*Australian Government Minister for the
Environment, Heritage and the Arts*



The Hon Carmel Tebbutt MP
*New South Wales Minister for **Climate
Change and the Environment***

5 June 2009

\$1.3 MILLION FOR GREATER BLUE MOUNTAINS CONSERVATION PROJECT ON WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

A funding injection of \$1.3 million will contribute to important conservation work in the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

The funding was announced on World Environment Day by the Federal Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts, Peter Garrett and the New South Wales Minister for Climate Change and the Environment, Carmel Tebbutt.

Mr Garrett said the funding is part of the Australian Government's \$650 million *Jobs Fund* initiative.

"The Greater Blue Mountains is one of Australia's most spectacular landscapes and one of our 17 World Heritage areas. This investment of \$1.3 million will ensure that vital heritage restoration works can begin on the popular and historically significant Grand Canyon Walking Track," Mr Garrett said.

"This new work will restore and protect the heritage elements to ensure the track will continue to provide an enjoyable and memorable visitor experience."

Mr Garrett said activities funded through the project include:

- Engaging skilled heritage contractors for significant stone masonry works;
- Track stabilisation, restoration and upgrades to three priority sections of the track; and,
- Sourcing of local materials through local businesses.

"As a result of this investment by the Australian Government the local community will benefit in terms of employment and building specialist trade skills. This is also a great opportunity for businesses to supply the necessary materials and services for these vital works," Mr Garrett said.

"The project will provide an enhanced visitor experience of the environment through interpretive signs and improved visitor safety. It will also reduce visitor impact on the environment, especially erosion associated with the high numbers of visitors to the area.

"The *Jobs Fund* is an important part of the Government's commitment to provide targeted funding for projects that not only protect and conserve some of our most important heritage places, but also help to generate jobs and provide economic stimulus around the country," Mr Garrett said.

Ms Tebbutt welcomed the funding as an important investment in the Blue Mountains region and announced the release of the Strategic Plan for the ongoing management of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

"This significant funding is a tremendous boost to local employment and local business confidence," Ms Tebbutt said.

“It will help to support much of the work already undertaken in the Blue Mountains in recent years, including the \$1.5million upgrade to the historic National Pass track, which has already won numerous national and international awards.

“This good news goes hand-in-hand with the release today of the Strategic Plan for the future management of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

“The Plan maps out the broad management principles, strategic objectives and key issues for the area.

“More than six years of planning, research and consultation has produced this document which will help us to better manage and protect the World Heritage and other values of the area into the future,” Minister Tebbutt said.

“With more than a million hectares of spectacular eucalypt and mountain landscapes, much of it wilderness, it is great that the Grand Canyon Walking Track upgrade will ensure that visitors can continue to access this magnificent place and support the region’s tourism economy.”

Mr Garrett welcomed the publication of the plan and congratulated everyone who has been involved in its preparation.

“This Strategic Plan highlights the Australian Government’s commitment to working with the NSW government to maintain and improve the values of the area that make it special to so many Australians.”

The \$650 million Jobs Fund includes \$60 million for projects related to Australia’s historic, Indigenous and natural heritage places.

The \$60 million for community heritage projects has been developed in consultation with Senator Bob Brown as part of the Government’s \$42 billion Nation Building - Economic Stimulus Plan.

Funding previously announced for heritage projects includes \$2.5 million for four Tasmanian convict sites and more than \$550,000 will protect and conserve the Cottesloe home of World War II Prime Minister John Curtin. In addition, \$2 million has also been announced for conservation works to Old Government House in Parramatta and more than \$360,000 has been provided for walking and bike trails at Budj Bim in Victoria, one of the world’s oldest known traditional aquaculture systems.

The Greater Blue Mountains is included in both the World and National Heritage Lists, is one of Australia’s iconic National Landscapes and is protected through the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

For more information on Australia’s heritage projects visit www.heritage.gov.au