



# Rob Stokes MP

Minister for the Environment  
Minister for Heritage  
Minister for the Central Coast  
Assistant Minister for Planning

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## MEDIA RELEASE

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Thursday, 5 June 2014

### WATTLES – TO INFINITY AND BEYOND

Two wattles planted today at the Royal Botanic Garden Sydney survived either 114 years in poor storage or the rigours of space travel, proving they're among the hardiest seeds on earth and maybe even the universe.

Environment Minister Rob Stokes said seeds from Australia's national emblem, the Golden Wattle (*Acacia pycnantha*) spent six months in space on the International Space Station.

"NASA astronaut Dr Gregory Chamitoff took seeds with him on the Discovery Mission in May 2008. They endured 2800 orbits of the Earth and were subjected to microgravity and ionising radiation," Rob Stokes said.

"The trip into space demonstrates the importance of seed-banking as an insurance policy for our future. It is vitally important we conserve our seeds for future needs – in particular the wattle.

"Wattles are a key species in bush regeneration as they can help restore damaged eco-systems. It is an important cover-crop which is planted first to protect other species to come through afterwards.

"NASA is interested in seeds that might be hardy enough to survive lengthy exposure to the space environment and germinate in greenhouses in space or on other planets.

"Wattles are also great because they grow rapidly and improve soil conditions, adding nutrients and helping break up soil, making it easier for other plants to grow.

The other planting today is the Blunt-leaf Wattle (*Acacia obtusata*) successfully germinated from 114 year-old seeds by scientists from the Royal Botanic Gardens.

"The seeds were likely to have been collected by Joseph Maiden an early Director of the Royal Botanic Garden for 28 years (from 1896)," Rob Stokes said.

"The seeds were found by Botanic Garden staff in a vial dated 1899 and were kept in less than ideal conditions and survived through time.

"Wattles are hard-seeded and extremely well adapted to drought, fire and harsh environments and understanding how they survive in all types of conditions helps scientists make the right decisions about their conservation and capacity to restore vegetation."