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\$2.3 MILLION FOR FRESH AIR NOT FARMING FOR FIFTEEN YEARS

Six landholders within the NSW Western Division will manage a total of 48,000 hectares (480km²) for conservation products rather than agriculture over the next fifteen years through the Enterprise Based Conservation program.

The original fund of \$1 million from the NSW and Australian Governments has been supplemented by an additional \$1 million from the Western CMA and \$334,000 from the Lower Murray-Darling CMA.

Both CMAs are working towards meeting management targets for conservation land use. CMAs will monitor the progress of the properties involved in their Catchment through Property Vegetation Plan Agreements. The program will be administered through the Western CMA.

Chair of the Western CMA, Rory Treweeke, says the Enterprise Based Conservation grants provide financial incentives for landholders to actively manage part or all of their property for specific conservation goals.

"It's an innovative idea that is actually very simple. Payments allow the landholders to remove stock and manage the area to assist native animals and plants to thrive.

"It will protect the variety of plants and animals within the ecosystem and the natural resources base while maintaining the financial viability of landholders," Mr Treweeke said.

Three properties are located within the Western Catchment: Will and Denise Turnbull of 'Greenvale' near Bourke, Tas and Penne Clarke of 'Kayrunnera', near White Cliffs, and Mick and Michaela Fisher of 'Kilberoo' near Yantabulla will take part.

The other three properties are from the Lower Murray-Darling Catchment: Andy and Fiona McLeod of 'Coombah' near Wentworth, Laurence and Helen Barnes of 'Lethero' south of Pooncarie, and Gary and Tracey Neyland of 'Mandelman' east of Pooncarie will receive grants.

Chair of the Lower Murray-Darling CMA, Mark King, says that as well as conserving a total area of 480 square kilometres, which is larger than the Kinchega National Park, it recognises conservation is a legitimate commercial land-use.

"Conservation produces clean air, healthy soils and water and a diversity of plants and animals, all of which benefit the public," Mr King said.

"The program built on the highly successful WEST 2000 Pilot project, which involved ten properties over five years, and made it available to all landholders within the Western Division.

"It is the first time that this initiative has been widely available to landholders across the Western Division, which comprises 42 per cent of the state and there was quite



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significant interest. An assessment panel chose the six properties expected to yield the most benefits from the funds invested.

"Landholders will access two, linked forms of assistance: negotiated payments to establish the conservation area and payments for costs relating to the management of the area for fifteen years," Mr King said.

"The funding is designed to cover costs of actively managing the conservation area and to provide income similar to forgone agricultural production to maintain the viability of the farm business," he said.

The recipients have been encouraged to invest payments into a long-term investment security to provide an on-going income stream," Mr King said.

WESTERN CATCHMENT CASE STUDY: FISHER FAMILY, 'KILBEROO' NEAR YANTABULLA

Mick and Michaela Fisher of 'Kilberoo', north-east of Wanaaring, will manage for conservation 14,185 hectares (142 km²) on their property.

Kilberoo is the largest conservation area of the six in the program and covers a wide range of land types.

It includes stony downs, escarpments, plains and frequently flooded Lignum and Cooba wattle watercourse country which is part of the unique Cuttaburra Basin. When flooded it provides habitat for numerous uncommon animals, including the threatened Freckled Duck as well as Brolgas and water fowl.

Mick Fisher says the program gives them the opportunity to balance the economic, social and conservation considerations of operating a property in far-western NSW.

"As we have a young family we have a vested interest in making the land as sustainable as we can. We think the EBC program is a great way to rejuvenate the land and protect it for future generations whilst being encouraged to do so".

Mick has already witnessed improvements to the area since destocking three years ago.

"The area has experienced a fair bit of grazing pressure, but we've already seen an increase in groundcover and we hope that if we nurse it along over fifteen years it will go back to its original state.

"It's fragile country. We want to look after it," Mr Fisher said.

LOWER-MURRAY DARLING CASE STUDY: NEYLAND FAMILY, 'MANDELMAN' NEAR POONCARIÉ

Based on their successful participation in the WEST 2000 Plus pilot project, Tracey and Gary Neyland have agreed to manage for conservation the remaining 10,760 hectares



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(107 km²) of their property, Mandelman Station. Between the two schemes, the entire property, or 33,157ha (331km²) is now being managed for conservation.

Located between Mungo National Park and Ivanhoe, the country is mostly undulating sandplains. The fragile environment is home to a variety of uncommon animals such as the endangered Malleefowl and the vulnerable Southern Ningai (a small marsupial).

Tracey Neyland says they've seen marked improvements since they destocked the property and undertook regular fox and cat management programs.

"The Malleefowl population has increased, the damage around waterholes has disappeared and despite the drought we have good levels of groundcover," Mrs Neyland said.

"We used recycled rack-netting that was previously used to dry grapes to keep feral goats out as they damage the fragile soil and plants.

"Having an income from the WEST 2000 Plus program alleviated some of the pressure from the drought and allowed us to see how the land could heal itself without the damage of stock.

"While it's in our power, this land will never be stocked.

"We've got a huge variety of birds, lizards and echidnas. It's alive everywhere when you take a step back and look around," Mrs Neyland said.

The Neylands are currently renovating their now redundant shearing quarters into guest accommodation and hope that visitors, including tourists, birdwatchers, university students and researchers, may be interested in experiencing their unique environment.

Ends

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Captions:

- Map_EBC: The six properties taking part in the Enterprise Based Conservation program.
- The Fisher Family of Kilberoo Station: Back: Mick, Joe and Michaela Fisher; Front: Jeremiah, Millicent and Mikey Fisher.
- Fisher_Floodplain: The floodplain on Kilberoo provides breeding habitat for a number of bird species including the freckled duck and blue-billed duck, both of which are threatened species.
- Fisher_GGoosefoot: Joe and Mick Fisher inspect golden goosefoot, which grows in floodplain depressions and is flourishing in the absence of stock.
- Turnbull_Family: Will and Denise Turnbull of Greenvale Station, near Bourke, will take part in the Enterprise Based Conservation program.
- Turnbull_Bimblebox: Bimblebox woodland on Greenvale Station, near Bourke, which will be managed for conservation.

