



MEDIA RELEASE

The Hon Peter Garrett MP

Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts

PG /173

24 November 2008

AUSTRALIA'S BOTANIC GARDENS FIGHT CLIMATE CHANGE

Australia's eight capital city botanic gardens will today release a national strategy to adapt to climate change at a meeting in Sydney of regional and state botanic gardens

The national plan was endorsed by federal, state and territory environment ministers in Adelaide on November 8.

"Australia's botanic gardens are among the first in the world to develop a national approach to climate change," Federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett said today.

Mr Garrett is responsible for the Australian National Botanic Gardens in Canberra, home to the country's largest living collection of native plants, with 6,300 species, one-third of the Australian flora and 500,000 visitors a year.

"Our botanic gardens have a proud history, dating back to the days when they helped the early European settlers find food crops and ornamental plants that would survive the harsh unfamiliar conditions," Mr Garrett said.

"In the early twentieth century the gardens began focusing on plant conservation, researching threatened species, investigating, propagation and restoration in the wild and establishing seedbanks.

"In the face of challenges from climate change, it is now time to muster all their resources, skills and activities in a coordinated strategy to support plant conservation."

The national climate change strategy includes:

- For the first time, prioritising and coordinating seed bank collection – an enduring safety net for our plant genetic resources and an investment against species loss. What plants are most at risk and are we saving their seeds? If so, which garden is?
- Priorities for living collections – what are the botanic gardens growing? Who grows what, when climate is changing and water is scarce? Should each garden concentrate on what is most appropriate for its climate?
- A coordinated national education campaign for the 13.4 million visitors a year.

"The botanic gardens are places of immense knowledge about how to grow and propagate plants, to re-introduce species and restore ecosystems," Mr Garrett said.

"With 150 botanic gardens and more than 13 million visitors a year, there is fantastic potential for them to make a difference – from helping people with advice about what to grow in their own private gardens to increasing awareness of the importance of biodiversity and sustainable living. '

To download *The National Strategy and Action Plan for the Role of Australia's Botanic Gardens in Adapting to Climate Change* visit www.anbg.gov.au/anbg/botclimate