



Media Release

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\$1million fund to save rare pink lizard

Developers, environmentalists and the NSW Government today launched a \$1million fund to protect one of Australia's rarest reptiles - the vulnerable Pink-tailed Worm Lizard.

The commitment follows the recent identification of a second colony of the tiny reptiles at Googong, on the NSW-ACT border.

The fund comprises a \$495,000 grant from the **NSW Government's Saving Our Species Program** and a matching contribution from **Googong Township developers Peet Limited and Mirvac**.

It was launched on the vast plains of Googong today where residents and guests were the Welcome to Country was delivered by Ngunawal Elder Wally Bell, representing the Traditional Custodians of Googong.

The fund will support a six-year conservation project to be managed by the **Molonglo Conservation Group**. Work will include maintenance and management of the species' habitat, community education for residents and rural landowners, and extensive surveys and research to map and manage the species across the Googong-Burra-Royalla region.

Work on the new protected habitat is scheduled to start later this year and will include access paths, fencing to manage grazing, and interpretive signage. Aboriginal custodians will conduct a series of "cool burns" to encourage grassland restoration while gently eradicating weeds from the landscape.

Googong Project Director Malcolm Leslie said the fund would support an extensive conservation program including creation of a new sanctuary. It will be the second protected reserve at Googong, which set up its first 56-hectare fenced reserve in 2015.

"The Googong environment is unique. Not only is it beautiful, but the community takes its caretaker role seriously and we encourage and contribute to that through our environmental management programs, open space planning and heritage protection activities," Mr Leslie said.

"Every two years, scientists survey the lizard population in the first conservation reserve and we can see that numbers have stabilised.

"The second reserve will be a little different in that it will allow visitors to have careful access to the habitat area. We will be working closely with the Molonglo Conservation Group and Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council to run education programs around the vulnerability and protection of the species, and to get community volunteers and land-holders across the region involved."

MCG Principal Ecologist Dr Jasmyn Lynch said the new project had a dual emphasis – to inspire Googong residents to understand and protect their environment and to encourage and assist rural landowners in stewardship of habitat sites on their private property.

“This project is a fantastic opportunity for local people to get involved in conservation of the Pink-tailed Worm Lizard. There have been only limited surveys in the region and we are expecting to find new sites,” she said.

A steering committee has been formed to guide the project, including representatives from the NSW Government, Molonglo Conservation Group, Googong Township, Queanbeyan-Palerang Regional Council and the ACT Government, which manages the adjacent Googong Foreshores.

For more information about Googong’s environmental projects, visit googong.net.

For more information about the project and Molonglo Conservation Group, visit www.molonglo.org.au.

ABOUT THE PINK-TAILED WORM LIZARD

The Pink-tailed Worm Lizard (*Aprasia parapulchella*) is found exclusively in south-east Australia, particularly the ACT, NSW and parts of Victoria. It is classified as ‘vulnerable’ by the Australian Government. One of the biggest known populations was discovered at Googong in 2009 and a 56-hectare fenced conservation area was established on development land to protect the colony. The new \$1million fund will see a second conservation area established to protect a new colony that has recently been discovered. The “lizard” is most closely related to a gecko. It grows up to 25 centimetres long and looks like a small snake or large worm, with a pink tinge to its tail.

ABOUT GOOGONG

Googong is a rapidly growing master planned community 16 kilometres from Canberra’s Parliament House, inside the New South Wales border and adjacent to Googong Dam. Over the next 15 years, Googong will be home for around 18,000 people, with 6,500 new homes built around a major town centre. Almost 25 per cent of land in the development is reserved for public open space and conservation areas. More than 3,500 residents currently live in Googong. Googong is a joint project by Australian residential land developers Peet Limited and Mirvac.

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