



Australian Government
Department of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry

National Soil Action Plan Annual Progress Report Summary 2023-24



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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the continuous connection of First Nations Traditional Owners and Custodians to the lands, seas and waters of Australia. We recognise their care for and cultivation of Country. We pay respect to Elders past and present and recognise their knowledge and contribution to the productivity, innovation and sustainability of Australia's agriculture, fisheries and forestry industries.

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1 Introduction

This report presents the progress of work and achievements under the National Soil Action Plan (NSAP) for the 2023-2024 financial year. It describes the work that contributes to the NSAP's four Priority Actions and aligns with the NSAP's Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Framework (2025).

The NSAP considers the value, interactions and opportunities of soil with other relevant portfolios, such as environment, education, health, infrastructure and mining. It is the first of four NSAPs scheduled under the 20-year National Soil Strategy (the Strategy). The Strategy sets out how Australia will value, manage and improve its soil and presents an agreed national vision, shared goals and objectives for soil management from 2021 to 2041.

This document is a summary of a report that captures all soil related activities carried out from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024 by the following organisations:

- Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Australian Government
- Department of Climate Change, Energy the Environment and Water, Australian Government
- Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation, Australian Government
- Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, ACT
- Department of Primary Industries and Regions, South Australia
- Department for Environment and Water, South Australia
- Department of Primary Industries NSW
- Department of Natural Resources and Environment, Tasmania
- Department of Lands Planning and Environment, NT
- Department of Environment, Science and Innovation, Queensland
- Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing and Regional and Rural Development, Queensland
- Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, Victoria
- Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, Western Australia
- Department of Water and Environmental Regulation, Western Australia
- The Cooperative Research Centre for High Performance Soils (Soil CRC)
- Soil Science Australia
- National Farmers' Federation
- NRM Regions Australia
- Indigenous Carbon Industry Network
- Meat and Livestock Australia

- Grains Research and Development Corporation
- Agriculture Victoria
- Australian Wool Innovation
- Wine Australia
- Cotton RDC
- Dairy Australia
- Sugar Research Australia

1.1 NSAP Priority Actions

The NSAP sets out four Priority Actions to strengthen Australia's soil health to drive long-term benefits for the productivity, resilience and sustainability of our agriculture sector and the protection of our environment.

The NSAP's four Priority Actions are:

Priority Action 1: Develop an agreed national framework to support the measurement, monitoring, mapping, reporting and sharing of soil state and trend information, to inform best practice management, decision making and future investment in soil.

Priority Action 2: Develop a holistic policy and strategy approach where soil function is recognised, valued and protected for the environment, economy, food, infrastructure, health, biodiversity and communities.

Priority Action 3: Accelerate the adoption of land use and management practices that protect soil and improve soil state and trends.

Priority Action 4: Identify and develop the soil workforce and capabilities needed to meet current and future challenges for Australia and the region.

Statements of commitment by partners are detailed for each Priority Action within the NSAP and are provided in this summary report.

In Australia, states and territories hold primary responsibility for natural resource management, including soil and land management. Under the NSAP, Australia has committed to strengthening global action on soil through working with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization's [Global Soil Partnership](#) (GSP) and the [Pacific Soil Partnership](#) (PSP) within the region. Recognising the challenges facing soil and the progress already achieved domestically and internationally, a coordinated and unified approach is required to build on existing efforts and enhance communication, harmonisation, and alignment of soil related initiatives.

The Strategy outlines the importance of leadership, collaboration, and coordination across all levels of government, industry, research institutions, communities, networks, and land managers.

The National Soil Implementation Steering Committee (NSSISC) members include representatives from state and territory governments, NRM Regions Australia, soil organisations and experts and rural research and development corporations and bodies. Established in 2020, it oversees the

implementation of the Strategy and NSAP and assists the department in the implementation of the NSAP.

1.2 Investment

NSAP partners are delivering 132 initiatives (strategic, long-term projects) that contribute to the four Priority Actions, with a total investment of \$1.46 billion over the life of the NSAP. This includes 457 individual activities (short term project, often multiple under an initiative) across Australia.

Within this reporting cycle (2023-24), 102 initiatives were active with an estimated total investment of \$256 million.

This includes in-kind contributions, proportion of total program/project funding that supports NSAP initiatives and other indirect costs associated with soil-related activities.

1.3 Collaboration

The NSAP formalises national collaboration and was developed in consultation with key partners who provided statements of support. The Australian Government's collaboration with these partners is essential to successfully implement the NSAP to support the long-term vision of recognising soil as a key national asset.

The National Soil Strategy Implementation Steering Committee (NSSISC), provides a forum for key NSAP partners to advise and support the department to implement the NSAP, share knowledge and expertise and the department to report regularly back to members on Commonwealth delivery of actions under the NSAP.

All NSSISC members, as partners in the implementation of the NSAP play key roles in its delivery. Partners deliver a broad portfolio of initiatives that contribute to the NSAP priorities, which include activities undertaken with Australian Government funding.

The NSAP's Priority Actions provide a framework to achieve nationally consistent direction while enabling partners to integrate and respond to local, regional and national soil management challenges in a manner that is suited to their circumstances.

Collaboration across all levels of government, industry, research institutions, natural resource management organisations and Landcare groups, First Nations communities and land managers ensures that diverse expertise and local knowledge inform soil management strategies and activities. This inclusive approach enables tailored responses to regional challenges while maintaining national consistency.

The Australian Government's investment of \$56 million demonstrates its commitment to supporting partnerships that drive innovation, data sharing and evidence-based decision-making. Of this \$56 million, \$20 million supports the states and territories to deliver activities to address priorities under the NSAP, and \$36 million over five years (2023-24 to 2027-28) to bolster national soil information and outreach. This is done through the National Soil Monitoring Program (NSMP), the Australian National Soil Information System (ANSIS) and the Regional Soil Coordinator program and the National Community of Practice.

These partnerships will help to build resilient agricultural systems, improve soil health and contribute to securing Australia's long term environmental and agricultural sustainability outcomes.

2 Progress towards NSAP statement of commitments in 2023-24

The following tables provide an overview of projects undertaken during the 2023–24 reporting period. Projects are organised according to each priority action and its corresponding statement of commitment. The focus during this period was on strengthening systems, building strategic partnerships and expanding the knowledge base required to drive transformative change.

The definitions for *Project Leads*, *Activity*, and *Status* are outlined below.

Project leads: The overarching initiatives or programs being managed by a lead agency.

Activity: The specific tasks, actions, or deliverables undertaken within each project lead to achieve its objectives. These describe what is being done or produced.

Status: The current stage or progress of the activity within the project lead. This indicates whether the work is in planning, implemented or completed. Status is reported for 2023-2024 financial year.

2.1 Priority Action 1

Develop an agreed national framework to support the measurement, monitoring, mapping, reporting and sharing of soil state and trend information to inform best practice management, decision making and future investment in soil.

Statements of commitment:

Table 1 1.1 Develop a strong governance framework for soil information nationally to ensure soil information is collected and managed to agreed standards

Project Leads	Activity	Status
NSIF – DAFF	Stakeholder engagement to develop a National Soil Information Framework (NSIF) including 57 interviews and 3 workshops attended by 157 individuals.	Planning
AASF – NFF	Australian Agriculture Sustainability Framework (AASF) incorporates soil metrics. AASF Community of Practice membership increased to over 280 people. The AASF Materiality Assessment Outcomes Final Report was published.	Planning
AWI frameworks	Develop two frameworks for sustainability reporting in the wool sector. Natural capital and environmental performance measures for Australian woolgrowers was fully delivered as the 'Nature Positive Farming Framework'.	Planning
NCST Handbook	Standardise field-based soil survey methods in a 4th edition of the Australian Soil and Land Survey Field Handbook.	Planning
DPIRD WA	Governance framework aligned with WA Soil and Land Conservation Act.	Planning

Table 2 1.2 Increase our knowledge of Australian soil through ongoing soil investigations and mapping programs

Project Leads	Activity	Status
CSIRO Carbon Model	Develop a dynamic soil carbon model for national soil stock carbon accounting.	Completed
40+ partner initiatives	Forty-three partner initiatives deliver soil investigations and mapping programs that contribute to increased knowledge of Australian soils for better soil management. This includes the NSMP and ANSIS. This includes projects being implemented by DCCEEW, Ag Vic, DETSI QLD, DNRMMRRD QLD, NRE Tas, DLPE NT, DPIRD WA, DPI NSW, CRDC, GRDC and CSIRO	Planning / implementation

Table 3 1.3 Ensure existing and new soil data and information is publicly accessible through the Australian National Soil Information System (ANSIS) – subject to privacy and permission levels – to inform future soil investment

Project Leads	Activity	Status
ANSIS – DAFF & CSIRO	Work with soil data providers and developed the ANSIS platform for nationally consistent and rapid soil data access for public use.	Implementation
DCCEEW, SA Gov, CSIRO	Initiatives contributing data to ANSIS.	Implementation

Table 4 1.4 Establish a national agreed set of soil health indicators for soil monitoring to report on national soil state and trends to provide the foundation for future national environmental and natural capital reporting

Project Leads	Activity	Status
NSMP – DAFF & CSIRO	CSIRO contracted to undertake the NSMP Phase 1 design. Designed national soil monitoring network and indicators.	Implementation
CSIRO	Maintain infrastructure supporting NSMP and ANSIS including the National Soil Archive and Soil Information System.	Implementation

Table 5 1.5 Promote and embed ANSIS as Australia’s national soil data system to inform best practice soil management and assist decision-making

Project Leads	Activity	Status
ANSIS Communications Strategy	Branding and website launched to promote ANSIS.	Implementation

2.2 Priority Action 2

Partners to develop a holistic policy and strategy approach where soil function is recognised, valued and protected for the environment, economy, food, infrastructure, health, biodiversity and communities.

Statements of commitment:

Table 6 2.1 Acknowledge the critical importance of soil and its contribution when developing key public policies and strategies including agriculture, climate change resilience, adaptation, mitigation and human and environmental health

Project Leads	Activity	Status
Soil and Catchment Science – DETSI QLD	Provide evidence-based insights to support sustainable natural resource use and inform soil-related policy across Queensland.	Planning
Land Resource Assessment – DNRMMRRD QLD	Supply foundational soil data, information and advice for evidenced based regulatory decisions.	Planning
Enterprise Suitability Mapping – NRE Tas	Map soil and climate suitability for agriculture.	Planning
Regulatory Advice – DLPE NT	Offer formal, publicly available soil advice for land use planning.	Planning
Soil and Land Conservation Program – DPIRD WA	Administer WA's soil conservation legislation. This includes conducting soil surveys and investigations and publishing findings. Providing instruction, information and supervision to landholders regarding soil conservation and land reclamation.	Planning
Long-term Future Farming Systems – DPIRD WA	Evaluation of long-term productivity, profitability and sustainability performance of both lower input and intensive ag-tech systems to test regenerative agriculture systems.	Planning
Sustainable Soils Program – SA Gov	Support sustainable and environmentally sound soil and landscape management and contributed to national standards.	Planning
Circular Bioeconomy – CSIRO	CSIRO's "Developing a Circular Bioeconomy for Australian Agricultural & Food Systems" aims to guide policy and strategy by creating circular bioeconomy pathways focused on recycling nutrients and carbon back into soils.	Planning
AASF – NFF	Integrate soil metrics into the Australian Agriculture Sustainability Framework. The AASF Materiality Assessment Outcomes Final Report was published.	Planning

Table 7 2.2 Improve the alignment and integration of soil policies and strategies across different levels of governments

Project Leads	Activity	Status
Commonwealth Soil Action Group – DAFF	Plan cross-government coordination on soil policy.	Planning
Mapping & gap analysis – DAFF	Identify gaps in soil-related strategies, policies and initiatives.	Planning
Soil management tools – DAFF	Develop tools to support soil-informed planning. This includes the National Soil Monitoring Program.	Planning

Table 8 2.3 Improve soil advocacy

Project Leads	Activity	Status
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Communications Plan – DAFF	Promote soil value through targeted messaging by developing a communications plan for the National Soil Action Plan.	Implementation
Stakeholder engagement – DAFF	Build awareness of soil health nationally and globally.	Implementation
Advocacy role – DAFF	Plan for broader soil policy awareness and support across the Australian and state/territory governments, NRMs, RDC's and other key stakeholders via the NSSISC.	Implementation

Table 9 2.4 Consider the need for measures to protect, restore and better manage soil whenever opportunities to review existing or develop new related Commonwealth and state and territory legislation arise

Project Leads	Activity	Status
Engagement – DAFF	Plan awareness raising initiatives of soil in legislative reviews across the Australian and state/territory governments and NSSISC members.	Planning
NRE Tas, DLPE NT, SA Gov	Provide input into legislation through soil initiatives.	Planning

Table 10 2.5 Strengthen action on soil globally through the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation's (FAO), Global Soil Partnership (GSP) and other international soil advocacy

Project Leads	Activity	Status
FAO GSP & PSP – DAFF	Engage in global soil partnerships and reporting.	Implementation
International Bilateral engagement – DAFF	Share knowledge and best practices internationally through active engagement with the Global Soil Partnership and Pacific Soil Partnership.	Implementation

2.3 Priority Action 3

Accelerate the adoption of land use and management practices that protect soil and improve soil state and trends.

Statements of commitment:

Table 11 3.1 Increase the number of land managers with access to extension activities, information and decision-making tools that support and demonstrate the benefits of improving land use practices for improved soil health

Project Leads	Activity	Status
Climate Smart Agriculture Program (CSAP) – DAFF	Fund regional projects supporting soil health through implementing the CSAP for regional programs and grants. There are 52 Regional NRM projects with 23 projects directly addressing soil priorities. The total value of projects that selected soil-based investment priorities is \$49,385,263. The investment for the smart farms projects, a sustainable agriculture investment under National Landcare Program Phase 2, is \$1,269,985.	Implementation
SAFs & RSCs – DAFF	Regional Soil Coordinators (RSCs) and Sustainable Agriculture Facilitators (SAFs) network established to provide extension services and coordination to land managers.	Implementation
Soil Science Challenge - DAFF	Supports research to address gaps in the soil science knowledge base and provide Australia with new and improved soil science to influence soil health.	Implementation
79 National Soil Action Plan partner initiatives	<p>The main areas of focus for the initiatives include improving soil health and performance, climate and drought resilience, carbon sequestration and markets, and more sustainable farming practices such as regenerative agriculture.</p> <p>Some initiatives focus specifically on applied research and innovation which can include demonstrations and field trials showcasing practical application of research. Others are producing decision-making tools to help plan farm operations and improvements. Another focus is on disseminating information. Initiatives are delivering extension activities including training through workshops, field days, farm walks, stakeholder meetings, communication materials, webinars, events and more. The Drought Hubs and other extension delivery agencies are also offering support and access to resources.</p> <p>Partners carrying out projects include DCCEEW, DAFF (NHT and FDF), ACT Gov, Ag Vic, Dairy Australia, DETSI QLD, DNRMMRRD QLD, NRE Tas, DLPE NT, DPIRD WA, SA Gov, AWI, SRA, CRDC, GRDC, MLA, Wine Australia, CSIRO and Soil CRC.</p>	Implementation

Table 12 3.2 Share approaches that have been effective in increasing the adoption of land management practices to improve soil health and resilience to the impacts of climate change

Project Leads	Activity	Status
CFOP – DCCEEW	Provide information and support to Australian land managers to participate in carbon markets and integrate low emission technologies and practices into their farming and land management operations. This initiative has been scoped to include train-the-trainer sessions and development of a knowledge bank—both supporting knowledge sharing among practitioners. Extension activities commenced with farmers in early 2024/25.	Implementation
Tolga Farm – DPIRD WA	Focus on preserving large soil carbon pools to support long-term agricultural productivity by improving soil structure, water retention and biodiversity. It emphasises the importance of quantifying trade-offs between using soil carbon for productivity improvements versus carbon sequestration (for sale or as an asset) to help farmers and governments make informed decisions.	Implementation
Soil and Land Conservation Program – DPIRD WA	Administer and deliver the Soil and Land Conservation Act 1945 and shares results of soil conservation trials.	Implementation
Carbon Farming Fund – DPIRD WA	Demonstrate carbon sequestration practices and opportunities across WA.	Implementation
Carbon Farming Pilot - PIRSA	Demonstrated carbon sequestration practices and increased understanding of carbon projects in SA	Implementation
EcoVineyards – Wine Australia	Promote benefits of cover crops and biodiversity in vineyards by providing support to winegrape growers to enhance soil health and increase functional biodiversity in their vineyards.	Implementation
High Performance Soils – Soil CRC	Build capacity for soil stewardship for researchers, farmer groups and Soil CRC partners. One output focuses on the acceptance and use of approaches to soil stewardship among farmers. A knowledge sharing project is in place, supporting knowledge sharing among practitioners.	Implementation

Table 13 3.3 Ensure regional NRM plans and strategies at the local and state levels are consistent with the NSAP and align to its priorities

Project Leads	Activity	Status
Engagement planning – DAFF	Plan to align regional NRM strategies with NSAP.	Planning

Table 14 3.4 Review the investment framework for soil research and make suggestions to better target government investment toward programs and projects that align to NSAP priorities

Project Leads	Activity	Status
CSAP negotiations – DAFF	Paused pending NRM funding agreement negotiations being completed.	Planning

Table 15 3.5 Engage a broader set of agricultural and rural industries on their role in helping to achieve this priority

Project Leads	Activity	Status
NSSISC & CSAP – DAFF	Plan broad stakeholder engagement. The NSSISC provides linkage to the RDCs via GRDC and MLA. Regional delivery through the CSAP partnership continued and was the primary investment vehicle for sustainable agriculture and natural resource management outcomes for the department.	Planning

2.4 Priority Action 4

Identify and develop the soil workforce and capabilities needed to meet current and future challenges for Australia and the Oceania region.

Statements of commitment:

Table 16 4.1 Better promote the range of opportunities and careers in soil

Project Leads	Activity	Status
DAFF communications	Contribute to and promote public narrative on soil careers.	Planning

Table 17 4.2 Review soil education in the Australian curriculum and identify opportunities for new soil education programs

Project Leads	Activity	Status
SSA & Skills Insight	Initiate work to expand the soil science workforce through the SSA and the Jobs and Skills Council. SSA has been working with Skills Insight to initiate this work.	Planning

Table 18 4.3 Assess the gaps, barriers and incentives for improving the soil workforce's knowledge and capacity and develop the scope of work required to address this workforce issue

Project Leads	Activity	Status
Soil Science Challenge – DAFF	Support research to address gaps in the soil science knowledge base and provide Australia with new and improved soil science to influence soil health.	Planning
Carbon Insetting – Wine Australia	Review carbon insetting in vineyards including investment needs, current practices and a strategy to improve vineyard workforce knowledge and capacity to use carbon insetting	Planning

Table 19 4.4 Develop long-term, field-based, on-the-job soil training employment programs for recently graduated tertiary students

Project Leads	Activity	Status
NRE Tas, DLPE NT, DPIRD WA	Deliver training for early-career soil professionals and identified and developed soil workforce capabilities needed to meet current and future challenges facing Australia.	Planning

Table 20 4.5 Understand new and emerging innovative agricultural and environmental activities and the implications for soil workforce requirements by working closely with relevant organisations, including Soil Science Australia (SSA) and the Jobs and Skills Council Skills Insight

Project Leads	Activity	Status
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26 partner initiatives	Considering future soil workforce requirements is an output in 26 partner projects regarding new and emerging innovative agricultural and environmental activities. Partners include NFF, DCCEEW, ACT Government, DLPE NT, DPI NSW, SA Gov, GRDC, CSIRO and Soil CRC.	Planning
States and Territories	Bilateral partnership agreements	Planning

Table 21 4.6 Support programs such as the SSA Certified Professional Soil Scientist and Registered Soil Practitioner (RSP) programs to increase the pool of accredited trained soil scientists and programs, including the Soil Science Challenge, to address fundamental soil knowledge gaps

Project Leads	Activity	Status
RSP – SSA	Training and accreditation of soil practitioners. SSA runs two-day in field training days for RSP accreditation. Online soil management training is undertaken when the online portal is open from February-November of each calendar year. In the 2023-24 financial year, 50 RSPs were accredited.	Planning

Table 22 4.7 Support the capabilities needed in our region (Oceania) to improve soil management for human and environmental health, food security and climate adaptation through the GSP Pacific Soil Partnership, the Pacific Community and South Pacific Regional Environment Program

Project Leads	Activity	Status
PSP – DAFF	Support soil management for human and environmental health, food security and climate adaptation in the Pacific region through the appointment of a Pacific Soil Partnership Coordinator.	Planning

Appendix A: National Soil Strategy Implementation Steering Committee members

- Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
- Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
- Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO)
- Department of Environment, Parks and Water Security, Northern Territory
- Department of Environment, Science and Innovation, Queensland
- Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, Victoria
- Department of Primary Industries and Regions, South Australia
- Department of Primary Industries New South Wales
- Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, Australian Capital Territory
- Department of Natural Resources and Environment, Tasmania
- Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, Western Australia
- Soil CRC
- Soil Science Australia
- National Farmers' Federation
- Natural Resource Management Regions Australia
- Indigenous Carbon Industry Network
- Meat and Livestock Australia
- Grains Research and Development Corporation

Glossary

Term	Definition
AASF	Australian Agricultural Sustainability Framework
ACT	Australian Capital Territory
AgVic	Agriculture Victoria
Annual Report	National Soil Action Plan 2023-2024 Annual Progress Report
ANSIS	Australian National Soil Information System
AWI	Australian Wool Innovation
CFOP	Carbon Farming Outreach Program
CRC	Cooperative Research Centre
CRDC	Cotton Research and Development Corporation
CSAP	Climate-Smart Agriculture Program
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
DA	Dairy Australia
DAFF	Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
DCCEEW	Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water
DETSI QLD	QLD Department of Environment Tourism Science and Innovation
DEW SA	South Australian Department for Environment and Water
DLPE NT	Department of Lands Planning and Environment Northern Territory
DNRMMRRD QLD	QLD Department of Natural Resources and Mines, Manufacturing and Regional and Rural Development
DPI NSW	NSW Department of Primary Industries
DPIRD WA	Western Australia Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development
DWER WA	WA Department of Water and Environmental Regulation
FAO	United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation
FDF	Future Drought Fund
GRDC	Grains Research and Development Corporation
GSP	Global Soil Partnership
JSC	Jobs and Skills Council
MEL	Measurement, Evaluation and Learning
MLA	Meat and Livestock Australia
NCST	National Committee on Soil and Terrain
NFF	National Farmers' Federation
NHT	Natural Heritage Trust
NRE Tas	Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania
NRM	Natural Resource Management
NSAP	National Soil Action Plan 2023–2028
NSIF	National Soil Information Framework

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Term	Definition
NSMP	National Soil Monitoring Program
NSS	National Soil Strategy
NSSISC	National Soil Strategy Implementation Steering Committee
NSW	New South Wales
NT	Northern Territory
PIRSA	Department of Primary Industries and Regions, South Australia
PSP	Pacific Soil Partnership
QLD	Queensland
RDC	Research and Development Corporation
RSC	Regional Soil Coordinator
RSP	Registered Soil Practitioner
SA	South Australia
SAF	Sustainable Agriculture Facilitator
SFL	Soils For Life
SoC	Statement of Commitment
SRA	Sugar Research Australia
SSA	Soil Science Australia
Strategy	National Soil Strategy
TAS	Tasmania
The department	Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
UTAS	University of Tasmania
VIC	Victoria
WA	Western Australia