

ec.sen@aph.gov.au

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

Submission to the Senate Inquiry "[Recent trends in and preparedness for extreme weather events](#)"

Almost all of the southern Australian brolga (crane) population is in Victoria. It crashed by about one third from 1997 to 2010. That might have been safe if there were more of them, but after numbers stayed at some 650 birds for decades by autumn 2010 there were only about 440 left. That trend will finish them off unless a recovery plan based on the (threatened species) action plan is successful. Brolga Recovery Group - boca.org.au/branches/branch-list/250-the-brolga-recovery-group - volunteers are doing most of the work.

Everyone knows our rainfall has dropped alarmingly; by 19.3% at Ballarat from 1997 to 2010. The effect on runoff was far more severe; it dropped over 80%

You can see we do not want another step down in rainfall; we rely on you to recommend the strongest possible action against climate change, including compensation for works to help brolgas (and all waterbirds) to adapt. Compensation to polluters is a very secondary consideration.

After two 'normal' nesting years in south-western Victoria in 2010 and 2011, rainfall again failed in the latter months of 2012 (down to 56% of average for September to December inclusive at Ballarat), causing brolgas sitting on eggs to abandon the nests.

Brolgas prefer large wetlands 250mm deep to nest in, but with permanent drought the nesting wetlands are dry, do not fill, fill too late in the season or dry prematurely. Instead some brolga pairs have been attempting to nest in the edges of farm dams/ponds and in one case in a roadside puddle about 40 metres long, but these sites leave the eggs and chicks open to greater predation and disturbance. The main summer flocking site near The Grampians moved south because the roosting wetlands at their old site were dry. With one or two more such moves the remnant brolgas will be flocking at the Southern Ocean. Where do they go then?

Recruitment to this population is about 5% per year, compared with 15% in the northern Australian brolga population. Victorian brolgas are ageing and most will soon be too old to breed. The few young breeding birds will not be able to maintain the population as the older birds die off.

This desperate situation has been caused by a global average temperature rise of just under one degree Celsius. The prospect of even a 1.5 degree rise in the global average temperature is far too much to accept. If the resulting climate shift is double what we have experienced already, we are in for utter disaster.

Even if politicians care little for species such as brolgas, the effect so far on our agricultural production should tell you that we need to reverse climate change as a top priority. We need to move to a war footing, NOW.

Very little is being done to implement the State Action Plan, chiefly some public education by the Brolga Recovery Group.

No work has been done to estimate the costs of implementing the Recovery Plan, and none has been foreshadowed.

No State or Commonwealth funds are known to have been allocated for implementation of the Recovery Plan.

It is fair to say that on-ground work to prepare for the effects of climate change on the southern Australian brolga population has not begun.

Gavin E Cerini Member, Brolga Recovery Group.