

## Introduction

- 1.1 On 2 June 2011, the Committee commenced an inquiry into biodiversity in a changing climate, in relation to nationally important ecosystems, with particular regard to:
- terrestrial, marine and freshwater biodiversity;
  - connectivity between ecosystems;
  - how biodiversity loss might affect human communities;
  - enhancing climate change adaptation;
  - sustainable use of natural resources and ecosystem services;
  - adequacy of current governance arrangements; and
  - enhancing community engagement.<sup>1</sup>
- 1.2 As noted in the first interim report,<sup>2</sup> the Committee considered that such broad terms of reference necessitated an extensive inquiry process. In order to effectively inquire into such a comprehensive topic, the Committee undertook a nationwide site inspection and public hearing program, and to present two interim reports prior to the production of its final report. The first interim report was presented in May 2012, and covered site inspections in Western Australia, Tasmania and New South Wales. This second interim report has been prepared in order to update the House, inquiry participants and the Australian public on the progress of the inquiry, and covers inspections at the following sites:
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1 The inquiry was referred to the Committee jointly by the Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, and the Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency.

2 House of Representatives Standing Committee on Climate Change, Environment and the Arts, *Case studies on biodiversity conservation: volume 1*, May 2012, p. 1; House of Representatives, *Debates*, no. 8, 28 May 2012, pp. 5631-34.

- Western Port and the Melbourne Museum, in Victoria;
  - the Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth region, and Greenfields Wetlands, in South Australia;
  - Kakadu National Park in the Northern Territory; and
  - the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area and Reef HQ Aquarium, in Queensland.
- 1.3 Throughout its site inspection program, the Committee had the opportunity to consider examples of community engagement, innovative ways of sustainably using natural resources, and complex governance arrangements, in the context of some of Australia's nationally significant ecosystems. The Committee has drawn these case studies from submissions and evidence received throughout the inquiry.
- 1.4 Since the inquiry was advertised on 2 June 2011, 87 submissions, 13 supplementary submissions and 60 exhibits have been received. To date, the Committee has carried out inquiry activities in each Australian state and territory, including 13 public hearings and eight site inspections.

## **Scope of this report**

- 1.5 As noted earlier, this report provides an update on the progress of the inquiry since the presentation of the first interim report in May 2012, by reviewing site inspections undertaken by the Committee since then.
- 1.6 As with the first interim report, the Committee has declined to make specific recommendations at this stage. Conclusions presented are preliminary and may only refer to specific sites visited. It is anticipated in its final report that the Committee will deliberate on how these preliminary conclusions, together with evidence gathered during the inquiry, may form more comprehensive recommendations.
- 1.7 The remainder of the report is divided into four chapters, with each focusing on a region or site inspection program. The report describes the sites inspected, the ecosystem types, and issues that arose upon inspection and in briefings with local experts. A glossary including some of the pertinent, and perhaps more scientific, terms that have arisen during the site inspections, is included at the back of the report.