



Australian Government

Department of Infrastructure and Transport

Ms Julia Searle
Committee Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on
Climate Change, Environment and the Arts
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms Searle

Inquiry into Australia's biodiversity in a changing climate – Major Cities Unit submission

Thank you for the opportunity to input into the Inquiry into Australia's biodiversity in a changing climate. This is an important and challenging issue of significant relevance to Australia's long-term prosperity and the well-being of communities as well as to the fortunes of natural environments. Our comments relate primarily to the relationship between cities and your topic of inquiry.

Our Cities, Our Future – A national urban policy for a productive, sustainable and liveable future (National Urban Policy) was released on 18 May 2011 and reinforces the Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) objective of ensuring Australian cities are globally competitive, productive, sustainable, liveable, socially inclusive and well placed to meet future challenges and growth. The National Urban Policy recognises that Australia's rapidly growing urban populations are intensifying pressure on the environment, including biodiversity in the areas around cities, through increased demand for water, energy, land and other resources, and through the production of waste and pollution. In this regard both the physical and ecological footprint of urban areas and their impact on surrounding high quality food producing areas or sensitive ecologies is of concern.

The National Urban Policy's sustainability objectives include:

- Protecting and sustaining our natural and built environments by protecting and enhancing natural ecosystems as well as supporting sustainable development and refurbishment of our built environment;
- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving air quality by supporting and investing in low emissions technologies, putting a price on carbon, and sustainable urban planning and regulatory reform;
- Managing our resources sustainably by reducing resource consumption and waste and improving water, energy and food security; and

- Increasing resilience to climate change, emergency events and natural hazards by climate change science and research as well as mitigation and adaptation.

The National Urban Policy encourages the participation of and engagement with stakeholders, including communities. I encourage you to review the National Urban Policy in more detail, it is available on our website at www.majorcities.gov.au.

In addition to the above, I encourage you to consider the following references that may be useful:

- The following document provides one of the most recent authoritative data summaries on the biodiversity impacts of Australian Cities, see pp. 107-117 of <http://www.periurban.org.au/references/LandandWaterConsolFinal1Nov2006.pdf>
- Subsequent reports from the same website set out, through case studies, how city and land use planning can best address biodiversity and natural resource management impacts: <http://www.periurban.org.au/publications.htm>
- Land clearing for land use change is the single largest current impact on terrestrial biodiversity, see pp. 20-25 of <http://www.environment.gov.au/biodiversity/publications/strategy-2010-30/pubs/biodiversity-strategy-2010.pdf>
- Mechanisms to promote the sustainable use of natural resources and ecosystem services in a changing climate are addressed in Professor Lo Chow's work on the integration of natural resource management planning and land use planning systems: http://www.ozcoasts.org.au/pdf/CRC/79_capitalising_on_opportunities_screen.pdf
- Outer urban and peri urban land management, natural resource management and land use planning systems are ill-equipped to address the biodiversity management and impacts: http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/images/stories/committees/osisdv/sustainable_development_of_agricultural_business/Report/OSISDC_Agribusiness_WEB.pdf

Yours sincerely

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Major Cities Unit

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