



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

29 July 2011

Inquiry into Australia's biodiversity in a changing climate

The Urban Development Institute of Australia (National) welcomes the opportunity to provide this submission to the House Standing Committee on Climate Change, Environment and the Arts.

The Urban Development Institute of Australia (UDIA) is the peak body representing the property development industry throughout Australia. Established at a state level in 1963, the Institute evolved to become a national body with a number of state-based divisions in 1970. UDIA aims to secure the economic prosperity and future of the development industry in Australia, recognizing that national prosperity is dependent on our success in housing our communities and building and rebuilding cities for future generations.

Our members cover a wide range of specialist and industry fields, including: Developers, Valuers, Planners, Engineers, Architects, Marketers, Researchers, Project Managers, Surveyors, Landscape Architects, Community Consultants, Environmental Consultants, Lawyers, Sales and Marketing Professionals, Financial Institutions, State and Local Government Authorities, and Product Suppliers.

UDIA's submission chiefly addresses the third point listed in the terms of reference: *How climate change impacts on biodiversity may flow on to affect human communities and the economy.*

While UDIA is a development association and thus unqualified to offer insight into the effect which climate change will have on biodiversity, it is clear that current and future efforts to protect our biodiversity have implications for our industry. The Federal Government's legislative response to the issue of threatened biodiversity is the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Act (EPBC Act).

The EPBC Act is intended to protect and manage flora, fauna, ecological communities and heritage places of national significance. While UDIA is supportive of the goals of the EPBC Act, we believe there is scope to improve the functioning of this legislation to deliver more efficient development outcomes alongside positive environmental outcomes. Above all, it is essential that the EPBC Act works toward achieving the triple bottom line of sustainability in the decision-making process, giving due consideration to economic, social and environmental factors.

Developers are compelled to adhere to requirements under the EPBC Act as well as the various State/Territory environmental frameworks. Lack of coordination between the Commonwealth and State/Territory governments often leads to significant delays which in turn can have a marked impact on land supply. Delays in the supply of land can have a devastating effect on the delivery of much needed housing. Furthermore, the costs involved in the processing of assessments as well as the holding costs incurred by developers will only compound the already scant supply of affordable housing in the country. The scale of these costs is exemplified by data obtained from Western Australia in 2007 which shows that:

- a one year delay in the development process would mean an increase of 13.3% on the price of a lot
- a four year delay in the development process would mean an increase of 68.4% on the price of a lot

Although, the EPBC Act makes allowances to minimise the duplication of processes – through the use of strategic assessments as well as bilateral agreements between the Federal and State/Territory environmental agencies – UDIA believes a greater degree of integration between the various layers of Government is required. Processes need to be established which enable single strategic assessments to occur prior to urban rezoning as developers have far greater capacity to respond to requirements early in the development process.

UDIA is committed to the protection of Australia's biodiversity, however we believe that more Government funding to facilitate regular scientific research is required. Policy influencing the protection of species needs to be informed by current scientific evidence. Currently, the information provided to the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities regarding the changing status of species/communities appears to be limited. There needs to be a clear distinction between species exhibiting a reduced range from previous studies and species which are in a definite state of decline.

UDIA thanks the House Standing Committee on Standing Committee on Climate Change, Environment and the Arts for inviting us to prepare this submission. UDIA would welcome the opportunity to discuss any aspect of this submission in greater detail. For further information, please contact UDIA National on _____ or at _____.

Yours Sincerely

Peter Sherrie
UDIA National President