



Senator Janet Rice  
Chair  
Environment and Communications References Committee  
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications  
PO Box 6100  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Senator Rice

I write in relation to questions taken on notice in the course of the public hearing for the Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications inquiry into *Australia's faunal extinction crisis* held on 8 October 2018.

Additional information was requested from the Director of National Parks in relation to the following areas: what species will be monitored once the National Environmental Science Program (NESP) monitoring project is in place; the current budget for threatened species monitoring; and the budgets for our parks over the past three years.

I would also like to make a correction to my testimony at the hearing. On page 15 of the proof Hansard, I responded to a question as follows:

**CHAIR:** *So that's \$15.5 million per year or over—*  
**Dr West:** *Per year.*

This response was not correct, as the \$15m figure mentioned is a prediction of the funding required over the next 5 years. Further information in relation to this question is provided on page 2 and 3 of this letter.

**Faunal species that will be monitored once the redesigned NESP monitoring program is in place**

Once the revised NESP-designed Top End Ecological Monitoring Program is in place (which only applies to Kakadu National Park and will be implemented together with the NT Department of Environment and Natural Resources flora and fauna division) the total percentage of threatened fauna species being monitored for trend in terrestrial parks would increase to 49%.

- If the Uluru mala and great desert skink surveys recommence at Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park, the proportion would increase to 52%. (At present, the plan is to reintroduce mala surveys in 2019.)

Each park has its own management and monitoring programs, and local priorities are set with consideration to many factors, such as the availability of internal and external resources, guiding documents like Management Plans, Recovery Plans, and Cultural Heritage Plans, and the local conditions and threat level to particular

species. There may be a number of reasons why all threatened species occurring in each park would not be prioritised for monitoring. For example:

- Parks land may represent only a small proportion of the entire range of the species, or the relative abundance and distribution of the species varies widely between years and seasons, or the major threatening processes occur in other jurisdictions. For example: the swift parrot in Booderee (primary threat is loss of breeding habitat in Tasmania), the grey-headed flying fox in Booderee (the species forages where food is available and may be present in an area only intermittently), a number of marine species which range widely (humpback whale, grey nurse shark, whale shark, green turtle and hawksbill turtle), a number of migratory bird species in Kakadu where the principal driver of current decline lies beyond Australia.
- Some species may be rare, patchily distributed or cryptic, and there are no known monitoring and sampling methods that would effectively be able to survey them within our parks. For example: a number of bat and reptile species within Kakadu (Arnhem leaf nosed bat, northern leaf nosed bat, ghost bat, Arnhem land egeria), and the Christmas Island blind snake.
- A small number of species are potentially extinct or no longer extant within our parks, but are still being included in our reporting statistics until their status is confirmed. For example: the greater glider in Booderee, the brush-tailed rabbit-rat and bare-rumped sheath-tail bat in Kakadu, four threatened snail species in Norfolk Island National Park.

**Current spending on threatened species management, and additional required spend to cover all prioritised threatened species management actions.**

Management of EPBC listed fauna species often aims at minimising the effect of key threatening processes such as fire, weeds and feral animals. Management activities are also often designed to benefit multiple threatened species (both flora and fauna species), and will also benefit a range of species that are not threatened. Therefore it is difficult to separate natural resource management budgets that are allocated to conservation of threatened fauna species from those that are allocated to conservation and management of the broader biodiversity within a park.

Over the last three years, the total DNP budget allocation for activities to conserve threatened fauna (including targeted threatened species work, and threat abatement actions for the benefit of threatened species and wider biodiversity) in our terrestrial reserves totalled approximately \$13.8 million.

On top of this, a number of targeted projects for threatened fauna have been undertaken in recent years with externally contributed funding, including the following:

- TSC threatened species projects (total of \$1,595,000 over 4 years):
  - Booderee small mammal reintroductions (\$80K over 3 years, 2015-2017)
  - Christmas Island feral cat eradication (\$500K contribution in 2015)
  - Norfolk Island rodent control to protect green parrots (\$300K over 3 years, 2015-2017)

- Pulu Keeling protecting the Cocos buff-banded rail (\$15K over 2 years (2015-2016))
- Kakadu targeting threats from fire, weeds and ferals (\$450K over 4 years (2015-2018))
- Kakadu wildlife refuge on Field Island (\$50K over 3 years (2015-2017))
- Kakadu expansion of toad smart quolls project (\$200K over 3 years (2015-2017))
- Christmas Island feral cat eradication program (environmental offset funding of \$750,000 over the last 3 years)
- Christmas Island Mine Site to Forest Rehabilitation Program, increasing available habitat for threatened bird species (mining levy of \$4.19 million over the last 3 years).
- Christmas Island yellow crazy ant control (NPP funding of \$591,500 over the last 3 years)

We also work with the NESP Threatened Species Recovery Hub on various projects. Funding amounts for these projects has not been provided as they cover area greater than our parks, but the projects are:

- 1.1.1 Adaptive management of fire and feral animals to improve conservation of threatened species in Kakadu (joint project with the Northern Australia Environmental Resources Hub Project 3.4) (2016–2018)
- Project 2.3 Enhancing conservation outcomes for Christmas Island over 5 years (2015-2019) - including projects on Christmas Island flying fox, critically endangered lizards, Christmas Island frigatebird, outcomes of cat control, and spatial conservation planning
- Project 3.2.2.1 Using reintroductions to understand causes of mammal declines and extinctions at Booderee National Park
- Project 3.2.2.6 Threatened species monitoring design in Northern Australia
- Project 6.2.3 The conservation ecology of the Alligator Rivers yellow chat

In 2017 Parks Australia conducted an exercise to prioritise a set of additional management activities (on top of existing BAU and projects underway) to conserve threatened fauna species in our terrestrial reserves. The decision tool used was developed in collaboration with the National Environmental Research Program (NERP) Environmental Decisions Hub, to guide resource allocation to threatened species management actions in Commonwealth terrestrial reserves.

In the prioritisation exercise, a total of 17 proposed management actions were developed and assessed, which would together benefit 27 threatened fauna species (some actions would benefit multiple species). The decision tool then ranked the 17 actions in order based on their cost effectiveness. The total cost of all 17 actions, if implemented, would be \$15,015,420 over 5 years (approximately \$3 million per year).

**Budget requests and funding, over the last three years, for threatened species management and threatening processes in terrestrial reserves**

The total budget requests over the last three years totalled \$3,926,036. Of this total, \$2,339,000 was funded. Details of requests and funding are provided in the two tables below.

<b>Funding Requested</b>					
<b>Program/Project Description</b>	<b>Place/Section</b>	<b>2016-17</b>	<b>2017-18</b>	<b>2018-19</b>	<b>Total</b>
Green Parrot Translocation	Norfolk Island National Park	180,000		70,000	250,000
Wet season burning/Fire Management Program	Kakadu National Park	288,000		150,000	438,000
Road side control of feral herbivores	Kakadu National Park			50,000	50,000
Cat Eradication, Yellow Crazy Ants, Listers Gecko, Blue Tailed Skink, Flying Fox, Frigate Bird Programs	Christmas Island National Park			1,217,036	1,217,036
Cat Eradication (only)	Christmas Island National Park	650,000	650,000		1,300,000
Norfolk Island Swamp Hen and Chicken Control Program Norfolk Island Gecko and Skink Program Norfolk Island Green Parrot and Giant Land Snails Program Booderee Fox Control	Parks Science, Knowledge and Information Management Section			250,000	250,000
Taronga Zoo Animal Ethics Agreement	Parks Science, Knowledge and Information Management Section		45,000	47,000	92,000
Reptile Breeding	Christmas Island National Park		50,000		50,000
Wasp Relocation	Christmas Island National Park	29,000			29,000
Feral Animal Control (in general)	Kakadu National Park	250,000			250,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$1,397,000</b>	<b>\$745,000</b>	<b>\$1,784,036</b>	<b>\$3,926,036</b>

<b>Requests funded</b>					
<b>Program/Project Description</b>	<b>Place/Section</b>	<b>2016-17</b>	<b>2017-18</b>	<b>2018-19</b>	<b>Total</b>
Green Parrot Translocation	Norfolk Island National Park	180,000			180,000
Cat Eradication and Yellow Crazy Ants	Christmas Island National Park			400,000	400,000
Cat Eradication (only)	Christmas Island National Park	650,000	400,000		1,050,000
Taronga Zoo Animal Ethics Agreement (baseline approp funding)	Parks Science, Knowledge and Information Management Section		45,000	47,000	92,000
Reptile Breeding	Christmas Island National Park		50,000		50,000
Wet season burning/Fire Management Program	Kakadu National Park	288,000			288,000
Wasp Relocation	Christmas Island National Park	29,000			29,000
Feral Animal Control (in general)	Kakadu National Park	250,000			250,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$1,397,000</b>	<b>\$495,000</b>	<b>\$447,000</b>	<b>\$2,339,000</b>

I trust this information will be of assistance to the Committee.

Yours sincerely

Judy West  
A/g Director of National Parks

7 November 2018

