




13 August 2019


Secretary Environment and
Communications References Committee

e-mail: ec.sen@aph.gov.au

2019 addition to: BirdLife Australia's Submission to the inquiry on Australia's faunal extinction crisis

Thank you for the opportunity to provide further input to the Environment and Communications References Committee's inquiry into Australia's faunal extinction crisis. The issues raised in our previous submission still stand and we refer to that document (including its attachment) as evidence for the urgent need for reform of Australia's approach to threatened species conservation.

We wish to add to our submission to the inquiry only under point c):

the international and domestic obligations of the Commonwealth Government in conserving threatened fauna;

In the period between our first submission and this second call, the United Nations released a report warning up to one million species could face extinction in the near future due to humans' impact on nature. A collapse in biodiversity will damage the interconnected ecosystems of the planet, putting humans at risk through the loss of food security, pollution of clean water and air and more extreme weather. Birds, for example, disperse seeds and assist their germination. Insect-eating birds act as living pest controllers. And they are part of the nutrient cycle, on both land and sea.

A new approach to threatened species conservation in Australia needs to be embedded in an ambitious and strong international framework that supports efforts by Australia and its co-signatories to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity to protect our planet's most precious resource, the diversity of life.

BirdLife Australia is concerned by the government's lack of visible engagement in this UN process. A real opportunity exists for the Australian government to work closely with civil society and the corporate sector on the transformative changes we need to halt and reverse the decline in nature.

Yours sincerely,


Paul Sullivan
Chief Executive Officer
BirdLife Australia



Attachment:

c) the international and domestic obligations of the Commonwealth Government in conserving threatened fauna;

Convention on Biological Diversity post-2020 framework – a ‘now or never’ opportunity for nature

Developed under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the new UN-wide biodiversity framework to be agreed at CBD COP15 in Kunming, China in 2020 will replace the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, which has failed to stem the devastating global decline in biodiversity.

With the impacts of this failure to protect nature now threatening not only our well-being but our very survival, 2020 represents a ‘now or never’ opportunity to put in place and deliver a transformational new framework to better safeguard, conserve and restore biodiversity for people and the planet.

An important element to this framework is the engagement of civil society with their governments, the parties to the CBD agreement, to create the transformative change needed to address the crisis. BirdLife Australia is involved in this as Australia’s partner in BirdLife International, the world’s largest nature conservation partnership with local roots and global reach informed by internationally-recognised science. BirdLife International is deeply engaged in the development of the post-2020 framework and will mobilise support for its implementation.

To date such engagement by the Australian Government has been very limited, inadequate and driven almost exclusively by civil society organisations.

The post-2020 framework will be a key international agreement for global biodiversity conservation in years to come and will directly influence national biodiversity strategies and action plans. Directly and indirectly, it will shape national legislation and funding mechanisms. The framework should strengthen connections and influence other important international agreements including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS), the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). It is thus critical that the Australian government works to influence the development of an ambitious biodiversity framework and, once it is adopted in 2020, drives its implementation domestically.



Recommendations

In order to address our faunal extinction crisis, we submit that the Australian government engage civil society and adopt the key elements (below) for a transformative post-2020 global biodiversity framework nationally and promote them internationally.

OBJECTIVES: RECOVER THE STATE OF NATURE

- Halt overall **species' population declines** by 2030; **prevent human-driven extinctions of known threatened species**; and **improve the status** of 30% of known threatened species by 2030
- Safeguard, buffer and **connect our remaining intact ecosystems, reduce the loss and degradation of natural habitats** and **restore degraded areas**, ensuring connectivity and resilience of habitats and provision of essential **ecosystem services** through **landscape-level conservation**

ACTIONS: PROTECT NATURE AND TACKLE THE DRIVERS OF BIODIVERSITY LOSS

- By 2030, the value of all **sites of significance for biodiversity**, including Key Biodiversity Areas, is documented, retained, and restored through protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures covering at least 30% of terrestrial and inland water environments and 30% of marine environments
- Tackle **illegal and unsustainable hunting and trade of wildlife** and eradicate or control and prevent the spread of **invasive alien species**, particularly on islands and also ensure that multilateral and bilateral trade agreements minimise countries, and businesses' biodiversity impacts
- Remove **harmful economic subsidies, reduce unsustainable consumption**, incentivise sustainable diets, and reduce countries' and businesses' ecological impact on the planet (e.g. via agriculture, forestry, fishing, extractives, energy), including through rules and incentives for a circular economy, full internalisation of environmental externalities, biodiversity positive trade agreements and other mechanisms
- To meet global goals on climate change and sustainable development promote **nature-based solutions** that integrate and support biodiversity, prioritising conservation and restoration of natural ecosystems
- Ensure our food, fibre and raw materials come from **land and seas well-managed for nature** (e.g. agricultural or forestry - with at a minimum no net loss of biodiversity), through legislation, incentives, standards and certifications for



sustainable supply chains, and employing robust strategic spatial planning and risk assessment to safeguard the most important and sensitive areas for biodiversity

ENABLING CONDITIONS: COOPERATE, COORDINATE AND DELIVER ON YOUR PROMISES

- Enable more **inclusive decision-making** (especially by empowering and engaging Indigenous people and local communities) in decisions affecting nature and ensure the equitable and just sharing of benefits from nature
- Provide **increased political commitment, capacity, empowerment** of civil society and communities and access to justice and environmental information to ensure **all state and non-state actors are able to play an active role** in contributing to achieving the post-2020 biodiversity framework
- Significantly **increase the mobilisation of financial resources** through both international and domestic measures, doubling financial flows and ensuring investment priorities align with this

IMPLEMENTATION

- Adopt a **binding and more transparent system of national reporting and accountability** which integrates into the Sustainable Development Goals and other policy processes. This should ensure that actions resulting from the post-2020 commitments will be reflected in and monitored at the national and global level, including through independent sources of information and indicators