



CAPRICORN CONSERVATION COUNCIL

A voice for the environment

13 August 2018

Committee Secretary
Environment and Communications References Committee
Department of the Senate
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT

Submitted via Parliament of Australia Login

Dear Committee,

RE: Submission to Australia's faunal extinction crisis inquiry.

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the above Inquiry. This submission is made on behalf of Capricorn Conservation Council, Rockhampton, Queensland. Since 1973 Capricorn Conservation Council (CCC) has performed an important role in providing community conservation education. Our work is mainly through volunteers and our engagement covers schools, general community, industry and government. CCC covers the Southern Great Barrier Reef, coastal areas from Broadsound to Baffle Creek, and the Fitzroy and Galilee Basins. CCC participates in numerous community, government and industry forums, a small sample includes:

- Environment and Heritage Protection Ministerial Roundtable
- Central Queensland Mine Rehabilitation Group
- Shoalwater Bay Training Area Environmental Advisory Committee
- Fitzroy Water Quality Advisory Group (EHP/DNRM)
- Fitzroy Partnership for River Health
- Project and EIS panels and consultative meetings and reports for coal, coal seam gas projects, dam and weirs proposals, statutory plans and water quality guidelines.

Our concerns in relation to the faunal extinction crisis currently taking place in Australia are;

1. Only 4% of Australia's threatened species are recognised in the Threatened Species Strategy. Most concerning is the exclusion of all other threatened species e.g. reptiles, amphibians, fishes and invertebrates, along with most of our threatened flora.
2. Spending on conservation should be equal with the uniqueness and value of Australia's biodiversity. It needs to change from the global OECD average to much higher¹. At current levels, it is highly unlikely Australia will be able to reverse the biodiversity crisis. Currently the Federal Government is spending 0.017% of Australia's AU\$416.9 billion annual revenue. The amount that needs to be spent to maintain biodiversity in Australia is about

¹ <http://www.pnas.org/content/110/29/12144.full#ref-5>

A\$200 million per year. To put this in perspective, Australians spent \$0.45 billion on pampering their pets in 2016.²

3. Funding for threatened species must be better targeted. Of the 499 projects cited in the Threatened Species Conservation second progress report, 361 were those of the Green Army and 20 Million Trees programs, which cost AU\$78 million, and was 60% of total funding. Neither program is specifically devoted to threatened species.
4. Establish headline indices for biodiversity gains and losses, and environmental health, and treat these as reverentially as it does economic indicators. Ecosystems services and have actual, calculable economic value, rather being an esoteric nicety.
5. Environmental management needs to be protected from short-term policy shifts shaped by parliamentary cycles.
6. Increase for funding research and adding of Traditional Ecological Knowledge to the Threatened Species Conservation strategies. Indigenous people bring valuable traditional ecological knowledge to the management of all species. Increased participation in active threatened species management will present opportunities for Indigenous people and groups; many would like to expand existing work on country; and are already achieving biodiversity outcomes for which they receive no formal recognition.³
7. Creation of Independent Environment Commission; Australians and democratic societies should have access to reliable, independent and objective information about the current state of our natural heritage, and how government decisions influence its course. For a commissioner to work effectively, they must also be willing to comment on politically sensitive issues and put themselves at odds with the government when necessary. The Commissioner must be an independent voice for Australia's threatened species, with the role within a statutory authority, at arm's length from government. New Zealand, has an independent environment commission, which has operated since 1986.
8. Environmental law needs to be strengthened, not trivialised or condemned as excessive 'green tape'. Please refer to The Australian Panel of Experts on Environmental Law, 'Blueprint for The Next Generation of Environmental Law'.⁴
 - i. Environmental law would be a national concern, reversing the current trend to devolve responsibility to the states. State borders arbitrarily divide Australian environments; they are colonial legacies that fragment and weaken our ability to care for this country.
 - ii. Treat extinction as a serious failure of policy and practice, which would demand coronial review and proper penalty.
 - iii. A commitment to sustainability that permeates across all laws relating to the use and management of Australia's natural resources including policy about population growth and land-use planning.

² <https://www.moneysmart.gov.au/managing-your-money/budgeting/spending/australian-spending-habits>

³ <http://www.nespthreatenedspecies.edu.au/projects/collaborations-with-indigenous-people-in-threatened-species-research-and-management>

⁴ <http://apeel.org.au/>

Thank you once again for the opportunity to raise these matters. Should you require any further information about this submission, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely

Sherie Bruce
Assistant Coordinator

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Coordinator

Biodiversity in Central Queensland

Biodiversity – your life depends on it

CCC's educational series *Biodiversity – your life depends on it*, developed by Marnie Augusteyn and Andrew Dinwoodie, series consists of a presentation, flyers and posters identifying the importance of biodiversity and featuring the nine regions represented in Central Queensland each depicting a representative species:

- **Marine** — *Sun and sand, our local wonderland* (Flatback turtle)
- **Coastal wetlands** — *Where water and wildlife converge* (Capricorn Yellow Chat)
- **Coastal communities** — *Nature's buffer behind our beaches* (Byfield fern)
- **Estuaries and deltas** — *Lifestyle and wildlife converge* (Snubfin dolphin)
- **Wetlands and aquifers** — *The elixir of life* (Boggomoss snail)
- **Capricorn serpentinites** — *Scarce and fascinating* (Gecko *Strophurus* sp.)
- **Riparian zones** — *Giving life to our landscapes* (Fitzroy River Turtle)
- **Brigalow Belt** — *A biodiversity hotspot* (Bridled naitailed wallaby)
- **Highlands** — *High havens with hidden stories* (Kroombit Tinker frog)

