

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

2.125 The committee recommends that the Commonwealth, state and territory governments prioritise their work towards reducing duplication and inconsistency between the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* list and state and territory lists of threatened species and communities, consistent with the aim of achieving a harmonised national list capable of accommodating regional or geographic listings within or across individual states. The committee further recommends that the Commonwealth, state and territory governments work to establish uniform and integrated processes for the future listing of threatened species and communities.

Recommendation 2

2.128 The committee recommends that the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities investigate a less complicated 'expressions of interest' process for the public to nominate threatened species and ecological communities for further consideration of their potential to be fully nominated by expert groups operating on a pro bono basis, as suggested by the Threatened Species Scientific Committee.

Recommendation 3

2.132 The committee recommends that the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities establish specialist scientific sub-groups to support the work of the Threatened Species Scientific Committee.

Recommendation 4

2.133 The committee recommends that the Threatened Species Scientific Committee, and specialist sub-groups, supported by the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, commence systematic reviews of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* threatened species list, to be undertaken by taxonomic group, to be completed within the next five years and to continue to be undertaken at not less than five yearly intervals.

Recommendation 5

2.135 The committee recommends that the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* be amended to give the Threatened Species Scientific Committee power to recommend that the Environment Minister fund research programs for species or communities which are found to be ineligible for listing under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* due to data deficiency or geographical location, and that the minister be required to respond to the Threatened Species Scientific Committee's recommendations.

Recommendation 6

2.137 The committee recommends that the Commonwealth government introduce into Parliament the proposed amendments to the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* relating to 'emergency listing' of threatened species and communities as a matter of high priority.

Recommendation 7

2.139 The committee recommends that the Commonwealth government amend the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* to allow for the listing of *threatened populations* of species in a manner consistent with the objective of harmonising listings and listing processes with state and territory governments.

Recommendation 8

3.103 The committee recommends that the focus of the recovery planning process be on the development of national level strategic plans supported by short action plans for specific species designed to achieve specific objectives against which their success can be measured.

Recommendation 9

3.105 The committee recommends that the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities adopt clear protocols to implement streamlined processes that lead to the establishment of relevant plans (including conservation advices, single species recovery plans, strategic plans supported by action plans, and multi-species and regional recovery plans) within strict timelines. The committee further recommends that the department's performance against those timelines be measured and made publicly available.

Recommendation 10

3.107 The committee recommends that action plans be developed with regard to the likelihood of available funds, and in a manner that allows for the potential prioritisation of actions.

Recommendation 11

3.109 The committee recommends that relevant action plans are developed in consultation with state and territory governments, as well as non-government organisations, to ensure planned actions are coordinated, supported and implemented.

Recommendation 12

3.112 The committee recommends that all action plans contain key performance indicators for outcomes in specific locations against which funding is directed.

Recommendation 13

3.115 The committee recommends that the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities conduct a review of all

recovery plans older than five years. This review should include an evaluation of the extent to which actions identified in those plans have been implemented and the success of those actions in recovering threatened species and ecological communities. The report of this review should be made publicly available and should consider where existing recovery plans can be incorporated into national strategic plans complemented by short action plans for certain species, as outlined in recommendation 9.

Recommendation 14

4.139 The committee recommends that, in developing action plans, and allocating program funding, the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities consider greater use of predator exclusion fences and other forms of 'mainland island sanctuaries' for threatened species.

Recommendation 15

4.141 The committee recommends that the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities develop clear biosecurity strategies as part of action plans to protect island sanctuaries.

Recommendation 16

4.143 The committee recommends that the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities develop regulations under section 301A of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* for the regulation of controlled invasive plant species within Australia. The Council of Australian Governments should be involved in the process, to ensure that these measures are developed in consultation with state and territory governments.

Recommendation 17

4.145 The committee recommends that the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities develop specific research strategies in conjunction with relevant research institutions, such as the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation and the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre, to develop biological controls for feral cats and other high impact invasive species.

Recommendation 18

4.147 The committee recommends that the Commonwealth government target more environmental research funding and programs towards effective control methods for invasive species.

Recommendation 19

4.149 The committee recommends that the Threatened Species Scientific Committee considers listing 'wildlife disease' as an overarching key threatening process under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

Recommendation 20

4.154 The committee recommends that all threat abatement plans contain realistic, measurable targets against which their effectiveness can be measured.

Recommendation 21

4.157 The committee recommends that the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities conduct a review of all threat abatement plans older than five years. This review should include an evaluation of the extent to which actions identified in those plans have been implemented, and the success of those actions. The review should be completed within the next five years and subsequent reviews should be undertaken at not less than five yearly intervals. The reports of these reviews should be made publicly available on the website of the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities.

Recommendation 22

5.49 The committee recommends that the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* be amended to require the identification of critical habitat for listed threatened species and ecological community at the time of listing.

Recommendation 23

5.52 The committee recommends the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities ensure that all critical habitats for threatened species and ecological communities, as identified in Commonwealth, state and territory recovery plans and conservation advices, be compiled into easily accessible maps which are readily available online and updated at regular intervals.

Recommendation 24

5.55 In light of the important contribution it should make to the protection of habitat for threatened species and ecological communities, the committee recommends that an audit be undertaken to identify all critical habitat within the National Reserve System.

Recommendation 25

5.56 The committee recommends that the Environmental Stewardship Program be maintained in order to continue to provide assistance to private land managers to manage and protect habitat for threatened species and ecological communities on their land.

Recommendation 26

5.85 The committee recommends that the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities assess the success of private conservation organisations in establishing sanctuaries of critical habitat for threatened species to examine what lessons could be applied across the National

Reserve System and how such private organisations could play an effective role in improving outcomes for threatened species, including within publicly owned assets within the National Reserve System. Such a role must be in cooperation with and following consultation with public land managers.

Recommendation 27

5.88 The committee recommends that the Commonwealth government continue to support the important contribution of all sectors of the community, including private sector and non-government organisations, landholders and community volunteers, in delivering outcomes for threatened species and ecological communities.

Recommendation 28

6.110 The committee recommends that, when the Biodiversity Strategy is reviewed in 2015, consideration is given to incorporating concrete targets that reflect the targets agreed to by Australia under the Biodiversity Convention.

Recommendation 29

6.114 The committee recommends that the Commonwealth government adjusts current funding under the Biodiversity Fund and Caring for our Country to provide targeted funding streams for threatened species and ecological communities. This dedicated funding should include funding for implementation of specific actions within recovery plans, conservation advices and threat abatement plans and advices.

Recommendation 30

6.116 In light of the evidence that feral animals and fire regimes are two of the biggest threats to threatened species and communities, the committee recommends that funding programs give high priority to on-ground projects addressing feral animals and fire regimes.

Recommendation 31

6.120 The committee recommends that all funding grants under relevant Commonwealth government programs, whether for the management of threatened species, ecological communities, threatening species or invasive species should include metrics to establish initial benchmarks and requirements to measure the outcomes from the project against those initial benchmarks.

Recommendation 32

6.122 The committee recommends that the Commonwealth government adjust relevant funding programs to enable funding grants relevant to threatened species and ecological communities to be awarded over longer timeframes, subject to ongoing success against measured objectives.

Recommendation 33

6.125 The committee recommends that the Commonwealth government develop and implement a national species prioritisation program to guide

decision-making in relation to funding for threatened species and ecological communities. This program should be regularly reviewed based on the best available scientific evidence.

Recommendation 34

6.127 The committee recommends that the Commonwealth government establish the national biodiversity monitoring system and system of national environment accounts by 2015, as recommended by the Hawke review and *Australia's Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2010–30*.

Recommendation 35

6.130 The committee recommends that the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* be amended to require the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities report, as part of the regular preparation of national accounts to Parliament on the status of species, and communities listed as threatened under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

Recommendation 36

7.112 The committee recommends that the Australian Law Reform Commission conduct a review of threatened species laws to ensure effective, comprehensive and consistent protections are in place across all jurisdictions.

Recommendation 37

7.116 The committee recommends that the Commonwealth government continues to work with state governments to improve the review, audit and monitoring arrangements for Regional Forest Agreements, with a view to ensuring that forestry operations avoid impacts on threatened species and ecological communities.

Recommendation 38

7.119 The committee recommends that the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities conduct a review of those strategic assessments undertaken under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* to date with a view to improving the process in the future. The committee recommends that this review be publicly released.

Recommendation 39

7.123 The committee recommends that the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities conduct an audit and evaluation of the offsets granted under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* to date, and make the results of this audit publicly available.

Recommendation 40

7.125 The committee recommends that the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities engage in extensive

consultation with affected stakeholders prior to the introduction of amendments to the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* to establish cost recovery mechanisms for environmental assessment processes.

Recommendation 41

7.127 The committee recommends that the minister and the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities ensure that conditions on approvals under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* are kept as straightforward as possible and worded clearly to ensure that conditions are enforceable.

Recommendation 42

7.128 The committee recommends that the Commonwealth government develop a new compliance strategy in consultation with the states for monitoring and compliance activities relating to the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

Recommendation 43

7.130 The committee recommends that the Australian National Audit Office conduct an audit of monitoring of compliance with approval conditions under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.

Recommendation 44

7.132 The committee recommends that the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* be amended so that 'the fisheries provisions under Parts 10, 13 and 13A are streamlined into a single strategic assessment framework for Commonwealth and State and Territory-managed fisheries to deliver a single assessment and approval framework' subject to the objects of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* being upheld.

