

Federal Budget 2022-23: Response from the Australian Land Conservation Alliance (ALCA)

Quotes that are attributable to Dr Jody Gunn, CEO, ALCA, the Australian peak body for private land conservation.

“Given the state of our environment, the impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss, and the need to restore resilience in our landscapes now, the budget for the environment and recognising the role of private land conservation is underwhelming.”

“The continuation of the Environment Restoration Fund alongside modest funding for koala conservation is important and welcome, as are incidental funding relating to agricultural-focused drought resilience and invasive species control that will also benefit the environment. However, there are no significant new initiatives in the budget for land-based conservation – a huge missed opportunity at a time when the world’s leading economists at the World Economic Forum have joined leading environmental scientists in declaring that nature loss is a planetary emergency.”

“As noted by the WEF, “Humanity has already wiped out 83% of wild mammals and half of all plants and severely altered three-quarters of ice-free land and two-thirds of marine environments. One million species are at risk of extinction in the coming decades – a rate tens to hundreds of times higher than the average over the past 10 million years.” Further, “Biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse [are now] one of the top five threats humanity will face in the next ten years.””

“This is why the Australian Land Conservation Alliance is urgently calling on government to commit to protecting 30% of Australian land and 30% of Australia seas, in alignment with the High Ambition Coalition for Nature of which Australia is a member. This government – and whichever federal government is elected later this year – can do, and must do, much better.””

“The Australian Land Conservation Alliance welcomes the announcement of additional funds being allocated for environmental assessments of proposed developments under the EPBC Act, Australia’s cornerstone environmental legislation. Additional resources and compliance are desperately needed to improve the federal government’s capacity to provide meaningful environmental protection, and the initiative to prioritise regional planning – a key recommendation of Professor Graeme Samuel’s review of federal environmental legislation – is welcome.”

“However, the focus of these assessments must be on ensuring environmental protections, not geared towards fast-tracking developments at the environment’s expense. We know that if you get environmental protections right, you’ll get the right developments as well. This investment remains piecemeal, and we continue to call for the full suite of recommendations to be considered.””

“The Australian Land Conservation Alliance welcomes the continuation of the Environment Restoration Fund and funding for koala conservation, whilst noting that, given the koala’s recent listing as endangered, much more funding will be needed if we are going to save this iconic species and the approximately 732 endangered flora and fauna species and 93 threatened ecological communities in Australia and reverse the escalating Australian extinction crisis.”