



PLC2022 ALCA Policy Workshop

8 March 2022

Outcomes statement

The key takeaways from the workshop were:

- There are a range of gaps in our policy knowledge that need addressing, including understanding the behavioural drivers of landholders who engage in private land conservation, how to appropriately value biodiversity and ecosystem services and to demonstrate that value, and how to mainstream concern for nature conservation into the decision-making of business and financial institutions
- Markets offer opportunities to mobilise investment at scale in private land conservation, but must be navigated carefully and with an eye to avoiding unintended outcomes
- There is significant scope to increase environmental philanthropy from its increasing but low base of approximately 2.5% of charitable giving
- Engaging with communities was a critical part of embedding the narrative importance of private land conservation to Australians, as was generally improving our ability to tell the positive stories from private land conservation
- There was a clear desire from participants to continue such policy discussions, especially ALCA-led policy forums that explore dedicated topics in more detail and, at minimum, open to staff from ALCA member organisations

The workshop in detail

Facilitator: *Michael Cornish, Policy Lead, The Australian Land Conservation Alliance*

Context:

- The workshop was advertised to policy professionals interested in the policy issues affecting Australian private land conservation and in exploring opportunities for collaboration on shared policy reform objectives
- 29 policy professionals across 18 organisations registered to attend the workshop

Introduction:

- Politics as 'the art of the possible'; policy as 'the art of explaining what's actually needed'
- The need for policy professionals to play a shuttle role across the policy spectrum, translating investigatory research and rigorous evidence into clearly articulated Government action, and then helping to mobilise the political will to act

Workshop aims:

- Jumpstart a greater connectivity between policy professionals in private land conservation => a loose community of practice

- Help fill the gaps in our knowledge on:
 - how our work as individuals contributes to the greater whole of advancing Australian private land conservation;
 - the major obstacles to this effort;
 - how to improve biodiversity outcomes; and
 - what steps need to be taken, and when.

Discussion:

What don't we know, but need to know to drive policy outcomes in private land conservation?

- How more support and action from financial institutions can be secured to reduce the rates of vegetation clearance, noting that agricultural production and land clearance is currently funded by financial institutions
- Concerns about flaws in the offsets model and how to resolve them
- How to constructively harness for-profit motive for biodiversity outcomes
- Cost estimates for conservation tax reform
- Security of conservation covenants is variable across Australia – how to increase permanence
- Gaps in valuing ecosystem services and to demonstrate that value
- More fully understanding the tipping points for landholder participation in private land conservation
- How to harness science to inform policy, including data from not-for-profit organisations that provides evidence for policy

How to mobilise investment in private land conservation?

- Markets – such as carbon, biodiversity, and water quality markets – are a huge opportunity, especially in the absence of Government investment
- Market integrity – especially standards, reporting, and independent assessment and regulation – is critical for high quality market-based outcomes
- Philanthropy is not ordinarily enthusiastic to step in where Governments have receded as it is important not to let governments 'off the hook'
 - Only 2% to 2.5% of philanthropic money goes into the environment and climate change; significant scope to increase this percentage
 - Can be difficult to unpack who the beneficiaries are from environmental philanthropy
- Important to secure investment for ongoing land management and Indigenous capacity-building as well as land acquisition and one-off projects
- Integration and involvement of communities is important for the narratives needed to mobilise action and investment
- New and innovative models of private land conservation struggle to secure funding, especially where potential stakeholders tend to view each other as being primarily responsible for particular types of work instead of themselves (e.g. farmers as the landowners, environmental NGOs, philanthropists, governments)
 - Important to find pathways for all players to have a role, and a *shared* role

- Tax reform is the intersection of private and public investment and was critical in the US and Canada to mobilise private land conservation

What should our priorities be in developing markets? Should market-based approaches be part of the solution for private land conservation?

- Need to be careful that markets are fit-for-purpose and do not lead to perverse outcomes, but they have the potential to drive investment at scale
 - For example, carbon markets are already having a significant impact
 - Important to ensure markets help provide a secure future for the communities – often regional communities – in which they operate
- Big corporate actors are large landowners in Australia and so also have a key role to play
- Developing national-based measures for biodiversity, and telling a better narrative to the market of the benefits

What should be our priorities for conservation law reform?

- The strength of conservation covenants, especially vis-à-vis mining
- Improving our capacity to leverage the intersection of conservation covenants and carbon project opportunities
- Income tax, land tax and financial incentives reform, including at State level
- A key role for Federal Government to deliver on international treaty commitments, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity, and not only the States
- The importance of reforming land clearance legislation
- Work with, not in parallel to, expert not-for-profit environmental law organisations (for example, Environmental Justice Australia and the Environmental Defenders Office)

How do we collaborate more effectively to drive outcomes for private land conservation?

- Important to support both grassroots and top-down efforts
- Increasing the level of collaboration is key, including with local communities
- Regular ALCA policy forums, each with a different topic of focus

Next steps

The following undertakings were made at that Workshop:

1. The attendee contact list would be shared amongst all participants;
2. The final Policy Agenda would be shared once approved; and
3. A workshop outcomes statement would be distributed to all participants.