

Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications
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10 August 2022

Dear Environment and Communications Legislation Committee,

RE: Climate Change Bill 2022 and the Climate Change (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2022

The Australian Land Conservation Alliance (ALCA) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the Environment and Communications Legislation Committee inquiry on the *Climate Change Bill 2022 and the Climate Change (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2022*.

Please note that ALCA is happy for this submission to be published in full.

About the Australian Land Conservation Alliance

The Australian Land Conservation Alliance is the peak national body representing organisations that work to conserve, manage and restore nature on privately managed land. We represent our members and supporters to grow the impact, capacity and influence of private land conservation to achieve a healthy and resilient Australia. Our eleven members are:

- Australian Wildlife Conservancy
- Biodiversity Conservation Trust NSW
- Bush Heritage Australia
- Greening Australia
- Landcare Australia
- Nature Foundation
- Queensland Trust for Nature
- South Endeavour Trust
- Tasmanian Land Conservancy
- The Nature Conservancy Australia
- Trust for Nature (Victoria)

ALCA land conservation efforts stretch across over 3 million square kilometres with more than 3,000 landholders. We have over 50,000 supporters and our combined annual turnover exceeds \$200 million. Together ALCA and its members address some of the most pressing conservation issues across the country, including restoring endangered ecosystems, building the protected area estate, tackling invasive species, expanding private conservation finance and funding and using nature-based solutions to tackle climate change.

Through their active land management, ALCA member organisations are deeply embedded in rural communities and economies, providing jobs, securing significant regional investment, and safeguarding remaining native habitat, with its many positive spillover effects for community, wellbeing, and food security. We seek to demonstrate the role and value of private land conservation as a cornerstone of the Australian economy.

Some ALCA members are statutory entities; the views expressed in this submission do not necessarily represent the views of the Government administering those statutory entities.

Summary

Climate change presents one of the greatest threats to Australia's biodiversity – to the survival of its species, ecosystems, and the wellbeing of all Australians who depend upon nature to sustain their food security, health, and livelihoods.

In considering its emission reduction targets, the Federal Government has a significant opportunity to address the inseparable threats posed by climate change and the collapse of Australia's ecosystems, specifically, by leveraging opportunities for nature-based solutions that sequester and mitigate greenhouse gas emissions.

ALCA's position on Australia's emissions reduction targets is inseparably coupled with its biodiversity targets, namely, that Australia should commit to:

- At minimum, a 50% reduction in CO₂-equivalent emissions by 2030 below 2005 levels
- At minimum, net zero CO₂-equivalent emissions by 2040
- Halt and reverse nature loss by 2030 at the latest, by achieving a net gain in area, connectivity and integrity of all ecosystems
- At minimum, halt and reverse forest loss and land degradation by 2030¹

Indeed, the world's leading economists at the World Economic Forum have joined leading environmental scientists in declaring that nature loss is a planetary emergency:

*[E]nvironmental risks are perceived to be the five most critical long-term threats to the world as well as the most potentially damaging to people and planet, with "climate action failure", "extreme weather", and "biodiversity loss" ranking as the top three most severe risks."*²

Furthermore:

*Human societies and economies rely on biodiversity in fundamental ways. ...over half the world's total GDP – is moderately or highly dependent on nature and its services."*³

Thus, whilst supportive of any improvement to Australia's emissions reduction targets as a first positive step for this Government, more must be done, and urgently, if Australia's remaining biodiversity – upon which the majority of our economic prosperity relies – is to be safeguarded from climate change.

The recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Sixth Assessment report, *Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change*⁴, identifies the potential for scaling up land-based mitigation options – nature-based solutions to climate change – in the Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Uses (AFOLU) sector:

*"Where carefully and appropriately implemented, AFOLU mitigation measures are uniquely positioned to deliver substantial co-benefits and help address many of the wider challenges associated with land management."*⁵

Further still:

"The currently quantified efforts to reduce net emissions with forests and agricultural actions are helpful, but society will need to quickly ramp up investments to achieve carbon

¹ As per the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use; note that the Australian Government is a signatory to the Declaration; see: <https://ukcop26.org/glasgow-leaders-declaration-on-forests-and-land-use/>

² See: p7, World Economic Forum, *The Global Risks Report 2022*; https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_The_Global_Risks_Report_2022.pdf

³ See: World Economic Forum, *Nature Risk Rising: Why the Crisis Engulfing Nature Matters for Business and the Economy*, January 2020; <https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-global-risks-report-2020>

⁴ See: <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg3/>

⁵ See: 7-4, Chapter 7, Agriculture, Forestry, and Other Land Uses (AFOLU), https://report.ipcc.ch/ar6wg3/pdf/IPCC_AR6_WGIII_FinalDraft_Chapter07.pdf

sequestration levels consistent with high levels of mitigation. Only 2.5% of climate mitigation funding goes to land-based mitigation options, an order of magnitude below the potential proportional contribution (Buchner et al. 2015).⁶

There is a significant opportunity for the Federal Government to leverage the emissions mitigation opportunity within the land use, land use change, and forestry (LULUCF) category through the sequestering of carbon twinned with biodiversity conservation and restoration.

In 2017, research led by The Nature Conservancy and 15 other institutions⁷, demonstrated that nature-based solutions can provide up to one-third of the emission reductions needed by 2030 to keep global temperature increases under 2°C – 30 percent more than previously estimated.

The value of investing in nature-based solutions for adaptation and mitigation to climate change are recognised by the Australian Government as providing multiple benefits, including:

- *protecting biodiversity and threatened species,*
- *contributing to climate mitigation through carbon sequestration,*
- *making communities more resilient to climate change,*
- *contributing to food security, and*
- *supporting businesses reliant on healthy ecosystems such as fishing, tourism and agriculture.”⁸*

Furthermore, biodiversity conservation and restoration have great potential to help drive business investment and philanthropic funding that also delivers significant emissions reduction outcomes.

ALCA’s challenge to the Federal Government in its policy development on climate change is thus to **mainstream nature-based solutions at scale**, explicitly connecting the benefits that flow from both emissions reduction and biodiversity conservation/restoration.

Recommendations

1. That the Committee recommend that the *Climate Change Bill 2022* and *Climate Change (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2022* be passed, whilst noting that further and significant improvements to the Federal Government’s emission reductions targets are still required.
2. That the Committee notes the importance of action on climate change in addressing the interconnected – but also parallel – crisis that is facing Australian and global nature.
3. That the Federal Government see the improvement of its emissions reduction target as an important catalyst to invest and mainstream nature-based solutions at scale.

Thank you again for the opportunity to contribute to the Committee’s inquiry on the *Climate Change Bill 2022* and the *Climate Change (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2022*.

Australian Land Conservation Alliance

⁶ See: 7-108, Ibid. [above n5]

⁷ See: <https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.1710465114>

⁸ See: <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/climate-change/policy/nature-based-solutions-for-climate>