

Media release

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What the global agreement for nature means for Australia

After four years of drawn-out development and now a marathon three weeks of detailed and occasionally tense negotiations, a global biodiversity agenda has finally been adopted at the COP15 summit in Montreal.

As a wealthy nation, and one of only 17 megadiverse countries in the world, but with a record rate of species extinctions, Australia must now turn a solid global framework into a national, transformational agenda.

The final agreement provides strong recognition of the fundamental importance of biodiversity – indeed, the entire biosphere – to our society and ongoing survival, with goals and targets for halting and reversing biodiversity loss and protecting at least 30% of land and water by 2030.

It ensures the rights of Indigenous people are recognised and protected, and mainstreams the responsibility of protecting nature throughout our community. The agreement sets strong signals for business to transform, outlining requirements for the reform of harmful subsidies and helps enable business to report on their dependencies upon nature and the risks if that nature continues to decline or disappear. Large and transnational businesses will increasingly be required to assess and disclose their impacts and dependencies on biodiversity across their value chain.

Although the agreement did not deliver the hoped-for unifying catchphrase like ‘net zero’, the details within the agreement pave the way for all parts of our communities to rapidly shift to a nature positive future for all.

Dr Jody Gunn, CEO of the Australian Land Conservation Alliance, Australia’s peak body for private land conservation, was in Montreal for the significant international summit.

Dr Gunn is confident that the agreed framework provides a clear, strong position to build from.

“For all of us across Australia, the task ahead now is to halt and reverse nature loss by 2030.

“We must urgently protect, manage and restore our environment, and reduce the impact of our actions on nature.

“Not only is Australia’s biodiversity important in its own right, it underpins our food security, our health and wellbeing and economy.

“Critically, we must also recognise and respect the rights and responsibilities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have been stewarding this country for over 60,000 years,” Dr Gunn said.

More than 60% of land in Australia is privately owned and managed. With much of our important biodiversity found outside the public protected estate (such as national parks), privately managed land is a critical pathway to achieving the targets in the framework.

Beyond the work undertaken by landholders, Dr Gunn notes growing interest in nature from business and industry.

“The writing is on the wall. I was there in Montreal and saw the interest from leading business and investors who are looking ahead and realising that times are changing.

“There are economic drivers for reducing the impact we are having on nature, and business leaders are aiming to be ahead of the curve to benefit from market advantage,” Dr Gunn said.

With ambitious national targets and strong regulation, we can embed the value of nature to our society, and turn the tide of environmental decline.

“With a signed agreement, I am optimistic about the future.”

Now that the international community has delivered a global framework agreement, the private land conservation sector is ready to scale up its implementation to achieve a healthy Australia for nature and people.

About ALCA

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.

ALCA member land conservation efforts stretch across over 3 million square kilometres with more than 4,000 landholders. We have over 70,000 supporters and our combined annual turnover exceeds \$260 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 regional 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.

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