

# Media release

## For immediate release

9 May 2023

### **Australia's peak body for private land conservation responds to the Federal environment Budget**

The Federal Government's most recent State of Environment Report sounded the alarm on the nature crisis facing our country, describing Australia's nature as "*poor and deteriorating as a result of increasing pressures from climate change, habitat loss, invasive species, pollution and resource extraction*", and that "*social, environmental and economic impacts [from this decline] are already apparent*".<sup>i</sup>

Global and Australian research highlights that half of our economic output is moderately or highly dependent on nature.<sup>ii</sup> Budget allocations for the environment can no longer be considered 'a nice thing to do', but a critical sector of the economy to invest in and with returns and savings that will be realised right across society and industry.

However, despite the worsening nature crisis and its increasing social and economic impacts, Australia's legacy of structural underfunding for on-ground nature conservation has largely continued.

The Australian Land Conservation Alliance ('ALCA') is the peak national body representing organisations that work to conserve, manage and restore nature on privately managed land.

ALCA CEO Dr Gunn welcomed the Government's much-needed restoration of funding to iconic national parks, ongoing progress towards a Federal environment protection agency to strengthen environmental law enforcement, and a new Environment Information Agency to collate environmental data.

However, beyond national parks, she expressed disappointment that the Government had not scaled up investment in on-the-ground conservation – including private land conservation – with the great majority of project funding being redirected from existing resources for the environment within the National Heritage Trust special account.

"Last year's release of the State of the Environment report underscored the brisk downward spiral facing Australian ecosystems and biodiversity. It was a call to action. Whilst we understand the current pressures facing the Budget, budgets are about priorities. Australia's budget for nature continues to be a rounding error in the sum-total of Federal Government expenditure."

"The Government has set a strong foundation with an ambitious vision. If we are to achieve the Government's commitment to no new extinctions and to protect ecosystems across at least 30 per cent of Australia's land<sup>iii</sup>, we simply cannot afford the delay," Dr Gunn said.

"Private land conservation will play a critical role in delivering these commitments and needs adequate resourcing. We are keen to work together with Government to turn around the legacy of structural underfunding for the environment. Collectively, ALCA's members contribute \$280 million a year to help close the gap in public investment from State and Federal Governments. If we can only partner our funding, we can leverage the international philanthropy, capital and ongoing investment to do so much more."

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## 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 \$280 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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<sup>i</sup> See: State of Environment Report 2021; <https://soe.dcceew.gov.au/overview/key-findings>

<sup>ii</sup> 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>; and: Australian Conservation Foundation, *The nature-based economy: How Australia's prosperity depends on nature*, September 2022; <https://www.acf.org.au/how-australias-prosperity-depends-on-nature>

<sup>iii</sup> See: Threatened Species Action Plan, Government of Australia; <https://www.dcceew.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/threatened-species-action-plan-2022-2032.pdf>