

‘Unite for Nature’: the PLC23 statement to Parliament

18 October 2023

Preamble

Nature is the keystone of our wellbeing, food and water security, cultures, and economies. Nature reduces our carbon emissions and the impacts of climate change. Over half of Australia’s GDP – and the world’s GDP – is moderately or highly dependent on nature.

The nature crisis is less publicised than the interconnected climate crisis but poses an equally grave threat. Australia’s trajectory towards collapse of ecosystems is now well established and of all the continents in the world, Australia has seen the largest documented decline of biodiversity.

Globally and nationally, the demand and support for nature protection, management, and restoration is surging. In Australia, the message is clear: we care deeply about our environment and demand stronger policy, action, and resourcing to protect and restore our natural assets and the vital services they provide.

Private land conservation addresses many of the most pressing conservation issues of our time. It connects habitat, saves species, improves the condition of working land, reduces carbon emissions, and contributes to the protected area estate for conservation.

This week, hundreds of people representing the diversity of the private land conservation sector and its partners gathered to build our collective capacity and cross-sectoral connections, and to chart the way forward. Our sector offers a pivotal opportunity to achieve Australia’s national and global protection and restoration targets. We invite all Australians to join with us to ensure that the environment we share, enjoy, and deeply rely upon, persists. Together, we can unite for nature.

The PLC23 Statement to Parliament

As leaders and representatives from the Australian 2023 Private Land Conservation conference (PLC23), **we convey the following statement to the Parliament of Australia:**

- (1) We support the diverse people, places and practices that contribute to the conservation and health of privately owned and managed land and water
- (2) We are united in our efforts to address the most pressing land conservation issues and key threatening processes across the country, including: reversing biodiversity decline and protecting and recovering at-risk and threatened species and ecosystems; tackling invasive species and other national environmental biosecurity threats; and delivering nature-based solutions to tackle climate change
- (3) We acknowledge, recognise, and respect the enduring relationship that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have with their lands and water. We seek to enable, support, and learn from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, guidance and learning in the management of Country. Together, we can share our collective knowledges and practices for our common future
- (4) We recognise the interconnected crises of climate change and biodiversity loss, which together require urgent action and coordination to ensure a healthy future for all; and
- (5) We will contribute to the delivery of the global and Australian commitment to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework agreed at the 15th meeting of the Conference of Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (COP15) in December 2022.

We call upon the Parliament of Australia to:

- (6) Recognise the deep dependence of the whole of our society upon nature
- (7) Recognise our collective impacts upon nature
- (8) Recognise and act on the nature crisis facing Australia so clearly outlined in the 2021 State of Environment Report (and elsewhere)
- (9) Recognise and prioritise the opportunity for private land conservation to halt and reverse the decline of Australian biodiversity; and
- (10) Support urgent environmental law and policy reform that recognises and effectively addresses the seriousness and urgency of the nature crisis.

We further call upon the Government of Australia to:

- (11) Deliver urgent and sustained whole-of-Government funding for Australian biodiversity that genuinely matches the urgency and seriousness of the nature crisis
- (12) Proactively support and invest in the capacity and capability of the Australian private land conservation workforce and its current and future leaders to deliver for Australian biodiversity
- (13) Leverage the resources and strategies required to scale up and sustain action in private land conservation in Australia and deliver our international and domestic commitments, including:
 - a. Halt and reverse biodiversity loss, including by reducing the risk of species extinction, improving the condition of Australia's diverse habitats, and preventing new extinctions of plants and animals
 - b. Protect 30% of Australian land and inland waters by 2030, with focus on its qualitative measures
 - c. Restore 30% of degraded land and inland waters by 2030, and
 - d. Set strong and measurable targets and actions for Australia's National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs)
- (14) Deliver the incentives and reduce the barriers that will maximise the role of private land conservation in reversing the decline of Australian biodiversity.