

Dear Susan Templeman MP

We are community volunteers who work to protect and preserve Australia's natural heritage as part of conservation groups which have members in your electorate: Australian Conservation Foundation Greater Western Sydney Community Group; BirdLife Southern NSW; Blue Mountains Conservation Society; Cattai Hills Environment Network; Cumberland Bird Observers Club; Hawkesbury Environment Network; Save Sydney's Koalas; Western Sydney Parents for Climate Action and WIRES Blue Mountains and Hawkesbury Branches. We are writing to you in relation to the reform of Australia's nature protection laws.

Australia is in the middle of an extinction crisis. At least 100 flora and fauna species have become extinct in Australia since 1788 including 38 native mammal species. This is the highest number of mammal extinctions in the world during that period. There are now 1,900 species on the national threatened species list. Last year, a record 144 species were added to the list. This is five times the yearly average and double the previous record set in 2009. In addition, Australia has the highest rate of deforestation of all 'developed' nations. Federal Minister for the Environment, the Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, has recognised this crisis and has vowed to try to prevent any further extinctions.

We can't afford to delay if we are to have any chance of ending this extinction crisis. We must act NOW. Otherwise future generations may never get to see some of this continent's unique species.

The current Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act is clearly broken. It has not been able to prevent the continued destruction of animals, plants and their habitats arising from human activity such as mining, property development and land clearing. The Samuel Review concluded that the Act is "not fit for purpose". Australia's nature protection laws need to be fixed.

We are pleased that the Albanese government has now introduced Bills to the Australian Parliament to establish Environment Protection Australia and Environment Information Australia. However, these reforms and the proposed new EPA will not be enough on their own to address the extinction crisis outlined above. The EPA will simply be administering the current broken EPBC Act.

The government's remaining nature law reforms need to be finalised, legislated and implemented before the next election. We would note that the government promised that it would introduce new nature protection laws during this term of government

The new nature laws need to create a rules-based system and to include:

- A rigorous definition of 'nature positive'
- Strong national environment standards with specified outcomes
- Defined unacceptable impacts of developments so that inappropriate developments don't get off the ground, as should have been the case with the proposed development at Toondah Harbour
- No offsets unless they do actually protect and enhance wildlife and habitat
- No ministerial call-in power, or if there is to be such a power, it must be tightly defined
- A climate trigger as climate change is one of the biggest threats to Australia's environment and nature
- Regional Forest Agreements to be covered by the laws
- Agriculture-related deforestation to be covered by the laws, including the removal of the 'continuations of use' exemption
- A fair say for the community in environmental decision-making, including by ensuring access to reliable information, meaningful consultation and opportunities to challenge bad decisions
- An independent Board for EPA to ensure that EPA is fully independent.

It is also vital that the new laws and EPA are supported by adequate funding to ensure that they are effective in ending the extinction crisis and reversing the decline of Australia's unique animals, plants and ecosystems.

We are writing to urge you to advocate within the government and the Labor Party for the remaining nature law reforms to be implemented before the next election, and for the laws to include the features we have outlined above and to be supported by adequate funding.

Australian Conservation Foundation research indicates that Australians have a deep love of nature and in particular of our unique flora and fauna but many are not aware that it is in crisis. It is imperative that those of us who are aware of the situation, and this includes the government which is clearly aware of it, take action to end the crisis

Surely we don't want to be the generation where our children and grandchildren look back and say, You knew what the situation was but you didn't do enough to fix it and now we've lost some of our iconic species forever.

We look forward to your positive response in relation to advocating for strong nature protection laws as we have outlined in this letter. We can be contacted at acfgreaterwesternsydney@gmail.com. The contact person is Martin Mansfield.

Yours sincerely,

ACF Greater Western Sydney Community 
Independently organised ACF group


birdlife
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