

James Cocking - Arid Lands Environment Centre

1. Do you consider the main biodiversity threats identified in the Consultation Draft (see below) to be the most important in reversing the decline in Australia's biodiversity?

- climate change
strongly agree
- invasive species
strongly agree
- loss and fragmentation of habitats
strongly agree
- degradation of habitats
strongly agree
- unsustainable use of natural resources
strongly agree
- changes to the aquatic environment and water flows
strongly agree
- inappropriate fire regimes
strongly agree

Are there any other threats you think should be addressed?

Maximum 90 words

Urban expansion
Lack of understanding or concern for biodiversity
Continued political weighting of the economy over natural ecology

2. Do you think that the proposed 'priorities for change' (outlined in the 'Making Enduring Changes' section) will be effective at delivering the Strategy's vision to ensure Australia's biodiversity 'is healthy, resilient to climate change and valued for its essential contribution to our existence'?

Maximum 90 words

The 'priorities for change' will only be effective at delivering the strategy's vision if biodiversity is more heavily weighted in decision-making processes than simply giving in to the simple economics of any given development. The general populace will not accept the importance of biodiversity if decision-makers are seen to be 'passing the buck' of biodiversity conservation onto future generations.

Do you think the six 'priorities for change' identified are the most important ones? If not what others would you suggest?

Maximum 90 words

The six 'priorities for change' are important. In terms of numerical order, 'involving indigenous peoples' should be placed second, after 'building ecosystem resilience' and before 'mainstreaming biodiversity'. This will ensure that the mainstream messaging for biodiversity conservation will be inclusive of indigenous knowledge and values.

Education is one the most critical tools for mainstreaming biodiversity and should not be limited to primary school children. Biodiversity should be incorporated into all levels of education from pre-school and continued through adulthood. The media will be an important tool for the mainstreaming of biodiversity conservation.

Do you have any comments on the vision?

Maximum 90 words

The vision is suitably ambitious yet achievable if the intended societal shift in values occurs. This is no easy task and will require a whole-of-government commitment in both principles and capital toward biodiversity conservation.

3. Do you consider that the Consultation Draft:

- promotes a good balance between conservation on private and public lands?
somewhat agree
- will facilitate a good mix of regulation and incentives?
somewhat agree
- provides a good balance between marine and terrestrial issues?
somewhat agree
- provides the necessary national framework to produce innovative conservation action?
somewhat agree
- has a sufficient focus on institutional arrangements and change?
somewhat agree
- provides sufficient emphasis on improving community awareness of biodiversity?
somewhat agree
- addresses the need to implement conservation action at the appropriate scale(s)?
somewhat agree
- is applicable to urban and rural environments
somewhat agree
- provides a clear framework for balancing conservation, social and economic issues?
somewhat agree
- adequately deals with the issue of climate change?
somewhat agree

Do you have any other comments on these issues?

Maximum 180 words

The Consultation draft is a comprehensive analysis of the current situation and takes into account the need for integrated adaptive management systems. The challenge will be balancing the economic drivers of development with the need for biodiversity conservation. This will require cooperation at the highest levels to ensure that this consultation draft is not shelved as 'another good idea' but incorporated into all levels of decision-making. Review and reform of current agreements and legislation including Regional Forestry Agreements (in both Tasmania and Victoria) and exemptions for big business eg. Roxby Downs Indenture Act must be changed to reflect the Commonwealth's commitment to biodiversity conservation.

4. Do you think the Consultation Draft adequately covers the roles of Indigenous peoples in biodiversity management?

Maximum 270 words

Yes. However, more consultation required to empower communities and Indigenous peoples to take ownership of biodiversity conservation in their respective areas and this be reinforced with adequate resources.

5. Do you consider that the proposed arrangements for reporting on implementation will be effective in the monitoring and evaluation of the expected outcomes (results) of the Consultation Draft?

somewhat agree

6. To what extent is the Consultation Draft an appropriate national framework to achieve biodiversity conservation benefits, considering the different responsibilities, legislation and funding arrangements between governments.

Maximum 270 words

The Consultation Draft provides an appropriate national framework provided that States and Territories resource appropriate departments to make appropriate decisions and implement them .

7. Is the Consultation Draft likely to encourage a good mix of public and private investment in biodiversity conservation?

somewhat agree

8. Is the Consultation Draft sufficiently clear about its role and how it will be implemented?

Maximum 270 words

More emphasis required on how this will be conveyed to the public. In the same way that media must adhere to broadcasting local content, biodiversity needs to be mainstreamed in such a way. People need to think it, breathe it, understand it and appreciate it. This will only happen if biodiversity conservation is given as much coverage as climate change now receives.

9. Does the Consultation Draft reflect the best practice on biodiversity conservation?

Maximum 270 words

Best practice on biodiversity conservation is a concept that will be realised once it is happening. Although national/state/territory/local frameworks are listed, it is a matter of acting and acting now. It's no good having something on paper that is not being practiced. I think the intention is definitely there, it's a matter of reaching out to the private sector which will only respond to either financial incentives or legislative sticks. This is for government to determine the appropriate course of action in the appropriate circumstances. There is no blanket-rule for biodiversity conservation.

10. Will the Consultation Draft effectively engage private sector interests in long-term biodiversity conservation?

Maximum 270 words

I hope so. Will involve either a carrot or stick in the appropriate circumstances.

Do you have any other comments you wish to make on the Consultation Draft?

Maximum 360 words

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this paper. It is comprehensive, well-thought through and is with good intention. The Arid Lands Environment Centre is committed to working towards 'healthy futures for arid lands and people' and considers the thinking behind the strategy to be taking steps in the right direction. The challenges lie in reining in laissez-faire economic decisions by big business and government ministers. Without healthy functioning ecosystems, the economics of human development will be meaningless.