

Mary River Catchment Coordinating Committee

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
somewhat 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

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 are admirable, but do not effectively communicate the required urgency for change, nor are the objectives specific enough. Unless there is very rapid cultural change within government, industry and the political sphere we will not be able to avoid further rapid and serious decline in Australia's biodiversity. Rather than 'measuring success' we should more realistically 'avoid failure' by appropriate monitoring and taking immediate direct action to avoid predictable future failures. Priority 6.4.2 (adaptive management) should head the list.

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

Maximum 90 words

Priority 5 should be recast, perhaps something like 'actively engaging local people and long-term knowledge of country'. This would capture the essential engagement with local indigenous knowledge and culture where it exists, as well as tapping into other sources of inter-generational local knowledge which are essential for understanding and managing biodiversity in the landscape.

Do you have any comments on the vision?

Maximum 90 words

Not clear enough, and doesn't explicitly state any support for intergenerational equity.

Suggestion: "Australia's biodiversity is valued for its essential contribution to our existence and is managed in stewardship for future generations, to be passed on in an equal or improved state of health"

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?
strongly agree
- provides the necessary national framework to produce innovative conservation action?
somewhat disagree
- has a sufficient focus on institutional arrangements and change?
somewhat disagree
- 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 disagree
- adequately deals with the issue of climate change?
somewhat agree

Do you have any other comments on these issues?

Maximum 180 words

Slowing the current rapid decline in Australia's biodiversity will require a greatly increased level of funding from all sectors. Only one of the actions (5.4.3) specifically mentions funding arrangements, in a fairly peripheral manner. Without a clear commitment to funding concrete actions aimed at slowing down Australia's current rate of biodiversity decline, all the noble words and policies in the strategy will be completely ineffective. What percentage of GDP is Australia willing to commit to implementing the biodiversity strategy?

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

Maximum 270 words

Fostering a whole-of-society cultural ethos of long-term intergenerational land stewardship is probably essential for biodiversity conservation. All Australians are capable of developing a sense of place and history in the landscape, and this perspective should not be regarded as a solely indigenous issue. Of course, traditional indigenous knowledge and culture, tied to specific places in the landscape should inform the active management

of our biodiversity. However, as time goes on, valuing intergenerational knowledge of, and connection to, specific places in the landscape needs to become part of Australian culture in general. Treating this sort of knowledge and attitude to country as an 'indigenous only' perspective could be very counter-productive. I believe ingraining an active cultural involvement in the landscape with a strong focus on intergenerational stewardship is one of the most valuable gifts that Australian indigenous culture has to offer Australian culture as a whole.

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?

not sure

Do you have any suggestions for alternative reporting arrangements?

Maximum 270 words

Although important, reporting is not as important as doing, which is not as important as recognizing what not to do. I believe that as it stands, there is a relatively large emphasis on reporting in the strategy. There is less of an emphasis on what concrete, funded, remediation actions will take place under the strategy. There is almost no mention in the strategy of the necessity of the federal government having increased powers to intervene and stop damaging development actions from taking place altogether (those which are likely to increasing Australia's current rate of biodiversity decline).

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

If the underlying principles of the strategy are realized in the procedures adopted, decisions made and outcomes achieved by governments within Australia, then the strategy cannot help but improve upon the current situation for Australia's biodiversity conservation. At least the noble words and ideals, clearly expressed in a government policy, are a start. The challenge will be seeing how much of this good intent hits the ground and changes the world for the better.

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

not sure

If not how can the Consultation Draft improve in this area?

Maximum 270 words

Not enough detail in the document to make this judgement.

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

Maximum 270 words

It is not clear about what power the strategy will have in driving funding priorities for State and Federal governments, and what status (if any) the strategy's underlying principals will have in law when it comes to State Government actions which are in conflict with these principals.

For example:

Will the Strategy directly influence the Caring For Our Country business plan priorities from 2010 onwards?

What direct influence will the policy have on State primary education curriculum and how will these changes be

funded?

How does the federal government intend to fund and deliver the “ongoing national campaign that demonstrates the importance of biodiversity to the sustainability of communities and the quality of our lives.”

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

Maximum 270 words

The appendices in the draft specifically acknowledge the special characteristics of freshwater aquatic ecosystems, particularly surface streams. This is a welcome step forward in strategic thinking and is to be commended. Freshwater surface streams form a directional, connected linear network of habitats which are subject to a extreme variability, and are fundamentally different in nature to area-based terrestrial and marine habitats. The challenges involved in maintaining freshwater and riparian biodiversity are thus often fundamentally different to those encountered in solely land-based and marine ecosystems.

The draft does not seem to specifically acknowledge Australia's active participation in UNESCO's Man in the Biosphere programme, and the importance of Australia's international biosphere reserves (set in place under that programme) to biodiversity conservation in Australia.

The draft does not seem to acknowledge Australia's commitment to the G8 “Carta di Siracusa” on Biodiversity, signed in 2009.

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

Maximum 270 words

I don't believe the consultation draft is specific enough for the private sector to make that sort of business decision.

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

Maximum 360 words

The MRCCC, as a long standing community-based Integrated Catchment Management body, is in total agreement with the overall intent of the strategy, and its underlying principals. If implemented, it would provide a general policy direction within which an organization such as ours could continue to function in an very effective way, and hopefully make a useful contribution towards achieving the vision behind the strategy.

The comments made on specific aspects of the draft strategy in this submission are made in the spirit of 'striving for the best', and should not be interpreted as negative towards the overall intent of the strategy.