

**South Australian Government
Submission on**

***Australia's Biodiversity
Conservation Strategy 2010 — 2020***

(Consultation Draft)

NAME OF ORGANISATION:

The South Australian Government

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT:

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1. INTRODUCTION

The South Australian Government welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Australian Government's Consultation Draft of *Australia's Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2010—2020*. The Strategy will provide important national direction to biodiversity conservation over the next ten years.

The South Australian Government supports the approach taken by the draft Strategy to provide a high-level guiding framework that jurisdictions can use to inform their own, more specific, policies and programs. This is the most effective approach in light of the diverse range of biodiversity conservation issues that are dealt with by jurisdictions, and the various legislative, administrative and funding arrangements that are in place.

The draft Strategy reflects contemporary biodiversity conservation issues, including the need to plan and implement conservation programs at large spatial scales and over long timeframes, and is well balanced in its approach to these. Its structure is clear and concise. The South Australian Government supports the six national 'Priorities for Change', which underpin the draft Strategy. These align broadly with South Australia's major biodiversity conservation policy directions as outlined in section 2.

This submission provides a brief overview of South Australia's policy context along with general comments on the Strategy's identified priorities, approach to dealing with the threats to biodiversity, determining the actions that should be tackled in the first two years and reporting on implementation.

2. SOUTH AUSTRALIAN POLICY CONTEXT

South Australia's Strategic Plan has six major Goals. Goal 3 - *Attaining Sustainability* includes three targets that relate specifically to biodiversity conservation. These are:

- Target 3.1 *Lose no known native species as a result of human impacts.*
- Target 3.2 *By 2010 have five well-established biodiversity corridors aimed at maximising ecological outcomes particularly in the face of climate change.*
- Target 3.4 *By 2010 create 19 marine parks aimed at maximising ecological outcomes.*

These three high-level targets help inform South Australia's major biodiversity conservation policy. Major policy directions are provided by:

- *No Species Loss – A nature conservation strategy for South Australia 2007 – 2017*¹
- *Living Coast Strategy for South Australia 2004*²
- *State Natural Resources Management Plan 2006*³.

3. PRIORITIES FOR CHANGE

The South Australian Government supports the Strategy's guiding framework of six national 'Priorities for Change' that represent the elements of biodiversity conservation that must be addressed urgently to meet the Strategy's vision.

The goals and objectives of South Australia's major biodiversity conservation policies broadly align with the six 'Priorities for Change' as outlined in the draft Strategy:

1. Building ecosystem resilience
2. Mainstreaming biodiversity
3. Knowledge for all
4. Getting results
5. Involving Indigenous Peoples
6. Measuring success.

In the South Australian policy context, particular emphasis is given to:

- Addressing issues at appropriate spatial and temporal scales, including developing and implementing biodiversity conservation programs at landscape scales and over long timeframes;
- Focusing on strategies that will increase the resilience of species and communities;
- Managing the impacts of climate change and facilitating adaptation;
- Improving our information and knowledge;
- Integrating biodiversity conservation with the natural resources management sector;
- Achieving biodiversity conservation outcomes on private as well as public land;
- Building community capacity to effectively manage biodiversity and natural resources; and
- Working with the South Australian community, including Indigenous communities, to deliver on-ground action.

The South Australian Government is of the view that the 20 objectives and 61 actions underlying the 'Priorities for Change' will provide effective direction to jurisdictions when developing and implementing biodiversity policies and programs.

¹ http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/biodiversity/pdfs/nsl_strategy.pdf

² http://www.environment.sa.gov.au/coasts/pdfs/living_coast.pdf

³ http://www.dwlbc.sa.gov.au/nrm/state_nrm_plan/snp.html

Care should be taken when implementing the actions of the Strategy to ensure that they recognise and build upon existing biodiversity policies, programs and mechanisms. For example, existing biodiversity conservation and natural resources management plans should be used as a foundation for any new plans to be developed under the action to *'Prepare and implement plans for biodiversity conservation at all levels that maintain ecosystem health and protect threatened and endangered species'* (1.1.2). This will ensure that plans learn from and build upon our existing efforts.

Recognising existing terrestrial, aquatic and marine datasets will help avoid duplication and the development of new datasets from scratch under the action to *'Build baseline datasets, including key indicators, to measure biodiversity condition and trends over time'* (6.1.1). Key indicators need not necessarily be redefined for all sectors. For example, key indicators for marine environments in South Australia have recently been set as part of a national review and it would be redundant to develop key indicators again.

Existing communications mechanisms should be recognised under the action to *'Improve communication between scientists, policy makers, resource users, landholders and managers'* (3.1.4). This will ensure that any new communication initiatives do not duplicate the roles and functions of existing mechanisms such as the NRM Alliance in South Australia. The NRM Alliance was established in 2008 to:

- Strengthen collaboration between researchers within and across disciplines;
- Improve the interface between the research community and the practitioners to facilitate translation of research into practical solutions;
- Advocate the uptake of NRM research outcomes into relevant on ground management practices and policy and planning processes; and
- Attract and direct investment into NRM science, technology and innovation that will lead to improved NRM outcomes.

South Australia's major biodiversity conservation and natural resources management policy documents will be progressively reviewed against Australia's Biodiversity Conservation Strategy to ensure that they assist in delivering the Strategy's outcomes.

4. THREATS TO BIODIVERSITY

The South Australian Government agrees with the range of threats identified in the Strategy, including climate change, invasive species, altered flow regimes and loss and fragmentation of habitat. Further, the South Australian Government supports the emphasis in the Strategy that, to be effective, threats must be managed at the appropriate spatial and temporal scales and using the most up-to-date technologies.

With regard to the identification of climate change as a critical threat, it will be important that the final Strategy takes into account and incorporates the findings of the *Strategic Assessment of the Vulnerability of Australia's Biodiversity to Climate Change*, which has recently been prepared under the auspices of the Natural Resource Management Ministerial Council.

It will also be important to ensure that the final Strategy links with and informs the COAG *National Climate Change Adaptation Framework* and the National Adaptation Research Plans that are being prepared for terrestrial, freshwater and marine biodiversity by the National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility.

5. PRIORITY SHORT-TERM ACTIONS

The South Australian Government supports the inclusion of priority actions that should be addressed in the first two years of the Strategy. However, it is considered that the current listing of priority actions should be reviewed to ensure that they are realistically achievable within the two-year timeframe, and using existing resources. For example, actions such as '*Review and reform legislation to improve biodiversity conservation outcomes across all sectors*' (4.3.2) will take much longer than two years taking into account Parliamentary processes and statutory review procedures.

6. REPORTING ON IMPLEMENTATION

Reporting on implementation, and effective follow-up on the outcomes of this reporting, will be fundamental to the Strategy's success. Reporting mechanisms should be kept simple and streamlined. To avoid duplication and confusion, reporting should be linked with existing environmental reporting mechanisms such as State of the Environment reporting.

Reporting arrangements should also be kept relatively flexible to allow for changing circumstances and priorities and to take into account improvements in knowledge and information.

All monitoring and evaluation activities should be consistent with, and feed into, the *Caring for Our Country* Monitoring, Evaluation, Reporting and Improvement Strategy that has recently been developed.