

The Secretariat
National Biodiversity Strategy Task Group
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Whilst a member of several national and ACT conservation groups I am writing in a personal capacity which does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of those organisations.

The current Australian EPBC Act is weak, has no teeth, is not policed, is obviously not working. We need to replace it with a much stronger outcomes-driven legal framework that includes consideration of the parameters that are driving the extinction of species, the destruction of forests and landscapes, the soiling of our rivers and oceans. The single most important factor is not only ignored but seemingly anathema to our politicians and senior public servants.

We need to recognise that the greatest threat to biodiversity is the overabundance and voracious appetite of one member of the animal group on planet Earth - humans. Jared Diamond expounds this case more eloquently than I ever could in his 2005 book *Collapse* published by Penguin, the subtitle says it all; *How Societies Choose to Fail or Survive*. David Suzuki has been stating the case for about two decades, his warnings have fallen on deaf ears. Global warming is a consequence of too many people, too many people living an unsustainable lifestyle. The rest of the world's population not unreasonably demands a similar quality of life to that currently enjoyed by Australians which will accelerate the current destruction of our landscapes, rivers, seashores and oceans to feed, clothe and house more and more people. This is a time-bomb for the world's biodiversity, including Australia's.

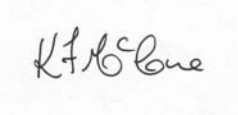
The loss of species and habitat in Australia over the last 2 centuries since Europeans arrived is unacceptable, the loss must be stopped. We need to change the way we live by adopting a truly sustainable lifestyle and we need to start now. We can only do this by using smart technology not reverting to a past hunter/gatherer or nomadic lifestyle but our first goal must be to determine a credible sustainable population whilst exercising care for the biodiversity with which we share the planet. All living beings have as much a right to survive as we do, if they don't we won't.

My suggestion is that we form a small task force in each State and Territory including carefully selected geographers, water and soil engineers, conservationists and farmers but no lawyers, politicians or economists, to make an estimate of the sustainable population. Politicians must then draft laws to ensure that the population in their jurisdictions adheres to the recommended maximum levels or less by encouraging appropriate birthrates and controlling inwards migration.

The criteria should be stopping the destruction of species and reversing the trend wherever possible. This means not only building no more dams on our rivers but removing targeted dams to restore the ecology of our damaged major waterways. This means no more destruction of native forests, and restoration of as much critical habitat as possible. This means no more sewage pumped into rivers and oceans. This means no more coal-fired power stations, and replacement of the more polluting old generators with solar, wind, geothermal, other new technologies but not nuclear fission, and energy conservation. The ramifications are serious, reducing our footprint on this planet not just decreasing its current level, is the only hope for Australia's biodiversity.

I commend this course of action to the task group members, not the easy option of doing nothing, and certainly not the minimalist proposal of the current Australian Government. Now is the time to determine whether our society fails or survives. I hope you will choose the latter.

Yours sincerely



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