



**Nature
Conservation
Council** The voice for
nature in NSW



A vision for nature conservation in NSW

Preamble

The list of animal and plant species facing extinction in New South Wales is on track to reach 1000 by 2020.ⁱ

This includes iconic and beloved species such as the once-abundant koala. Koala numbers are plummeting in New South Walesⁱⁱ and isolated populations are at great risk of extinction in the near future^{iii,iv}.

The diversity of native plants and animals in this state is continuing to decline at an alarming rateⁱⁱⁱ despite successive governments having enacted laws and financed programs aimed at reversing these trends.

The loss and fragmentation of habitat in New South Wales caused by land clearing and urban development has slowed but not ceased^{iv}.

Feral animals and exotic weeds are widespread, even in protected areas^v. Foxes and cats are a serious threat to many native species^{vi}.

Human-induced climate change is resulting in increased temperatures and reduced rainfall in south-eastern Australia^{vii}. These changes will compound other threats to native flora and fauna.

The responses of successive governments to this extinction crisis have been patently inadequate. As the Director General of the IUCN, Julia Marton-Lefèvre, points out, the protection of the natural world is not simply about protecting beauty. It's also about protecting our life support system. We need to safeguard our food and water supplies and protect ourselves from extreme weather^{viii}.

On the eve of the World Parks Congress in Sydney this week, the Nature Conservation Council of NSW and the National Parks Association of NSW challenge all political parties to embrace our vision for conservation in New South Wales by investing in action to restore living landscapes and bring threatened species back from the brink^{ix}.

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Conservation Vision

TERRESTRIAL PARKS	
Goal 1	Ensure the survival of all NSW terrestrial ecosystems in perpetuity by conserving at least 17% of the state in national parks, nature reserves and conservation areas by 2020.^x
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invest in the acquisition of reserves to ensure that 17% of the state's natural areas are fully protected by 2020. Full and timely implementation of the <i>NSW National Parks Establishment Plan</i>.^{xi} Invest adequately in the management of the conservation estate, including adequate resources for managing key threats, including invasive species.
Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Australian Government is committed to implementing its obligations under the Convention on Biological Diversity, including protecting at least 17% of terrestrial ecosystems in a comprehensive, adequate and representative reserve system by 2020.^{xii} Currently only 9% of NSW is protected in reserves.^{xi} To match the federal goal there is clearly much work to be done. The <i>NSW National Parks Establishment Plan</i> needs to be fully implemented.^{xi} The NSW Government has added little to the reserve network since the change of government in 2011.^{xiii}
MARINE PARKS	
Goal 2	Ensure the survival of all NSW marine species and ecosystems in perpetuity by creating a comprehensive, adequate and representative system of marine protected areas by 2020.
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Declare Sydney Marine Park this year. Immediately restore full protections to existing marine sanctuaries. Invest in the management of the marine conservation estate.
Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The NSW coastal and off-shore marine estate includes six marine parks: Cape Byron, Solitary Islands (Coffs Harbour), Port Stephens, Jervis Bay, Batemans Bay, Lord Howe. Marine sanctuaries, those areas that provide maximum protection, cover only 6% of NSW waters and about 4% of our coastline.^{xiv} The Sydney region is the last major unprotected marine region. The Coalition government has allowed fishing from beaches and headlands in marine sanctuary zones. Although supposedly a temporary measure, this is likely to undermine benefits accrued since the declaration of the marine parks.
FORESTS	
Goal 3	Restore 15% of native vegetation and forests to near natural condition by 2050.
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make the end of native forest logging and native vegetation land clearing by 2021 part of the NSW State Plan. Invest in the rapid transition from native forest logging to plantation forestry. Invest in on-farm tree planting and native habitat protection and restoration.
Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only 9% of native vegetation and forests were near natural condition as at 2012, according to NSW State of Environment Report 2012. Prior to European settlement approximately 80% of NSW had tree woody vegetation cover^{xv}. That is now less than 40%.^{xvi} Native forest logging, vegetation loss, and habitat fragmentation is a major cause

	<p>of species extinction.^{xvii}</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forests capture significant amounts of atmospheric carbon so increasing the state's forests will help minimise the climate change effects of CO2 emissions.
CONNECTIVITY	
Goal 4	New South Wales has a well-managed, well-resources and integrated network of natural areas across NSW
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substantially increase investment in the Great Eastern Ranges initiative, one of the world's most ambitious habitat connectivity projects. • Legislate to conserve and properly manage the state's network of travelling stock routes. • Reconnect fractured wildlife habitat by patching gaps and linking forests and other natural areas across the landscape.
Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitat fragmentation is a key cause of species extinctions. • The Great Eastern Ranges Initiative aims to create a 3,600km corridor from north Queensland to Victoria to enable species to move, adapt to climate change and survive.^{xviii} • The state's travelling stock route system is a priceless store of plants and animals, provides vital connections between larger habitat remnants and is important culturally. The network is threatened by government plans to plans to sell and fragment the routes.^{xix}
GOVERNANCE	
Goal 5	Natural areas and native species have strong legal protection against exploitation.
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enact a suite of strong laws by 2018 that enhance the protections contained in the <i>Native Vegetation Act</i>, <i>Threatened Species Conservation Act</i>, <i>National Parks and Wildlife Act</i>, <i>Marine Parks Act</i> and other laws.
Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NSW was once a leader in conservation law, but environmental protections in many areas have been weakened. • The NSW Government is reviewing the key laws relating to nature conservation, which presents opportunities but also threats.

REFERENCES

- ⁱ <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/threatenedspecies/>. NSW currently has 548 species listed as threatened (as at November 2014) under the Federal Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act <http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/sprat/public/publicreports.pl>
- ⁱⁱ Koala populations in NSW and Queensland fell 42% from 326,400 to 188,000 (a loss of 138,400 individuals) in the 20 years from 1990 to 2010. On current trends, koalas will be extinct in the wild in NSW by 2030. Habitat loss, fragmentation and degradation, predation (dogs and vehicle strike, disease, drought and climate change, and inbreeding are keys threats. http://www.environment.gov.au/cgi-bin/sprat/public/publicspecies.pl?taxon_id=85104#population_information
- ⁱⁱⁱ Lunney, D., O'Neill, L., Matthews, A. & Sherwin, W. B. Modelling mammalian extinction and forecasting recovery: koalas at Iluka (NSW, Australia). *Biological Conservation* **106**, 101-113, doi:[http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0006-3207\(01\)00233-6](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0006-3207(01)00233-6) (2002).
- ^{iv} Lunney, D., Gresser, S., O'Neill, L. E., Matthews, A. & Rhodes, J. The impact of fire and dogs on Koalas at Port Stephens, New South Wales, using population viability analysis. *Pacific Conservation Biology* **13**, 189-201 (2007).
- ^v NSW Environment Protection Authority (EPA), *NSW State of the Environment 201*, p212-3, <http://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/resources/soe/20120846soe2012.pdf>
- ^{vi} Woinarski, J. C. Z., Burbidge, A. A. & Harrison, P. L. *The action plan for Australian Mammals 2012*. (CSIRO, 2014).
- ^{vii} Bureau of Meteorology. <<http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/change/index.shtml#tabs=Tracker&tracker=trend-maps&tQ%5Bmap%5D=tmean&tQ%5Barea%5D=aus&tQ%5Bseason%5D=0112&tQ%5Bperiod%5D=1970>> (2014).
- ^{viii} Milman, O. *Worlds governments failing Earth's ecosystems, says top conservationist*, <<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2014/nov/09/world-governments-failing-earths-ecosystems-says-top-conservationist>> (2014).
- ^{ix} NSW Native Vegetation Act Saves Australian Wildlife, 2014. <http://www.wwf.org.au/?9520/NSW-land-clearing-law-saves-265000-native-mammals>
- ^x Target 11 of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets under the United Nations Environment Programme's Convention on Biological Diversity states: "By 2020, at least 17 per cent of terrestrial and inland water, and 10 per cent of coastal and marine areas, especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services, are conserved through effectively and equitably managed, ecologically representative and well connected systems of protected areas and other effective area-based conservation measures, and integrated into the wider landscapes and seascapes. <http://www.cbd.int/sp/targets/>
- ^{xi} Department of Environment and Climate Change NSW. (ed Department of Environment and Climate Change NSW) (Sydney, 2008).
- ^{xii} Australian Government Department of Environment. (ed Department of the Environment) (2014).
- ^{xiii} Over the past three years, the NSW Government made small additions to the protected area system, by upgrading Dharawal and Berowra to national park status, some additions to existing parks and significantly extending the Nattai Wilderness
- ^{xiv} NSW State of the Environment 2012, 5.3 Reserves and conservation, Figure 5.6: Area and percentage of each marine park zone in force in NSW bioregions, http://www.epa.nsw.gov.au/soe/soe2012/chapter5/chp_5.3.htm
- ^{xv} https://www.rbgssyd.nsw.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0004/97663/Benson_1e.pdf, John Benson, *The Effect of 200 years of European Settlement on the vegetation and flora of NSW*, 1991

^{xvi} NSW State of Environment Report 2012, Chapter 5.2

^{xvii} Blueprint for a Healthy Environment and a Productive Economy, Wentworth Group,
<http://wentworthgroup.org/2014/11/blueprint-for-a-healthy-environment-and-a-productive-economy/2014/>

^{xviii} <http://www.greateasternranges.org.au>

^{xix} The NSW travelling stock routes and reserves network.
<http://www.environment.gov.au/system/files/consultations/ddafe83e-ae2c-434a-8327-8af2da580a9c/files/npancc1.pdf>