

## Submission on the Nature Positive Bill

### Prepared by

Northern Plains Conservation Management Network and Friends of Terrick Terrick National Park (working as the Northern Plains Conservation Alliance).



Our community, volunteer-run environment group works across the Northern Plains of Victoria with a focus on conservation of native grasslands, grassy woodlands, and other threatened species and communities across private and public land. We are made up of farmers, community members, scientists, naturalists, and land managers with a passion for protecting our precious natural and cultural heritage.

### For further information on this submission, please contact

Dr Daniel Nugent,

President, Northern Plains Conservation Management Network and Friends of Terrick Terrick National Park

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**Summary:**

The Northern Plains Conservation Alliance (NPCA) has seen first-hand the EPBC Act fail to protect the most endangered ecosystem in Australia – our natural grasslands. For over 20 years, our group has witnessed the destruction of many native grasslands (EPBC-listed as Critically Endangered- *the Natural Grasslands of the Murray Valley Plains*) and habitat of threatened species through ploughing and cropping on private land with no prosecutions of perpetrators. Each incident has been reported to federal and state agencies, but they have not been acted upon – despite strong evidence of breaches of the law. There is a rife culture of ignoring the laws meant to protect biodiversity across the region by some landholders because of the clear lack of enforcement. At present, our group and community feel helpless to stop this senseless loss of our unique plants and animals that define our region's identity. Strong nature laws are essential to halting this pattern of biodiversity and heritage destruction.

We contend that it is self-evident that Australia's primary piece of environmental protection legislation is failing to achieve either of its primary aims – to protect the environment or conserve biodiversity. National indicators of the health of Australia's land, water, ecosystems and biodiversity continue to decline, and more and more species continue to be added to lengthening lists of threatened species. Clearly, reform is required to address this perilous situation.

The NPCA strongly recommends that:

- **The new nature laws are enforced by a strong, well-resourced EPA that works proactively to protect threatened communities and species vulnerable to illegal actions such as land clearing, and undertakes thorough and rapid investigations of alleged breaches.**

Communities such as ours are too easily brushed off by authorities when reporting suspected illegal activities. The EPA must be required to:

- **Immediately act on complaints that someone is undertaking an activity that harms threatened species and their habitat without an approval; and**
- **Respond to requests to use powerful new Environment Protections Orders to protect the environment where someone is breaking the law or failing to comply with an approvals**

We hope that your government can make the necessary changes to ensure our nature laws are fit for purpose and will ensure a healthy and rich environment for future generations.

Kind regards,

Dr Daniel Nugent, Bendigo.

On behalf of the Northern Plains Conservation Management Network and Friends of Terrick Terrick National Park.

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