

Submission to the Senate Inquiry into Australia's Faunal Extinction Crisis.



Tree Kangaroo and Mammal Group (Inc).

Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications,

Our organisation made an original timely submission to this inquiry on the 9th September, 2018. All the points made in that submission remain but we wish to make a brief addendum to our submission to add further evidence in support of our recommendations and to suggest an additional recommendation.

Terms of Reference (e): [adequacy of protections for critical habitat]

The risk to biodiversity from climate change has become even more clear and in response to that the Wet Tropics Management Authority has released an alarming statement about the threats to fauna within that World Heritage Area. The Board released a statement of concern and a 10 point climate plan following receipt of additional data from Professor Steve Williams.

“Concerning new evidence has shown an accelerating decline in the Wet Tropics of Queensland World Heritage Area’s unique rainforest animals as a result of climate change. The Board of the Wet Tropics Management Authority (the Board) has now become aware that, following the hottest summer ever recorded, some of the key species for which the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area was listed are at imminent risk of extinction.” Wet Tropics Board, 30th April, 2019.

Many of the species at risk are mammals found only in this area, and the TKMG would urge the Senate Committee to consider these grave concerns and act to better protect the species. **TKMG applauds the Wet Tropics statement and urges the Senate Inquiry to respond to the urgent threats within this World Heritage Area.**

Terms of Reference (i). [adequacy of monitoring]

A second additional concern has been raised as a result of the Queensland Audit Office review of how threatened species are managed in the State of Queensland. This report was released on the 13th November, 2018 and provides a shocking indictment of failure on the part of the Queensland Government to undertake appropriate actions in response to threatened species. TKMG commends this report to the Inquiry as it shows insights about how little is achieved and how much more can be accomplished in the State of Queensland. It also has many lessons for the Commonwealth. The report noted:

“The department has no strategy or framework for conserving or managing threatened species. This is despite the Nature Conservation Act 1992 requiring the department to develop an integrated and comprehensive conservation strategy for the whole of the state.”

“With few exceptions, the department does not currently know how threatened species are faring and whether management actions are having the desired impact.”

A similar criticism might be equally levelled at the Commonwealth Department given that it has an inability to monitor conservation work being done for each of the listed species and it is only now putting together a framework to attempt such monitoring. Gaps in developing formal recovery plans have already been noted in our original submission.

TKMG recommends that a similar thorough audit be conducted on the National program so a better understanding can be reached on what has been achieved and what gaps there are at the National level.

Terms of Reference (I) [related matters]

One additional concern, briefly referred to in our original submission, is Australia's National engagement with the Framework Convention on Biodiversity (CBD). Despite the closeness of the 2020 Conference of the Parties, and despite Government commitments, there seems to have been little or no engagement by the Australian Government with the wider community about how we are nationally progressing towards our CBD commitments and what specific steps we are undertaking to reduce extinctions of biodiversity. While it might seem obvious to most, there is no sign of Australia's faunal extinction crisis achieving any kind of Government attention in the national conversation – little or no attempt to engage the wider community in this critical issue. Instead, progress in recognition and action is left to community conservation groups and the wider members of the public (such as the Extinction Rebellion). Rather than lead the battle for species survival, the Government seems to be missing in action.

The members of the Tree Kangaroo and Mammal Group look for national leadership to deliver a secure future for our many threatened species and to ensure that we Australians do everything we can to address the faunal extinction crisis.

Peter Valentine, President, Tree Kangaroo and Mammal Group (Inc). 12/08/2019