



Australia's Extinction Crisis

31 AUGUST 2022

Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Environment and Communications
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

By email: ec.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Committee Secretary

Australia's Extinction Crisis

As the primary union representing Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) employees, the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) is committed to providing a strong voice for our members in key public policy and political debates.

The CPSU welcomes the opportunity to make a supplementary submission to this Senate inquiry into Australia's extinction crisis. The CPSU previously made a submission to this inquiry to the 45th Parliament in 2018. A copy of that submission is attached.

In our 2018 submission, CPSU members and delegates raised several concerns including on Government performance responding to extinction crisis, the impact of funding pressures, and the adequacy of resourcing to comply with legislation.

CPSU members at DCCEEW were surveyed about whether these concerns continued to be issues. Overwhelmingly, nine in ten staff who responded to the survey agreed or strongly agreed that:

- The Commonwealth Government's performance regarding faunal extinction has been poor or very poor;
- Funding cuts to Departments have affected the Government's ability to support programs that protect critical habitats for threatened fauna;
- Recovery planning hasn't kept up with the rate of threatened species listings;
- Inadequate resourcing has affected capacity to enforce compliance under the EPBC Act; and
- Government staffing caps have had a negative impact on corporate knowledge.

Members at DCCEEW were also asked about whether there had been changes since the CPSU's submission in 2018. The Commonwealth's performance regarding faunal extinction, funding cuts, recovery planning and the capacity to enforce compliance under the EPBC Act was

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generally seen as getting worse or much worse. While a minority said it was the same, no members indicated it had improved since then.

With the broadening of the scope of the inquiry and subsequent events and reports since our last submission, members at DCCEEW also highlighted several other issues that the inquiry should examine further. These included:

- The need for investment in better data to track biodiversity losses;
- Implementation of the recommendations of the EPBC Act Review;
- The role of Parks Australia in providing critical research, habitat and conservation in threatened species management;
- The importance of adequate funding to enable appropriate levels of consultation with First Nations and to reimburse them for their cultural knowledge;
- Adding a significant greenhouse gas emissions trigger to the EPBC Act;
- Environmental impact assessments for offshore petroleum not being handled by the Department but by the National Offshore Petroleum Safety and Environmental Management Authority; and
- The impact of existing government policies that counteract attempts to protect threatened species and biodiversity.

The CPSU is happy to provide further information on the matters raised in this submission and supplementary information on other relevant issues if needed.

For further information, please contact Osmond Chiu, Senior Policy and Research Officer via email osmond.chiu@cpsu.org.au or on 0424 159 463.

Yours sincerely

Beth Vincent-Pietsch
Deputy Secretary
Community and Public Sector Union