



P.O. Box 444 Healesville VIC 3777  
Phone: (03) 5962 1224  
Tues & Thurs: (03) 5962 5982

Secretary: Maureen Bond [hewisec@bigpond.com](mailto:hewisec@bigpond.com)

HEALESVILLE ♦ CHUM CREEK ♦ YARRA GLEN ♦ BADGER CREEK ♦ TOOLANGI ♦ STEELS CREEK ♦ TARRAWARRA

ABN: 67 253 515 594 ♦ Reg. No: A0018935T <http://hewi.friends.melbournewater.com.au>  
<http://roundleafpomaderris.org.au/>

House of Representatives Standing Committee on  
Climate Change, Environment and the Arts  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600  
AUSTRALIA  
[ccea.reps@aph.gov.au](mailto:ccea.reps@aph.gov.au)

**Re: Inquiry into climate change and biodiversity.**

Dear Committee,

We welcome the opportunity to provide information to the inquiry by the closing date. But due to the immediate pressures of local biodiversity issues with which our members are totally involved this month, we hope to be given the opportunity to make a supplementary report that would include far more detailed and referenced information.

**How climate change impacts on biodiversity may flow on to affect human communities and the economy:**

All human beings are an integral part of the planet's biodiversity and so all communities and economic processes are affected by impacts on our ecosystems. IPCC reports continue to indicate that climate change is a rapidly increasing phenomenon and that the effects and pressures on communities will be various and widespread, possibly irreversible if not given immediate attention and resources by all governments to protect our biodiversity.

The Earth's biodiversity ensures resilience and adaptive capabilities but increasing human populations have decimated other species that were an essential component of the total biosphere. Urgently increased research funding must be provided for specific studies of our most endangered species.

**An assessment of whether current governance arrangements are well placed to deal with the challenges of conserving biodiversity in a changing climate:**

We welcome the establishment of a new Biodiversity and Climate Fund of \$946 million over the first six years as part of the new Clean Energy Future Package.

However, current governance arrangements remain totally insufficient to deal with the vast challenges of conserving biodiversity, as indicated by the mere \$8 million funding for a Climate Change Research Program.

The compounding pressures of a changing climate must be addressed with urgency by all levels of government, but the Australian Parliament must lead with scientifically based projects to be initiated in all States and Territories, involving local governments, business and the community.

Local examples of lack of biodiversity conservation:

**1. Deforestation**

The ongoing deforestation of the Central Highlands, catchment of Melbourne's water supply, the proven habitat of the highly endangered Leadbeater's Possum and a region

*HEWI is a community group acting to protect and enhance important elements of our local environment*

internationally recognised for its highly significant ecosystem that includes our iconic Mountain Ash forests is supported by the Victorian State government in spite of the vast adjacent areas that were decimated by the 2009 fires. Deforestation is now acknowledged as a massive contributor to greenhouse gas production and it is also recognised that our forests must be preserved as essential carbon sinks.

The local community believes that this process is in complete denial of the following principle from **Australia's Biodiversity Conservation Strategy 2010-2030**

*'Natural ecosystems are dynamic but have a finite capacity to recover from external threats, impacts and pressures'*

Certainly, 'current governance arrangements' are not able to deal with such biodiversity challenges in a changing climate.

## **2. *Pomaderris vacciniifolia* Round-leaf Pomaderris**

This critically endangered shrub is endemic to our region and our group has contributed many volunteer hours in surveys and regular observational studies. We were responsible for having this important component of local biodiversity nominated for protection by the Victorian Government's Flora and Fauna Act, 1988 on August 13, 1988.

However, a similarly researched application for protection under the EPBC Act, in November 2008, has not yet been approved.

Australia's Terrestrial Biodiversity Assessment 2008 found that existing threats to biodiversity are rapidly escalating and that climate change will compound these pressures further. It is now well documented that Australia could face a biological catastrophe.

We support the Boobook Declaration which states that we can halt the species extinction crisis, reduce global warming, maintain and restore vital Indigenous cultural connections, and expand jobs and economies in rural, regional and remote areas. But this requires the Australian Government, in concert with the community, all levels of government, and business, to take urgent, committed action.

### **Strategies to enhance climate change adaptation, including promoting resilience in ecosystems and human communities & Mechanisms to enhance community engagement:**

HEWI members support the following statements:

We call upon the Australian Government to act decisively to fulfill its international and national promises to protect biodiversity. Specifically the Australian Government must:

1 Acknowledge the critical importance of safeguarding biodiversity as part of Australia's climate change response and commit to correspondingly urgent action to address the systemic drivers of biodiversity loss. In so doing, due recognition should be given both to the threat that global warming poses to biodiversity and ecosystems such as the Great Barrier Reef, and to the vital role these have in mitigating dangerous climate change including by permanently storing carbon;

2 Substantially increase investment in biodiversity and ecosystem protection, restoration and management to at least \$9 billion over the three years to 2012 and establish an independent widely consultative process into future funding and stewardship of Australia's, terrestrial, aquatic and marine biodiversity;

3 Restore and increase the capacity for publicly funded biodiversity research, auditing, monitoring, accounting and communication, including through an expanded independent Land, Water and Biodiversity authority; and

4 Develop our biodiversity education and training programs so that all sectors of the Australian community and business have the knowledge to understand the magnitude of current threats to our biodiversity and the skills to take action to conserve our biodiversity and ecosystems. This is essential to transforming our nation to a healthy, sustainable society and economy.

In conclusion, HEWI especially endorses the vital necessity to communicate with all sectors of business and the community. We believe that increased biodiversity funding to local governments should be diverted for this application urgently.

We thank you for the opportunity to make this submission to your inquiry and we trust that you will allow a supplementary report of our local issues at a later date.

Yours sincerely

Maureen Bond  
Secretary, HEWI