

Senate Standing Committee on Environment and Communications
Legislation Committee
Answers to questions on notice
Environment portfolio

Question No: 281
Hearing: Additional Estimates
Outcome: Outcome 1
Programme: Wildlife Heritage and Marine Division (WHM)
Topic: Movement from Threatened Species listing
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Question Type: Spoken

Senator Singh asked:

Senator SINGH: I was asking what the process is for moving species from the threatened species list to the endangered list?

Mr Andrews: Ideally, something that is on our threatened species list is going to be recovered and then it moves off the threatened species EPBC list. In the EPBC categories for the level of threat, 'endangered' is the second highest classification before 'critically endangered' and then 'extinction'. I should let you know that if you look at what 'vulnerable' means it is also very close to extinction. To use mainstream language, 'endangered' is basically in serious trouble. There is no endangered list except, of course, there is a list of species that are classified endangered. But by investing in threatened species recovery activities under the threatened species recovery plans that we are establishing—the target for that is to have up-to-date plans by the end of this year and up-to-date conservation advices, so that is what Mr Richardson is working with me on—we will graduate them off, and they will go back from endangered, to vulnerable, to near threatened and then to not being on our threatened species list. So the headline KPI of this work is to get things off the EPBC list, and once they are recovering then we can achieve that. The definitions for that are set down in the EPBC Act.

Mr Knudson: I will add—exactly as Mr Andrews just said—we can come back to you and give you the specifics of what the process is to proceed for reclassification under the EPBC Act of the status of a species, if that would be helpful.

Senator SINGH: Thank you, because that is very optimistic, which is obviously a good way to approach it. But you said 'ideally', so there must be occasions where there are threatened species that move onto this endangered list and not the other way around. That is what my question was really about.

Answer:

Section 178 of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* establishes a list of threatened species divided into the following categories:

- extinct
- extinct in the wild
- critically endangered
- endangered

- vulnerable
- conservation dependent.

The Act and the associated *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Regulations 2000* set out criteria for each category within the threatened species list. Species which have been assessed as meeting the criteria for listing are included in the appropriate category within the threatened species list.

Species can be moved between categories on the threatened species list, or removed from the list altogether where warranted, by following the nomination and listing process set out in sections 194A through 194T of the Act.

The usual process includes the following steps:

- (a) each year, the Minister invites people to nominate species for assessment (this can include new listings, changes of category and deletions from the list), and gives the nominations to the Threatened Species Scientific Committee;
- (b) the Scientific Committee prepares, and gives to the Minister, a list of species that it advises should be assessed. The Scientific Committee can include species it wishes to nominate, in addition to those received through the public nomination process;
- (c) the Minister finalises the list of species that are to be assessed;
- (d) the Scientific Committee invites people to make comments about the species in the finalised list;
- (e) the Scientific Committee assesses the species in the finalised list against the criteria set out in the regulations, and gives the assessments to the Minister;
- (f) the Minister decides whether a species that has been assessed should be included in the threatened species list, moved to different category within the list, or deleted from the list.