



Environment Institute
of Australia and
New Zealand Inc.

EPBC Act Review

EIANZ calls for reform action
September 2021

The **final report** of the independent 10-year Review of Australia's lead environmental legislation, The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act (EPBC Act), was publicly released in January 2021.

Professor Graeme Samuel's report proposes a comprehensive suite of reforms that reflects: the overall state of decline and increased threats to the Australian natural and heritage environment; the need to reverse the unsustainable trajectory; and the inadequacy of current legislation.

Environmental practitioners want legislation and a system that works to protect the environment. The Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand (EIANZ) calls on the Federal Government to quickly implement Samuel's recommendations and offers the expertise of our members to assist in the design of the implementation.

PRIORITIES FOR REFORM ARE

National Environmental Standards The EIANZ supports meaningful National Environmental Standards, the cornerstone recommendation of the Samuel Review. All National Environmental Standards should receive proper public consultation. Standards should protect and improve the environment and our heritage, be comprehensive and clearly enforceable. They should provide at least as much environmental protection as proposed by Samuel in his final report.

Indigenous Engagement The EIANZ endorses reform to ensure Indigenous Australians are listened to, and environmental and heritage decision-makers harness the value of Indigenous knowledge of managing Country.

Compliance and enforcement The EIANZ supports the establishment of an independent compliance and enforcement regulator. We agree that a new, independent statutory Environment Assurance Commissioner should provide oversight of the National Environmental Standards. We support the Department having greater enforcement emphasis and capacity. EIANZ supports, after development of comprehensive and effective National Environmental Standards and rigorous accreditation and subsequent monitoring, states and territories being delegated activities required by the EPBC Act. This should avoid duplication and overlap.

Bioregional planning The EIANZ supports achieving better environmental outcomes by managing regional, strategic and cumulative impacts under the EPBC Act through partnerships between the Commonwealth, states, territories and/or corporations, and by increasing stakeholder engagement.

Informed decision-making You cannot manage what you do not measure. Much more is needed to collect, collate, and make available relevant environmental information. EIANZ supports Samuel's framework to make better use of the data currently available, and to increase meaningful assessment of that data.

The EIANZ calls on the Federal Government to now act to implement EPBC Act reforms consistent with the spirit of Samuel's plan and recommendations and the **Australian National Audit Office 2020 report**. This includes refusing to "cherry-pick" the recommendations, providing the necessary additional funding and resourcing within the Department for effective and efficient delivery and properly engaging with the environment profession and the community.

Read [EIANZ's submission to the EPBC Act Review Discussion Paper](#)

The EIANZ is a not-for-profit, professional association for environmental practitioners from across Australia and New Zealand. Its membership is drawn from all areas of environmental practice, and includes practitioners with industry, government, community and academic careers.