



EIANZ's call to all political parties: 2022 Australian Federal Election

As members of the global community, we are living beyond our means through greenhouse gas emissions, biodiversity decline and non-sustainable resource use. The lack of consistent policy commitment to sustainable development exposes Australians to direct environmental, social and economic impacts.¹

We are increasingly experiencing extreme natural events (heat waves, droughts, storms and bushfires) and rises in temperature, sea levels, wastes and pollutants. Australia trails many of our international counterparts in transitioning our economy and supporting innovation.

The environment profession brings innovation, science, modern technologies, education and management systems to guide investment in the future. The Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand (EIANZ), as the peak body representing and certifying environmental practitioners who work across all levels of government, industry and academia, offers its support to the next government to meet this complex agenda.

Strategic recommendations

The EIANZ has **four strategic recommendations** for all Australian political parties and politicians:

1. Elevate the priority for protecting and restoring the natural, cultural, heritage and built environments across Australia
2. Make policy fit for current and future environmental, climate, and social needs
3. Increase government resourcing for implementing critical legislation and supporting action and data collection across borders and public/private/non-profit groups
4. Harness and support opportunities by providing clear and sustained policy settings, enhancing the public good where there are valid market failures, and defending and promoting the national interest at home and abroad.

1. As Professor Samuel highlighted in his Independent Review of the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act and as recorded in the 2016 State of the Environment Report, the Australian natural environment and iconic places are in an overall state of decline and are under increasing threat and the current legislative framework is due for reform – we have over-allocated our water resources, overused our soils and seen plant and animal extinctions with other species heading in the same direction. Although the evidence continues to increase, the root causes have existed for many years.



There are many risks and opportunities for stronger environmental reform. Our EIANZ practitioners are active in areas as diverse as contaminated land practice, complex water regulation and management, marine health, and climate change adaptation.

After extensive consultation with experts in these fields, we have compiled a list of four priority areas. These represent some of the broadest risks and biggest opportunities in Australia. Our recommendations are actionable now, measurable, and relate directly to the strategic recommendations mentioned previously.

We call on the Australian Government to take rapid but researched action in:

- supporting a national approach to the Circular Economy, Waste and Pollution
- implementing in its entirety the recommendations of the recent review into Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act Reform
- acting decisively, and scientifically to mitigate Climate Change
- integrating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Knowledge and Management of Places into the Australian approach to environmental management.



Circular Economy, Waste and Pollution

Our existing linear economy is failing with excessive resource utilisation and deterioration of our natural environment.²

Australia needs to value nature and integrate it into economic decisions using the three circular economy principles:

1. design out all kinds of waste
2. regenerate natural systems
3. keep products and materials in use for as long as possible.

We call on the next government to:

- put in place a **National Circular Economy Action Plan**. This should look to system redesign including (but also looking beyond) material flows to protect and regenerate the biosphere and break down our siloed approach to sustainability. Environmental and social issues are all interconnected
- encourage circularity through an **authorised mark** that details how many products are part of a circular economy
- use COAG and the National Cabinet and its powers over the registration and import of chemicals, to **fund and broker consistent national action on waste**. There is a rapid expansion of solar energy generation and battery storage systems that governments need to plan for
- **strengthen community awareness** of the need for environmental protection and circularity.

2. Australia's material economy is one of the most emissions intensive in the world (OECD (2012) GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS AND THE POTENTIAL FOR MITIGATION FROM MATERIALS MANAGEMENT WITHIN OECD COUNTRIES) so there is huge potential for emissions reduction through well managed transition to a circular economy



Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act Reform

A decade ago, no reform was actioned after the Hawke Review of the EPBC Act and 12 months after the Samuel Review, no legislation has been enacted. The next government must accept and act on Prof. Samuel's recommendations without cherry picking (as Prof. Samuel himself emphasised).

Protecting biodiversity underpins the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of all Australians. This requires government to prioritise reform of this critical legislation, increase administrative and implementation funding for environmental protection, and action science-based solutions.

Commonwealth legislation is critical to protect biodiversity across borders and migration routes, connecting international actions to local scale regulation. Commonwealth resources are critical for better information sharing networks across governments, non-government organisations, land and water users, and the public. This includes national systems for assessing the status of biodiversity and health.

We call on the next government to:

- develop, with proper public consultation and technical expertise, **meaningful National Environmental Standards** that protect and improve our environment and heritage and are comprehensive and clearly enforceable
- once high-quality standards are in place, **delegate activities required by the EPBC Act to states and territories** (with rigorous accreditation and subsequent monitoring) to avoid duplication and overlap in assessment and approval processes and offset arrangements
- establish an **independent statutory Environment Assurance Commissioner** to provide oversight of the National Environmental Standards
- actively work with state and territory governments and Commonwealth agencies to initiate strategic assessments and regional plans to get the basic settings right. This will provide a **clear regional decision-making framework** and clarity to developers and regulators while recognising cumulative pressures
- collect, collate and make available **more relevant environmental information for informed decision-making**. Prof. Samuel provides a framework for better use of available data. There are considerable opportunities to work with the private sector to realise better value, cooperation, trust, and partnerships around information and data management.



Climate Change

Australian land areas have warmed by around 1.4°C and New Zealand land areas by around 1.1°C between ~1910 and 2020.³

For our national economy, and as a global citizen, Australia must play its part in limiting the global temperature increase to 1.5°C. We can only achieve this by having credible domestic mitigation targets, plans and actions. The next government must lead the way on prevention, resilience, adaptation and recovery capacity.

We call upon the next government to:

- **Legislate for change**
 - legislate net zero and interim targets, policies and plans that will enable Australia to achieve its carbon budget for limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees. This should include by 2030 emission reductions of around 50 per cent and a near complete renewables national grid
 - vehicle fleet efficiency standards are needed.
- **Support the transition to a low-carbon economy**
 - support and re-skill sectors and regions most vulnerable to the shift away from fossil fuels
 - invest in education and incentives for regenerative farming practices
 - greater promotion of emerging green technologies where Australia has competitive advantage
 - phase out financial support for 'high carbon' activities, e.g. diesel fuel rebates.
- **Position the Commonwealth as a primary research and development hub for climate adaptation and resilience**
 - this includes utilising Indigenous knowledge of Country to enhance Australia's adaptation and recovery capacity
 - drive climate policy for urban areas
 - strengthen the nation's emergency response capabilities for extreme weather events. This includes sharing and pooling of emergency assets across State and Territory borders.
- **Position Australia as a leader in international climate management**
 - ensure that our national delegations to the UNFCCC Conference of Parties and other international engagements are the strongest our nation can assemble
 - our leaders need to commit genuine efforts to work effectively with other nations to develop and implement global solutions.

3. Estimates labeled as "very high confidence" - see IPCC (2021) "Regional fact sheet - Australasia: Sixth Assessment Report".
https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/wg1/downloads/factsheets/IPCC_AR6_WGI_Regional_Fact_Sheet_Australasia.pdf



Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Knowledge and Management of Places

Indigenous Peoples' knowledge and values contribute to effective environmental management, and the government should recognise, integrate, and appropriately value this knowledge. The EIANZ recognises the rights and interests of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Peoples in Australia, for example, as provided for in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.⁴

Australia's unique Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage and cultural knowledge needs better protection. Government must accelerate the pace of: community understanding of pre-contact First Nations cultures; knowledge and contributions; and the need for, and formal recognition of, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander rights and interests including in the Constitution of Australia.

We call upon the next government to better recognise, integrate, listen to and appropriately value the importance of First Peoples' knowledge, values, and views in contributing to effective environmental and heritage management.

This can be done by:

- implementing recommendations of the Joint Standing Committee on Northern Australia report⁵ on the destruction of 46,000 year old caves at the Juukan Gorge in the Pilbara region of Western Australia. This includes reviewing the Native Title Act 1993 to resolve inequalities in the negotiating position of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- implementing the recommendation of Prof Samuel's review for a **National Environmental Standard for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander engagement and participation in decision-making**
- adopting the **Dhawura Ngilan Vision**⁶ and appropriate resourcing to support its implementation
- further developing the *Working on Country Program* of the Commonwealth Government.⁷ The program needs to spread into areas where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander title to land is less certain. Both protected- and other-areas of public land need to be managed on a collaborative basis.

4. The EIANZ has embarked on a journey of reconciliation that aims to see Indigenous Australians play an increasing role in the environment profession.

5. This report addresses a number of inherent unfair and discriminatory practices against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia

6. On 16 September 2020, the Heritage Chairs of Australia and New Zealand welcomed and supported *Dhawura Ngilan: A vision for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage in Australia and the Best Practice Standards in Indigenous cultural heritage management and legislation*. Developed by and presented to the meeting by the Chairs of Australia's national, state and territory Indigenous heritage bodies, these two documents provide a roadmap for improving approaches to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage management in Australia. Both documents are the product of extensive consultation with Indigenous stakeholders and relevant peak advisory bodies. [DAWE:2020](#)

7. This program has been effective in Indigenous Protected Areas and facilitates employment of Indigenous rangers by local governments and other natural and cultural resource management agencies in collaborative with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This program has been empowering for Indigenous People living on country. It has been less influential in engaging Indigenous Australians in managing country in the more closely settled parts of the nation.



About EIANZ

EIANZ is a not-for-profit, professional association for environmental practitioners from across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand. The Institute has a certification scheme that recognises ethical and professional practice which assures government, industry and the community of practitioners' professional standing. Our members and certified practitioners have specialist knowledge and skills in environmental systems, processes and solutions. They bring passion, ingenuity and creativity to their work.